



KAREN THOMSON
CATALOGUE 102

PART II. JANE AUSTEN
FAMILY LETTERS.

The only letter which I possess relating to the Leigh family, is a copy of that which I inclose a description. The original is, I believe, in the possession of the eldest surviving son of my Uncle Adm^l Sir Francis Austen, to whom it passed on the death of his sister, my Aunt, Miss Cassandra Austen, the elder sister of Jane, the authoress.

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A COLLECTION OF UNPUBLISHED LETTERS, POEMS AND OTHER
MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL (1686-1823 & 1866, 52 items) FROM THE
LEIGHS OF ADLESTROP, JANE AUSTEN'S MOTHER'S FAMILY.

£35,000

Some pieces bound in, others loosely inserted, in a nineteenth-century quarto album of brown diced russia, titled in gilt on spine "Original Family Papers &c. Vol. I. MSS.", with the armorial bookplate of a descendant of the family, Frederick Leigh Colvile, on front pastedown.

“I have always maintained the importance of Aunts as much as possible”, wrote Jane Austen jokingly in a letter to her niece Caroline in 1815, but it was not just aunts: all her relations mattered to her. In his 1932 review of Chapman's edition of her letters E.M. Forster concluded: “they show, more clearly than ever, that Miss Austen was part of the Austens, the Knights, the Leighs, the Lefroys. The accidents of birth and relationship were more sacred to her than anything else in the world, and she introduced this faith as the groundwork of her six great novels.”

Many of the early letters in this family collection are by women, four by aunts of Jane's mother Cassandra Austen and of an intimate and lively nature, discussing relationships and domestic affairs. The collection also includes a letter about the propriety of describing a woman as “playful” on her tombstone, sent by Warren Hastings to the Reverend Thomas Leigh at Adlestrop Rectory and received on July 31st 1806, on which date the Austens are known to have been staying with him; a reference to the hospitality of one of Jane Austen's recorded male admirers; and a long letter of condolence written by her cousin Edward Cooper. This appears to be the only surviving example of one of his "Letters of cruel comfort", as Jane described them. The unctuous Mr Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* is believed by many scholars to be based on Edward Cooper.

The collection includes two later letters, from Jane's nephew and first biographer James Edward Austen-Leigh to his relation Frederick Leigh Colvile, offering him a copy made by his half-sister Anna Lefroy of the “curious letter of advice and reproof” of 1686 which is transcribed in full in his *Memoir of Jane Austen*, and giving additional information about its provenance with reference to Jane.

Provenance.

The early letters were preserved by Theophilus Leigh (b.1693), Cassandra Austen's uncle and godfather to Jane Austen's sister Cassandra, who was Master of Balliol College Oxford from 1726 until his death in 1785 and Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1739 to 1741. They passed to his daughter Mary and her husband, also cousin, the Reverend Thomas Leigh (1734-1813) at Adlestrop, who added to the collection. Mary Leigh copied one of the seventeenth-century letters into her MS history of the family in 1788.

Three of Jane Austen's visits to Adlestrop are documented, those of 1794, 1799 and July/August 1806. Throughout this period the letters were in the possession of the Reverend Thomas Leigh at Adlestrop Rectory, with whom the Austens always stayed. At the time there were portraits of many of their writers on the walls of the Rectory and of the adjacent manor house (now Adlestrop Park): where this is known there is a (P) after the first mention of the writer in the description that follows. The Austen scholar Jon Spence wrote in 2004 in *The Leighs: the Revelations of Stoneleigh*, about one of the group portraits (which in 1806 would have still been in Adlestrop), "Mrs Austen must have known which child was her father; she must also have known which was her beloved aunt Cassandra, after whom she had named her own elder daughter. Jane, who knew neither her grandfather nor her great-aunt Cassandra, would have been fascinated". It must have been on one of their visits to Adlestrop that the Austens acquired the "curious letter of advice and reproof" from James Henry Leigh at the manor house, and they would also surely have been shown the treasured early letters in the Reverend Thomas Leigh's possession.

The letters went with the Reverend Thomas Leigh from Adlestrop to Stoneleigh Abbey some time after the summer of 1806, eventually becoming incorporated into a large accumulation of later Stoneleigh material. This was put into eight albums and annotated in the 1870s by Frederick Leigh Colvile, a grandson of James Henry Leigh to whom Stoneleigh passed on the death of Thomas Leigh. Six of his eight albums of "Original Family Papers", including this first volume, were sold at auction in London in 2009. The later material was donated to Stoneleigh Abbey in 2013 and is now in the family archive at the Shakespeare Memorial Trust in Stratford.

References.

Austen, Jane. *Letters*. Fourth Edition, collected and edited by Deirdre Le Faye. OUP 2011.

Austen-Leigh, J.E. *A Memoir of Jane Austen and other Family Recollections*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Kathryn Sutherland. OUP 2008.

Austen-Leigh, R. A. *Austen Papers 1704-1856*. Privately printed 1942.

Le Faye, Deirdre. *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family*. CUP 2006.

Dear Mr Leigh June 11th 1687
 I had answered you of
 last past but was prevented by a fall
 of a Stone in my Kidneys but I thank
 God I am as well as I am as I used
 to be. my she doctor sends me word
 she dos not doubt but to cure me yet
 but I thinke nothing will doe it but
 yt one Catholicon in all diseases which
 is Death. I may give my thanks to Mr
 Wolfe & his wife which my thanks
 for her presents of such value & make
 my apology for not writing my self
 for my services are very dull as you see
 my lady remembers her love to you
 & thankd by Susy. yr horses are
 pretty well & eat their meals heartily
 I wish you could meet our sister by chance
 only I have what I should say. yr Leigh

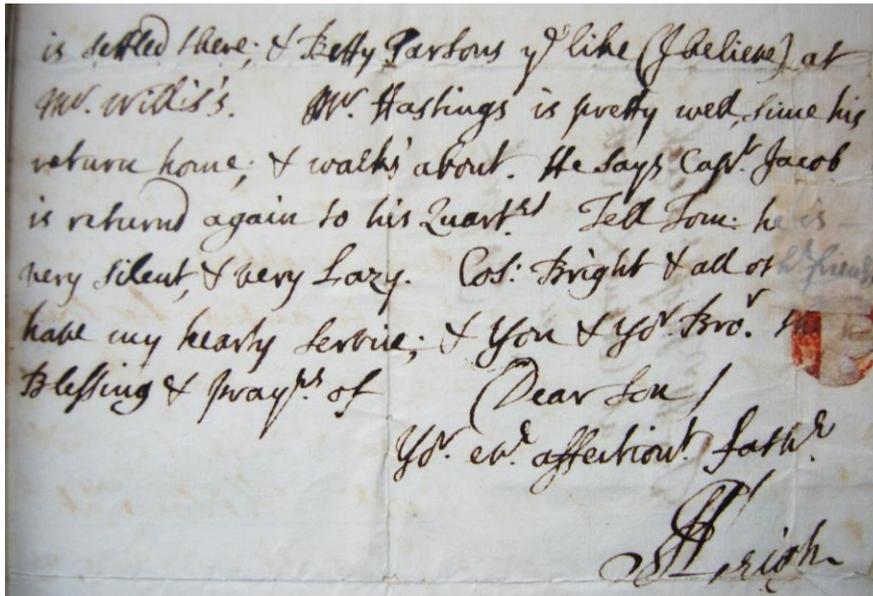
Two letters to the elder Theophilus Leigh (P) (1643-1725), Jane Austen's great-grandfather and father of the Master of Balliol of the same name, from his ailing first wife Elizabeth (Craven).

