



# Living Letters

Correspondence then and now

## Beginnings and education

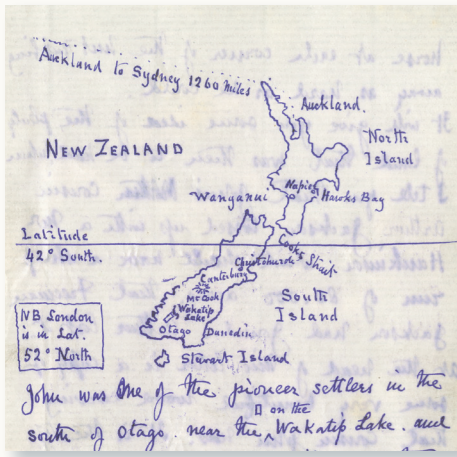
Letters describe the course of individual lives. We can read about new births announced to family and friends, and learn about the children's progress as they grow up.

Mary Howitt's *Picture Book for the Young* shows that by the nineteenth century (and undoubtedly much earlier) letter writing played an important part in children's upbringing. As surviving letters by children reveal, to make their letters as neat as possible, they were encouraged to draw ruled lines on the page and to write on these. Lucy Aikin's *Juvenile Correspondence* hints that not all children may have enjoyed doing this. She encouraged them to see writing 'pretty letters' not as a chore but as a 'delightful employment' and provided examples that 'children of both sexes' could model their own letters on. A letter from Lady Anna Maria Pelham-Clinton to 'My dear Papa and Mama' (the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle) shows how such lessons could be put into practice. However, its neatness is counterbalanced by letters from her governess, Mrs Forbes, reporting the child's bad behaviour to her mother.

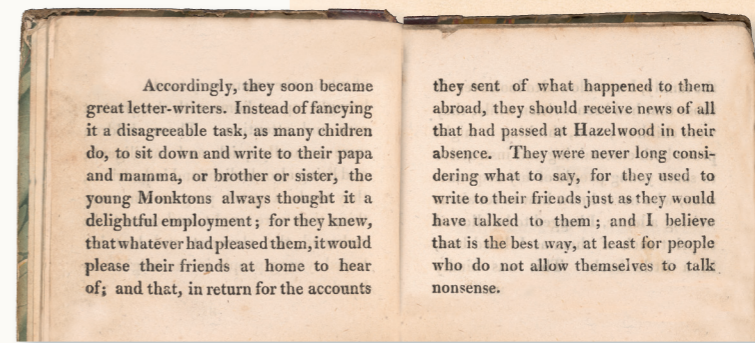
Correspondence illuminates relationships between parents and their growing offspring in other ways. Edward Wrench's letters to his children are filled with hundreds of illustrations aimed at instructing or amusing them, something that must have been particularly welcome when they were away at school. Wrench used a cyclostyle machine to make duplicates of each letter – something echoed in the modern fashion for round-robin letters sent to multiple recipients at the end of each year.



↑ 'Arthur writing his letter', from Mary Howitt, *The picture book for the young; with twenty illustrations by E. Morin* (London, 1855?). East Midlands Special Collection Not 1.W8 HOW/ MY.E55



↑ Cyclostyled letter from Dr Edward Wrench to his children, March 1880. Wrench Collection, Wr C 3040/10/2



↑ Detail from Lucy Aikin, *Juvenile correspondence, or, Letters : designed as examples of the epistolary style, for children of both sexes* (2nd edition, London, 1816). Briggs Collection LT210.PE/A4

→ Letter from A.M. Pelham-Clinton to her parents, 19 May 1818. Newcastle Collection, Ne C 5540

→ Detail from letter from Mrs Forbes (governess), Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire, to Georgiana Elizabeth, 4th Duchess of Newcastle under Lyne, 26 April 1819. Newcastle Collection, Ne C 5551  
 "The Gloves, Basket and Handkerchief were thrown on the ground & next went the Bonnet & Cap, the two latter I succeeded in getting on and then said we would return for Mrs Humphries but when we were near the Conservatory the Naughty little Girl sat down determining to go no farther"