On March 12th 1686, "your kind Letters do comfort me much; but your presence will more; when I hope to receive the substance, of what I doe now in words"; and June 11th 1687, foreseeing her death later that year: "my she doctor sends me word she dos not doubt but to cure me yet. but I thinke nothing will doe it but yt one Catholicon in all diseases which is Death". This second letter was copied a century later by Mary Leigh (1731-1797) into her manuscript history of the Leigh family, now at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Letter to Theophilus Leigh senior from his mother, Joanna (Pury) (P), Jane Austen's great- great-grandmother, Oxford June 23 1688.

Addressed "Deare Sonne"; it includes shopping requests: "if your Sister might be in towne I would have her buy me a newer fashion slight skarfe to wear heere if I had beene at home my ould one should serve if she be not in Towne bid my daughter brandon doe it at Contebury".

Deare Sonne
 Oxon June 23 88
 yoer letter I have receivd was as glad to heare you are
 all well yoer father is indifferent he looks better then
 he did before he came to Oxford & the doctor and the
 Surgeon sayes that his last words beyond expectation
 but I suppose you shall staye heree some quarters of a year
 God that you may come downe with yoer young this waye
 and lett her staye heree 2 or 3 dayes I can have a
 very good lodging for her in the house will cost you not
 the waye lodgs with Mrs Custars daughter who is about her
 by night a very pretty girl & about the same that you intend to
 come we would and the coach shall be ordred so come I
 would have you lett some that her father doth expect that
 that he should buy the vestments he gave him money so doe
 and he would have him later yoer advise in the buying of
 them yoer father doth expect him downe before you if
 yoer sister would be in towne I would have her buy me a
 newer fashion slight skarfe to wear heere if I had beene
 at home my ould one should serve if she be not in Towne bid my daughter
 brandon doe it at Contebury
 of Oxon I do have us a bishoppe already with yoer fathers
 and my love to you and all the well of you I am and am
 yoer Joane mother
 J L



Letter from Theophilus Leigh senior to his son Theophilus (henceforth TL) (P) at Corpus Christi College Oxford.

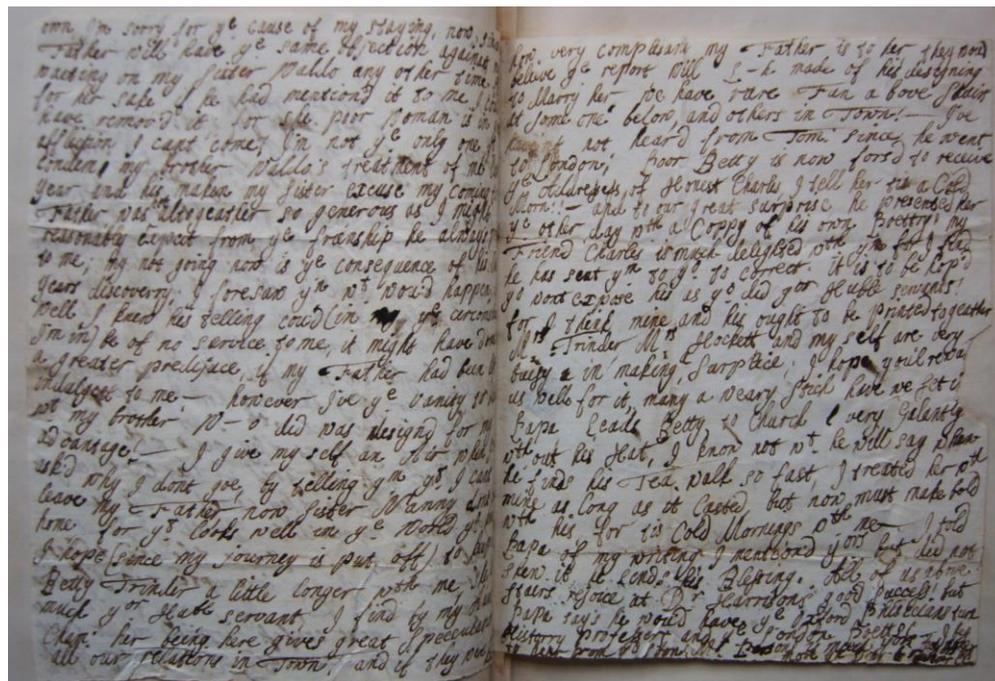
June 21 1716, family matters, referring to Jane Austen's grandfather Thomas (1696-1764) (P): "The hot Weather wch agrees ill wth ye

Bath waters, has obliged me to send for Yor. Sister sooner than was intended: So yt Yor. & Yor. Bror. Tom's progresse to Bath, is for this time disappointed.... Tell Tom. he is very silent, & very Lazy".

Four lively and interesting letters from TL's sisters Cassandra (P), Tryphena (P), and Mary (P), which appear to be the only surviving letters from these great-aunts of Jane.

Two from Cassandra (1695-1779), godmother to Jane Austen's elder brother Edward (b.1767). She was a benefactress to the Austen family: in her will of September 1779, the year that their youngest child Charles was born, she relieved Mrs Austen of a debt to her of £200 inherited from her father, on which interest had been annually due.

The first is undated, docketed "Abt. 1721". Their mother Mary (Brydges) (P) had died in childbed, and there is joking speculation about a possible romance – "Papa leads Betty to Church very gallantly without his Hat". The letter is written quickly, as if she were speaking: "My thoughts are so confus'd wth joy at hearing from My Dear Brother yt. I know not how to express my self! and my eyes are wet wth Tears wch



flow from two contrary Passions they weep wth joy to view yor. lines; and with grief yt they cant see ye Person from whom they came! Tis near supper time, I'm vex'd to Death yt. I cant command an hour, - for I've a thousand things to tell yo! - However if I'm interrupted now, I'll finish it when I come to bed”.

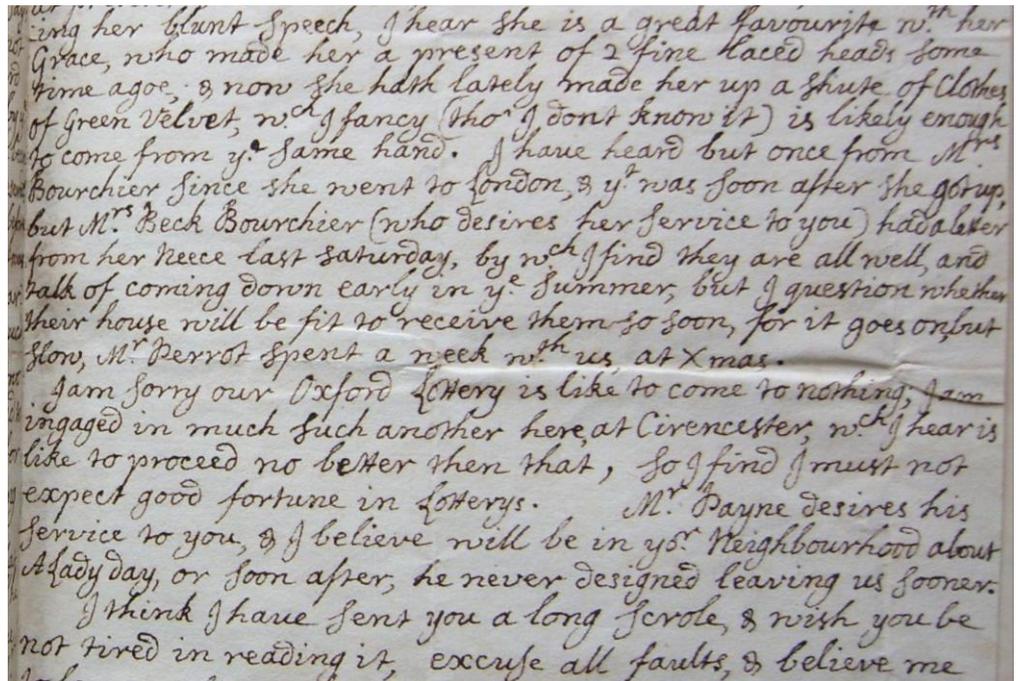
This is an example of Jane Austen’s “ideal letter”, as described to her sister Cassandra in 1801:

I have now attained the true art of letter-writing, which we are always told, is to express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth; I have been talking to you almost as fast as I could the whole of this letter. (Letter 29)

Great-aunt Cassandra describes the family's poetic aspirations, including her own, and again refers to Thomas as a poor letter writer: “I’ve not heard from Tom since he went to London”. No letters written by Jane Austen’s grandfather survive.

The second, March 19th [1726], demonstrates the operation of petticoat influence: “ye Dutchess of Chandos made a short visett here ys. Evening, and lay’d her Commands on me to write to yo, to use yor intrest wth yor friends at Oxford for Dr. Brydges, to be chose Master of Balioll, in ye. room of Dr. Hunt, whome ye. Duke hears is Dead”.

Letter from Tryphena Leigh (b. 1678) to her half-brother TL, from Barnsley in Gloucestershire, February [1721], (3 pages): her brother's match “is quite at an end, notwithstanding Mrs. Jacob had taken it in hand, as I heard some time agoe. I can't say I am sorry yt. is off, for by ye. character I have heard, of ye. mother, I fear he would not have been very happy in ye.

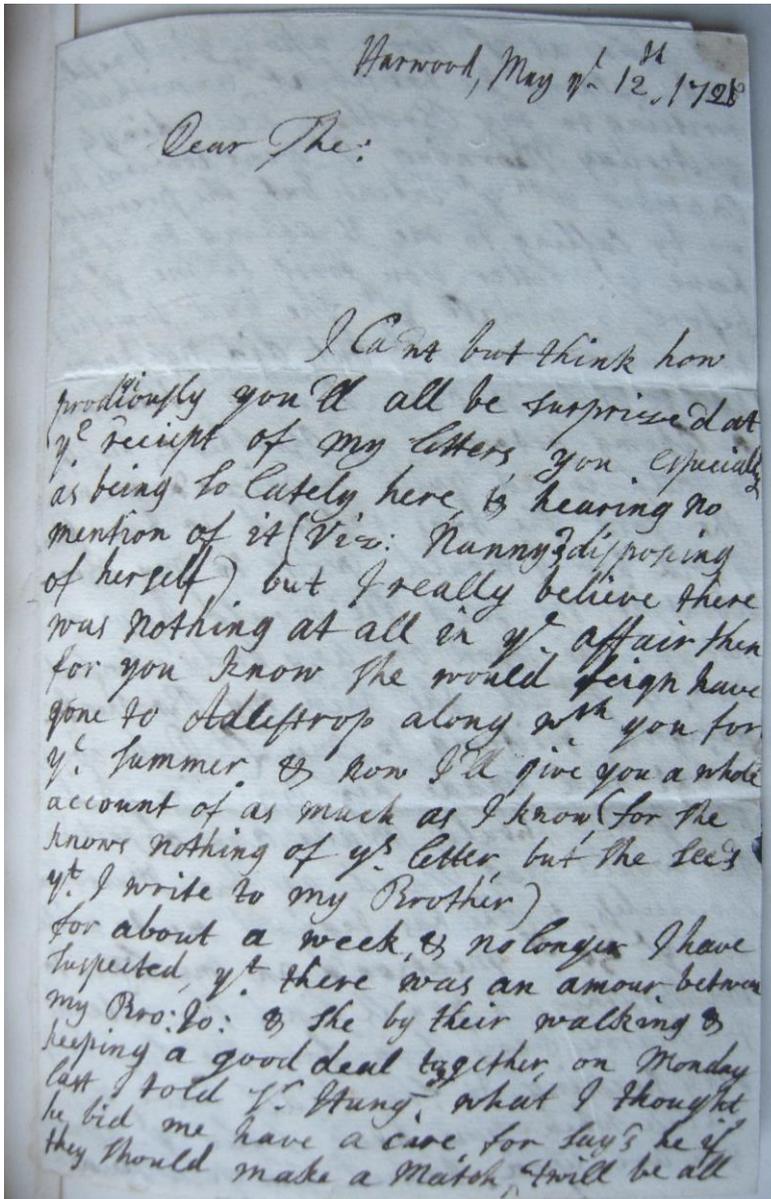


ing her blunt speech, I hear she is a great favourite wth her Grace, who made her a present of 2 fine faced heads some time agoe; & now she hath lately made her up a shuse of clothes of green velvet, w^{ch} I fancy (tho' I don't know it) is likely enough to come from y^r. same hand. I have heard but once from M^{rs}. Bourchier since she went to London, & y^t was soon after she got up, but M^{rs}. Beck Bourchier (who desires her service to you) had a letter from her Niece last Saturday, by w^{ch} I find they are all well, and talk of coming down early in y^e. Summer, but I question whether their house will be fit to receive them so soon, for it goes on but slow, M^r. Perrot spent a week wth us, at Xmas.

I am sorry our Oxford Lottery is like to come to nothing, I am engaged in much such another here at Cirencester, w^{ch} I hear is like to proceed no better then that, so I find I must not expect good fortune in Lotterys. M^r. Payne desires his service to you, & I believe will be in y^r. Neighbourhood about A Lady day, or soon after, he never designed leaving us sooner.

I think I have sent you a long scrole, & wish you be not tired in reading it, excuse all faults, & believe me

Daughter”, and about the completion of Barnsley Park, “they talk of coming down early in ye. summer, but I question whether their house will be fit to receive them so soon, for it goes on but slow, Mr. Perrot spent a week with us at Xmas”. Barnsley Park was used as the model for Kellynch Hall in the 1995 film of *Persuasion*.



A 3-page confidential letter from TL's sister Mary, dated May 12th 1725, addressed "Dear The:", describing the rapid progress of an "amour" between their youngest sister Anne ("Nanny") and John Hoskyns: "I'll give you a whole account of as much as I know (for she knows nothing of ys. letter, but she sees yt. I write to my Brother)". The matter is urgent, "you'll find she intends to Marry very soon, for she says he is very pressing... let me have an answer to ys. but if Nanny must not see it, get somebody else to direct it not frank'd, & red wax". This aunt clearly had a shotgun wedding: their first son, James, was born later the same year.

Two-page friendly letter from Joseph Trapp, first Professor of Poetry at Oxford, August 1739, to TL.

Asking his advice as Vice-Chancellor about publishing his Assize Sermon: "It being one thing for their Lordships to express their Desire to have the Sermon printed; and another for them to say that they desire it may be done as at their Request". And two others to TL from academic colleagues.

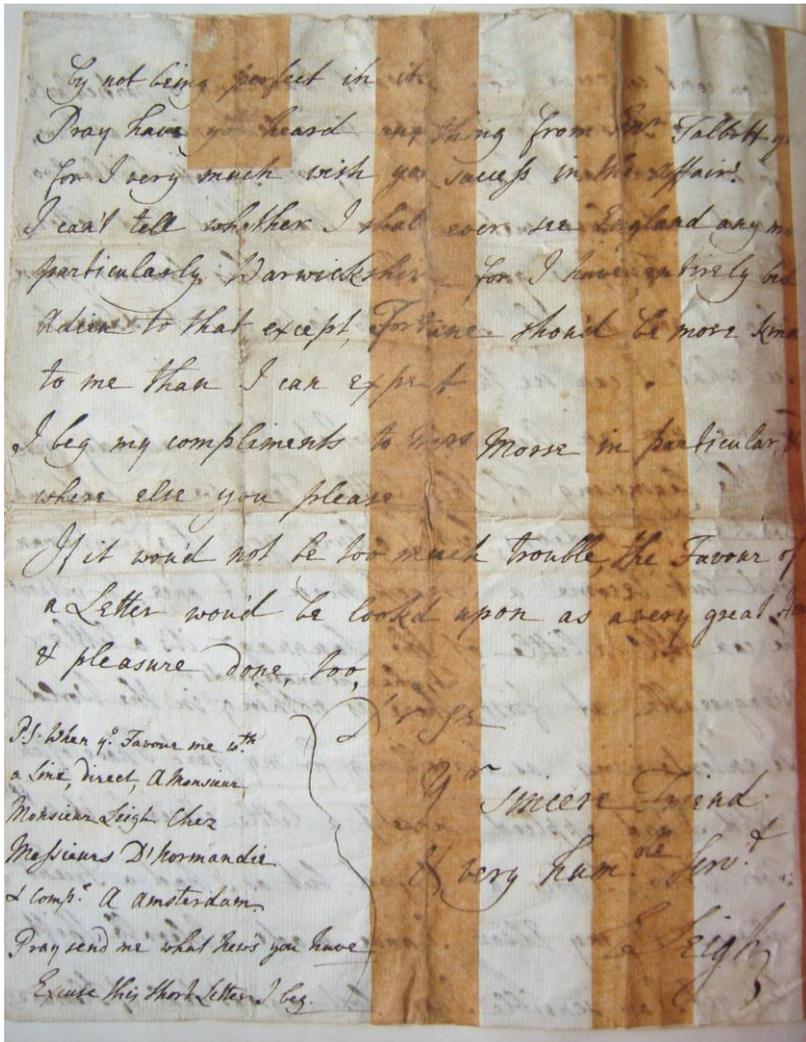
Six to TL from his elder brother William (1691-1757) (P) at Adlestrop, 1744-1747.

Including a 3-page letter, January 1744, about payments made for his sons' education at New College School. And three from members of William's family, including a 3-page letter from his eldest son James, March 1750, describing the London earthquake: "a General panick seems to have taken possession of all here particularly the Female World... London is to share the Fate of Lima".

Five from Sir Edward Turner of Ambrosden (1719-1766) (P).

Intimate, joking, and discursive, sent between 1739 and 1763. His daughter became Lady Saye and Sele – see below.

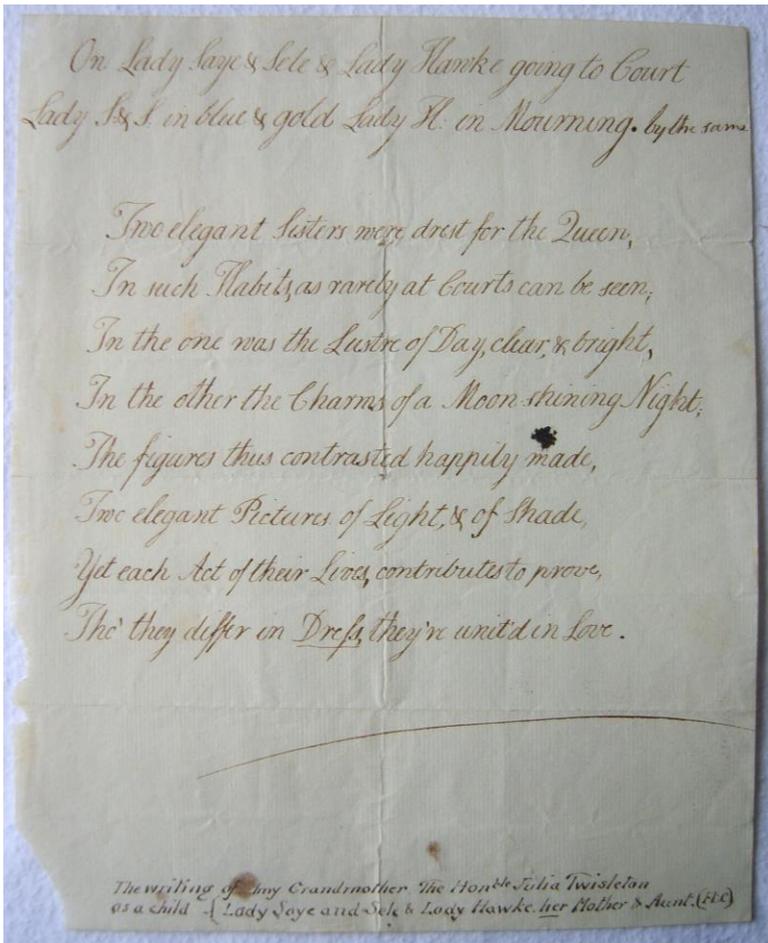
Three from the Leighs of Stoneleigh. Jane Austen would have seen the portraits of all three of these writers on her 1806 visit to Stoneleigh Abbey.



The only known letter from Edward Leigh, elder son (b.1708) of the 3rd Lord Leigh, disinherited for reasons that remain unclear; he then predeceased his father, dying abroad in 1737.

A 4-page, sad letter written to TL from Brussels in June 1736, much-handled and extensively repaired but all readable. “I have at last had my desire fulfill'd, for if you remember Sr. I allways had an inclination to travell, but I am sorry it's now upon such an Account, but as it has made such a noise in the World, I have no occasion to mention it to you, for I presume you heard of it long since... I can't tell whether I shall ever see England again particularly Warwickshire, for I have entirely bid Adieu to that except, Fortune shou'd be more kind to me than I can expect.”

A 2-page letter to TL from Thomas, younger brother of the above who became 4th Baron Leigh of Stoneleigh as a result of his elder brother's disinheritance, Oct. 1744, “My Girl desires Her best Compliments to Miss. Leigh, & returns Her a great many thanks for her very kind pres:t of the Oxford Almanack”, and a scrawled note from his son Edward, 5th Baron Leigh, April 1764, the year of his coming of age, already showing signs of mental problems. Edward died in 1786 insane and childless, and the terms of his will ultimately led the Adlestrop Leighs to inherit the Stoneleigh estate, occasioning the Austens' visit to Stoneleigh Abbey in 1806.



Two poems written out in an nineteenth-century childish hand describing Eliza, Lady Saye and Sele.

“On Miss Turner (now Lady Saye and Sele), by John Willes Esqr” (she married in 1767), and “On Lady Saye and Sele and Lady Hawke going to Court” (1805 or later).

When the Austens visited Stoneleigh Mrs Austen described her:

Poor Lady Saye and Sele to be sure is rather tormenting, tho' sometimes amusing, and affords Jane many a good laugh - but she fatigues me sadly on the whole. (Austen Papers 247)

Her sister Cassandra, Lady Hawke, published a novel, *Julia de Gramont*, in 1788.

Letters and poems relating to the Rev. Thomas Leigh (1734-1813) (P) and his unmarried sister Elizabeth (1735-1816) (P).

Jane Austen was fond of them both, writing on Thomas's death:

The respectable, worthy, clever, agreeable Mr Tho. Leigh, who has just closed a good life at the age of 79, and must have died the possessor of one of the finest Estates in England... - We are very anxious to know who will have the living of Adlestrop, and where his excellent Sister will find a home for the remainder of her days. (Letter 86)

His sister Elizabeth was another godparent to Cassandra, and Jane mentions “your good godmother” several times in the letters. On her death she wrote to her niece Caroline,

We all feel that we have lost a most valued old freind (Letter 140).

Includes a letter signed “T&E Leigh” detailing the route of a tour to the Lake District, 3 quarto pages, sent to their nephew James Henry Leigh and his wife, July 1802, in which they mention having stayed with the Coopers, Jane Austen's cousins. They also stay with another Leigh relation: “While Mr: Holt Leighs, and his admirable Sisters hospitality insisted on detaining us at Wiggan, the new member elect, was made

supremely happy by the letter from his friend & name-sake, with the assignation of a meeting at St: Stephens!”

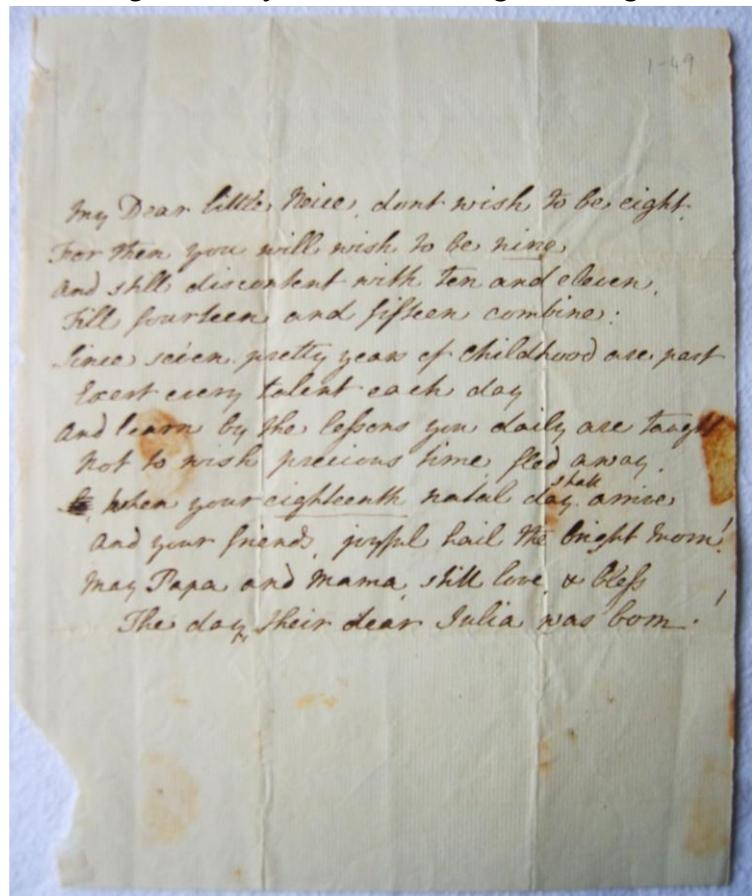
The Austens met the member for Wigan during their visit to Stoneleigh four years later, as recorded again by Mrs Austen:

A Mr. Holt Leigh was here yesterday and gave us all Franks... a single man, the wrong side of forty, chatty and well bred, and has a large Estate (Austen Papers 247).

Her reference to his chattiness and marriageability was presumably because he admired Jane, as recalled by her niece Caroline. “Aunt Cassandra told me, [that Mr Holt Leigh] was a great admirer of her sister. They were all passing guests at Stoneleigh Abbey – & all passed away, & never met again & I mention this only as showing that her pretty face did not pass through the world without receiving some tributes of admiration.” (quoted by Gaye King in ‘The Jane Austen Connection’, in Bearman, Ed. *Stoneleigh Abbey*, p.173).

Also included is a 2-page letter of Sept. 1748 from Thomas Leigh as a schoolboy to TL at Balliol, requesting a book: “the Book-sellers in Evesham and about this country cannot furnish me with it”, enclosing a poem, “Soliloquy”, by his sister Elizabeth to be delivered to his cousin; a copy of a 3-page “Epithalamium”, 1755, the text not in Thomas's hand but identified as being composed by him on the reverse, “Verses made by me Thomas Leigh upon Mr. James Leigh & Lady Carolines Bridges marriage”; and an entertaining 5-page letter to TL from another of Thomas’s sisters, March 1760, detailing a visit to the fashionable amusements of London in company with Thomas and Elizabeth, “the divine lookd not very Clerical, nor Miss Betty very creditable.”

And two further literary attempts by Elizabeth Leigh: an account of another tour in search of the picturesque, this time to Malvern, 4 folio pages dated 1797, made together with her brother Thomas and his wife Mary; and a poem, “Don't wish to be eight”, addressed to “My Dear little Neice”.



Letter from Warren Hastings to the Reverend Thomas Leigh, its receipt dated July 31st 1806 when the Austens are known to have been staying with him at Adlestrop, devoted to the subject of the propriety of the use of the word *playful* to describe a woman on her tombstone.

A 4-page letter from neighbouring Daylesford, in which Hastings encloses his draft text for the monument to the deceased wife of his friend Sir John D'Oyley. D'Oyley had written from India “expressing his particular desire that it should contain something allusive to 'the playful simplicity of mind which' (to use his own words) 'she possessed beyond almost any woman I ever met with.’” Hastings continues: “I felt the difficulty of this commission so great, that I had not the courage or presumption for many months to attempt the execution of it... though much critical labour has been bestowed upon it, I entertain doubts of its propriety... Yet knowing how much the affectionate purposes of my freind would be disappointed by the omission of that part of the Lady's character on which he has so particularly insisted, I have retained it under all the alternatives which the sketch has undergone. [...] I am, My dear Sir, Your truly affectionate Warren Hastings”. A contemporary hand has suggested two alternatives in pencil, changing *playfulness* to *cheerfulness*, but the text appeared on Lady D'Oyley's tombstone as drafted by Hastings, although his authorship of it appears not to be recorded.



Deirdre Le Faye records the events of this period in her *Chronology of Jane Austen* (p.331). “End of July. Mrs GA, JA and CEA go to stay with Revd Thomas Leigh at Adlestrop rectory.” On August 1st Thomas Leigh wrote to his lawyer making arrangements for the Leigh contingent to set off for Stoneleigh on August 5th, telling him that “Mrs and Miss Austens will be of the party.” Le Faye also records that Warren Hastings and his wife left for a tour of Scotland on August 4th.

Hastings was intimately connected with the Austen family. His first child had been cared for while he was in India for by Mr and Mrs Austen in the early days of their marriage, and James Edward Austen-Leigh records in his *Memoir of Jane Austen* that “Mrs Austen had become so attached to him that she always declared that his death had been as great a grief to her as if he had been a child of her own” (p.13). The arrival of this letter at the rectory would surely have been shared with the Austens.

Its subject would have been of particular interest to Jane, who approved, up to a point, of an air of playfulness, describing it as “delightful in a woman one loves” in *Sense and Sensibility*, with which D’Oyley would have agreed. Playfulness, again in the context of being loved, is one of the charms of Elizabeth Bennet: “Elizabeth’s spirits soon rising to playfulness again, she wanted Mr. Darcy to account for his having ever fallen in love with her.”

A photograph of a handwritten note in cursive script. The text reads: "+ Cheerful, benevolent and generous, she endeared herself by the Simplicity of her manners, which like the Playfulness of her". The handwriting is elegant and fluid, with some ink bleed-through from the reverse side of the paper.

Hastings admired the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*. His view of the book is excitedly reported in 1813 in a letter to Cassandra, in which Jane Austen has just determined to moderate her style, “I am going to write nothing but short Sentences. There shall be two full stops in every Line,” a resolution which lasts for a paragraph. Then her enthusiasm spills over:

And Mr. Hastings - I am quite delighted with what such a Man writes about it. – Henry sent him the Books after his return from Daylesford – but you will hear the Letter too.

Let me be rational and return to my two full stops.

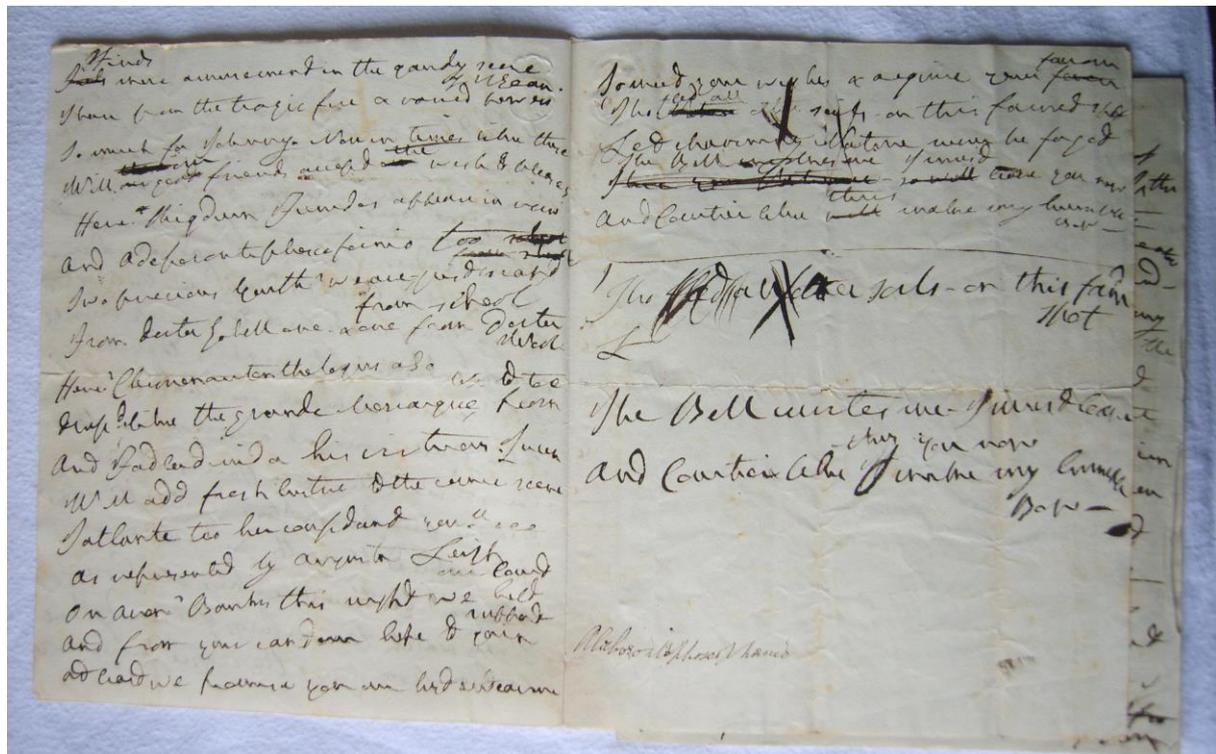
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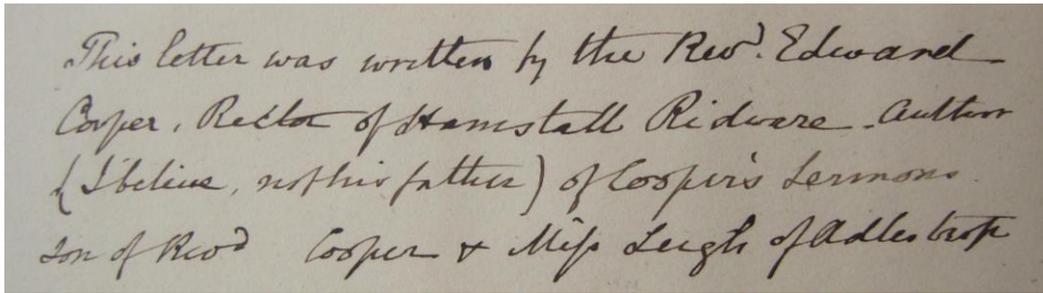
I long to have you hear Mr H’s opinion of P&P. His admiring my Elizabeth so much is particularly welcome to me. (Letter 87).

Prologue, 3 pages, by James Henry Leigh, much altered and spattered, written by him for a private production of *Chrononhotonthologos* performed *al fresco* at Stoneleigh in 1821. This appears to be the only record of the performance.

On Thomas Leigh's death in 1813 James Henry inherited Stoneleigh, and the collection of letters passed to him. It includes letters to him, and two manuscripts in his hand: a draft of a essay on the Sabbath, and this fine prologue. James Henry, one of "Jane's relations on the distaff side who had thoroughly inky fingers" (Harman *Jane's Fame*), unlike the others whose poetic endeavours are preserved in this collection made it into print: his *New Rosciad* was published in 1785.

*What times are these when half the British nation
Hurries each night to view the Coronation
When pretty Miss - Mama - & antient Granny
Avon's great bard forsake for Giovanni
When dandies - School Boys - Radicals, admire
The sprightly Vestris dress'd in male attire.
When Young stands forth to prop up Cheyney's muse
His splendid talents nightly to misuse?
To Pageants - Carnivals - see Kean give way
John Bull commands & we must all obey. [...]
On Avon's banks this night we hold our Court
And from your candour hope to gain support.[...]
The Bell invites me - I must leave you now
And Courtier like thus make my humble Bow -*





This letter was written by the Rev. Edward Cooper, Rector of Hamstall Ridware. Author of *I believe, in this father*) of Cooper's Sermons. Son of Rev. Cooper & Miss Leigh of Adlestrop

Letter of consolation from the Rev. Edward Cooper of Hamstall Ridware, Jane Austen's cousin, to James Henry Leigh's widow, November 20, 1823.

James Henry died unexpectedly in his sleep. His widow had the misfortune to receive, not just one, but two of the Rev. Edward Cooper's consolatory letters, the second of which, 5 pages long, is preserved here.

Jane Austen had expressed the hope to Cassandra in October 1808 that their brother Edward Knight would not be similarly afflicted on the occasion of his wife's sudden death.

I have written to Edwd Cooper, & hope he will not send one of his Letters of cruel comfort to my poor Brother. (Letter 59)

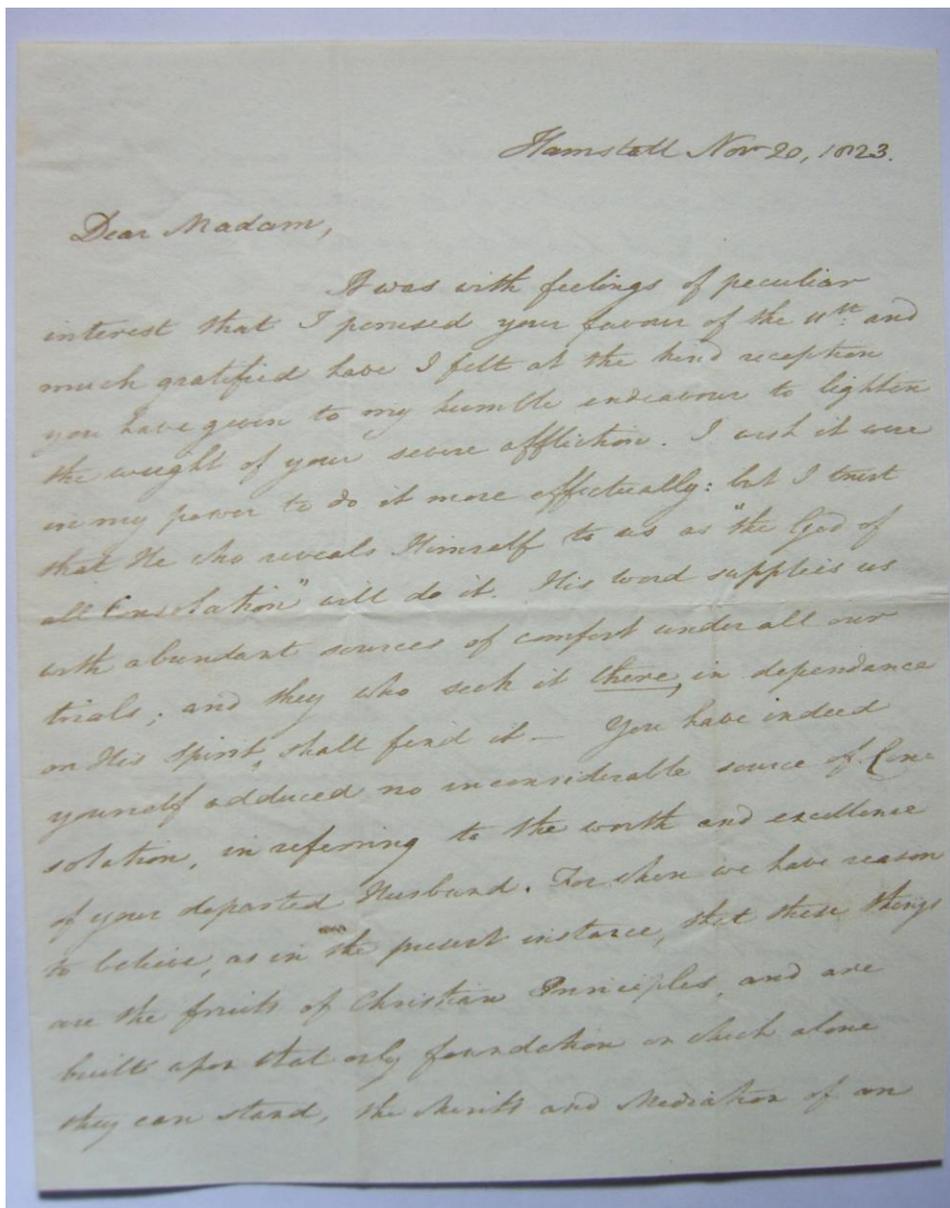
It is not difficult to understand why these letters were not generally kept: this is the only surviving example. Jane Austen's description is entirely apt.

Hamstall, Novr 20, 1823.

Dear Madam,

It was with feelings of peculiar interest that I perused your favour of the 11th: and much gratified have I felt at the kind reception you have given to my humble endeavour to lighten the weight of your severe affliction. [...] You have indeed yourself adduced no inconsiderable source of Consolation, in referring to the worth and excellence of your departed Husband. For when we have reason to believe, as in the present instance, that these things are the fruits of Christian Principles, and are built upon that only foundation in which alone they can stand, the Merits and Mediation of an Almighty Redeemer, then the recollection of them teaches us not only to submit to the divine dispensation which has taken away the Possession of them, but eventually to acquiesce with complacency in it, from the consideration of that high and glorious felicity, to which according to the Promise of a never-failing God, he is now advanced. And in this view, the very suddenness itself of the event, which at first so appalled our minds, becomes on reflection a cause even of satisfaction and thankfulness [...]

To the Survivors indeed such an event speaks very forcibly and with a voice that cannot be mistaken. It says to them, "Be ye also ready: for ye know not at what hour your Lord may come. Be not overcharged with the cares of this world. Do not slumber and sleep but see that your lights are burning, that you have oil in your vessels, as well as in your lamps – the reality as well as the profession of Religion; – so that whenever the Bridegroom cometh, you may be ready to enter with Him to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."



That such,
Dear Madam, may be
the happy portion of
You and of myself and
of all respectively
belonging to us, is the
fervent wish and
prayer of

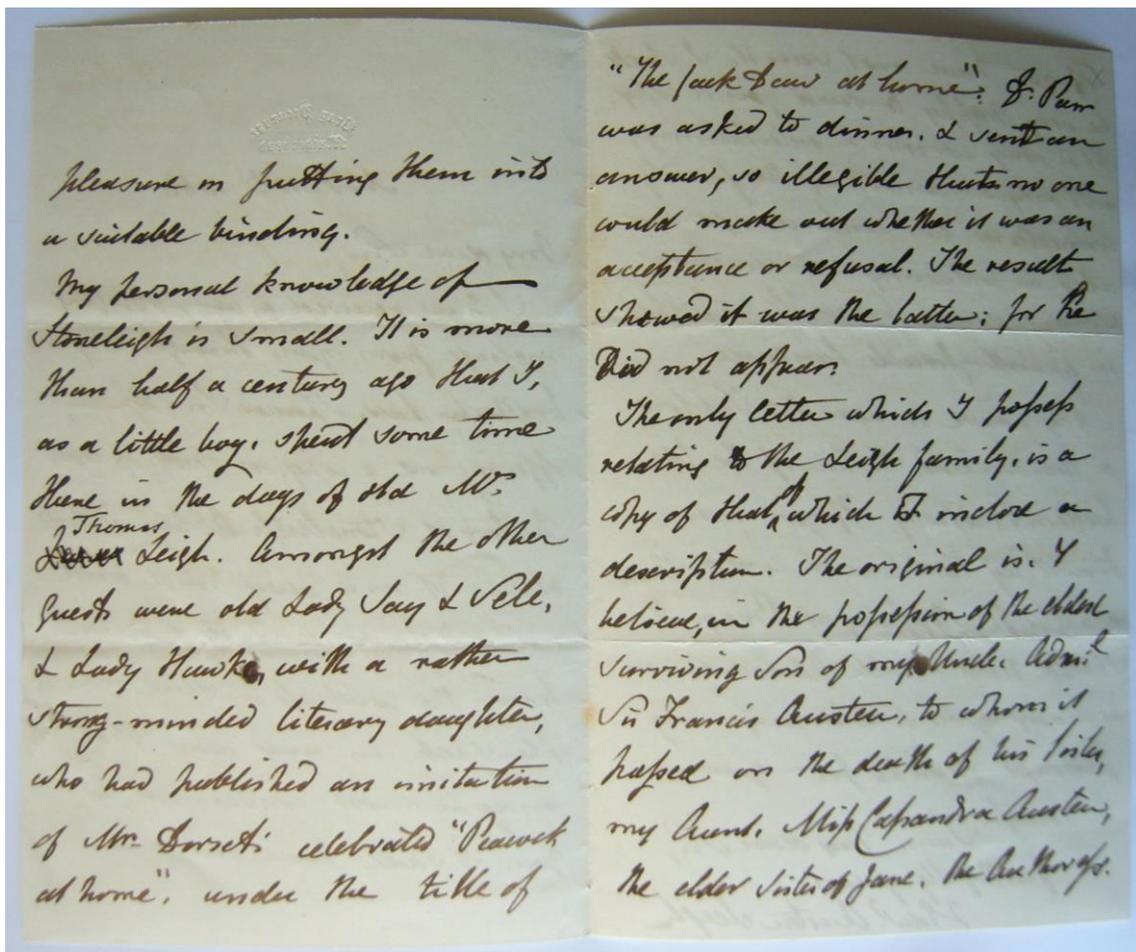
Your very faithful &
obliged
Friend & Servant
Edward Cooper.

On the very same day, in confirmation of his moral insensibility, Edward Cooper wrote a business letter to James Henry Leigh's heir to ensure that his livings would not be affected by James Henry's sudden death. The description comes from the Leigh of Stoneleigh archive at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust:

"20 November 1823. Letter from Edward Cooper, Hamstall Ridware, to Chandos Leigh, asking that he may continue to hold jointly the livings of Yoxall and Hamstall Ridware."

Two letters of November 1866, from Jane Austen's nephew and biographer James Edward Austen-Leigh to his relation Frederick Leigh Colville (FLC), giving important new information about the provenance of the "very old Letter" which he printed in full in *A Memoir of Jane Austen*.

James Edward is writing in response to FLC's enquiry about his memories of Stoneleigh. In his first, of November 10th (4 pages), he describes the little that he remembers from a childhood visit.



He then turns to matters of more interest to him: that is, the history of the Austen branch of the family, and in particular, Jane Austen.

Austen-Leigh's biography of his aunt, still the prime authority for Jane Austen's life, was published three years later. He does, he tells Colville, have in his possession an old Leigh family letter; or rather a copy of one. It had been sent to Jane Austen's great-grandmother Mary Brydges in May 1686 – Mary Brydges was to become the second wife of the first Theophilus Leigh, and the mother of five of the letter writers in this collection. The "curious letter of advice and reproof", as Austen-Leigh describes it, was sent to Mary by her mother Eliza, Lady Chandos, who at the time was in Constantinople, where her husband James was Ambassador. It was one of a series of letters sent from Turkey to her daughter in London between 1682 and 1687, and in the

Memoir of Jane Austen James Edward transcribed it in full. However, he failed to explain why, and as a result scholars have always puzzled over the reason for its presence. Kathryn Sutherland, in her 2002 edition, concludes that “JEAL's inclusion of this letter to JA's great-grandmother can only be explained as symptomatic of that social anxiety which surfaces in the *Memoir* at several points and was itself a major feature of JA's novels.” (p. 220).

The justification for the inclusion of the “very old Letter” in his biography of Jane becomes apparent as a result of this 1866 letter to Colvile.

The only letter which I possess relating to the Leigh family, is a copy of that of which I enclose a description. The original is, I believe, in the possession of the eldest surviving Son of my Uncle, Adml. Sir Francis Austen, to whom it passed on the death of his Sister, my Aunt, Miss Cassandra Austen, the elder sister of Jane, the Authoress.

A letter that had been owned by Jane's elder sister Cassandra, passing on her death to their younger brother Frank, was very likely to have belonged to Jane. Cassandra inherited all Jane's papers, and distributed them among close family members before her death in 1845.

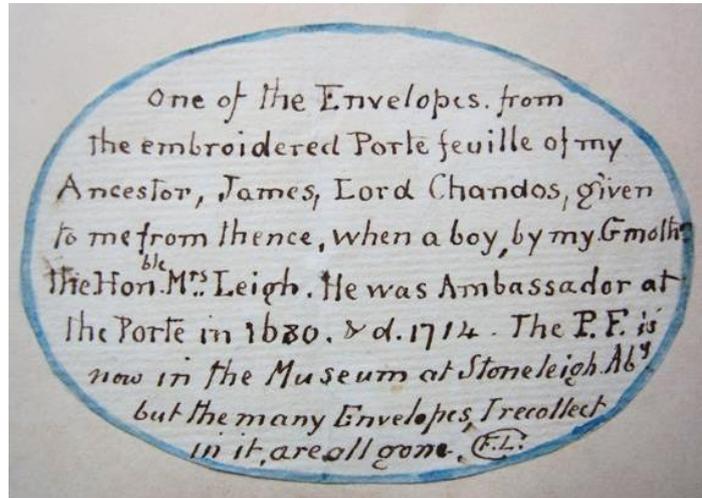
Mary Leigh had addressed her manuscript history of the family in 1788 to James Henry Leigh, then living at the manor house in Adlestrop. In it she describes James, Lord Chandos, and his wife Eliza: “they were patterns of conjugal Love. She was an excellent Woman. Her Letters to her Daughter Mary (our Grandmother, who remained with her Aunt Lady Child at Wanstead; not accompanying the family into Turkey,) are worthy of Madame Saveigné, & I believe, are now in yr possession.” The “curious letter of advice and reproof” sent from Turkey to Wanstead must have been given to the Austens on one of their Adlestrop visits. They would have seen the large and handsome portrait of its writer, now in an obscure corridor at Stoneleigh, which would have had pride of place in the manor house since both of James Henry's parents were descended from her.

Austen-Leigh's second letter of November 24th 1866, 2 pages, is a covering letter, enclosing the promised copy. However, neither his description, nor the copy, were still with the collection when it was sold in London in 2009.

It has been copied by my Sister, Mrs B. Lefroy, with all the abbreviations, irregular spelling, & scarcity of stops which are in the original. I am very glad to place so curious a piece of antiquity in the hands of another branch of the family, as the greater may be the number of Copies, the less chance is there of its being entirely lost.

An envelope that had belonged to Eliza's husband James, 8th Lord Chandos (1642-1714), painted in watercolour.

The envelope is pasted into the beginning of the album, and is captioned by Colvile, signing himself, as he regularly does in his annotations, with a neat monogrammed FLC.



One of the Envelopes. from
the embroidered Porte feuille of my
Ancestor, James, Lord Chandos, given
to me from thence, when a boy, by my G^{mo}the
The Hon^{ble} Mrs Leigh. He was Ambassador at
the Porte in 1680. & d. 1714. The P. F. is
now in the Museum at Stoneleigh Ab^y
but the many Envelopes, I recollect
in it, are all gone. (F.L.)

