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Blogs - 2014 - February

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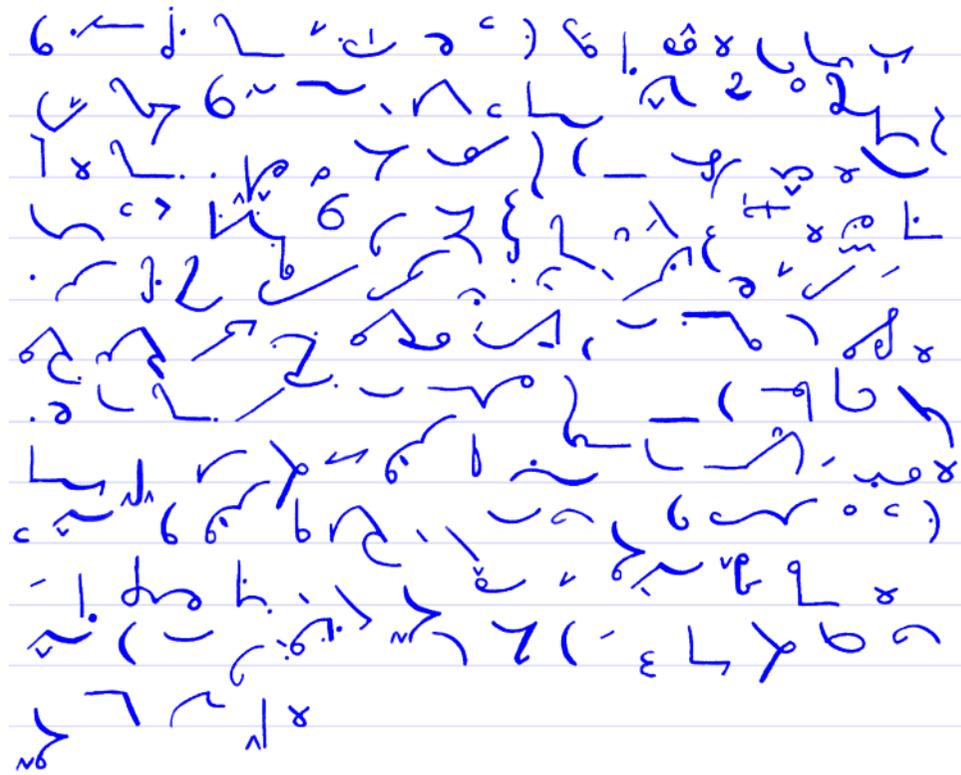
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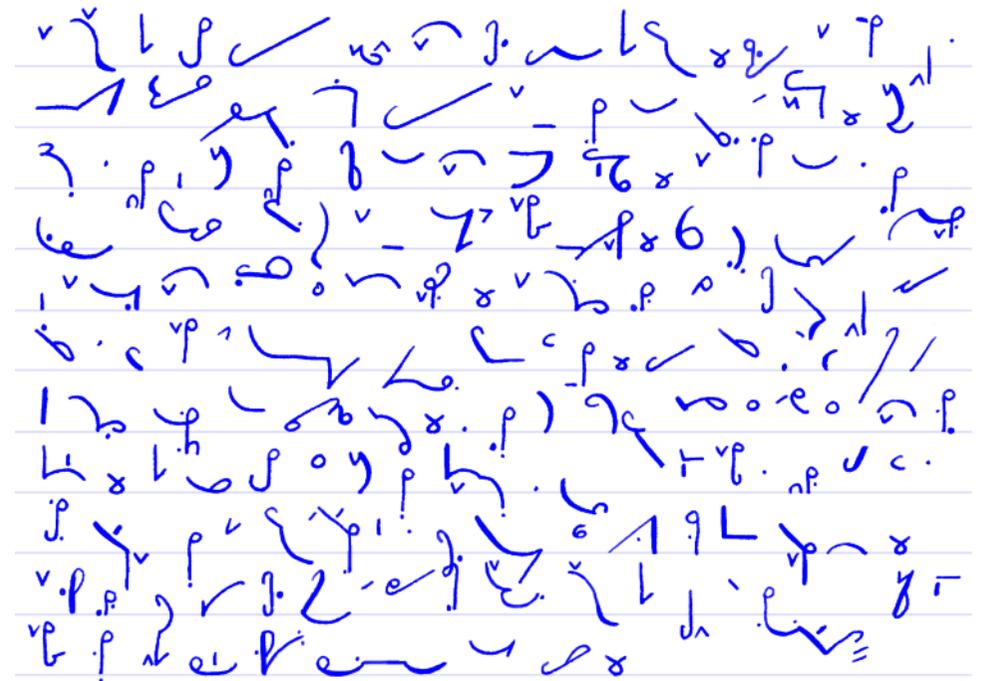
Stay And Sit

This article contains practice on the commoner words with S plus T sounds. Even if you know the theory perfectly, this is not going to help when taking live shorthand, as there is no time to think of it. Practising the outlines is the only answer so that they come instantly to mind. Being familiar with all the derivatives as well will ensure that they do not trip you up when they occur. Let's* take a little train journey where we will meet a lot of related words on the way, and hopefully you will be able to record the imaginary happenings en route without any gaps or hesitations. The words for practising are in capitals, so that you can give them extra attention before

taking down the whole passage – slowly at first* aiming for accuracy and neatness. When writing this slowly, it is helpful to put in more vowels than normal, as with S and T it is sometimes tempting to put the vowel sign on the wrong side of the stroke. Writing them in will consolidate your knowledge of them and when you take the passage faster, more vowels can be left out.

* Wavy underline to show it is the apostrophied version

* Omission phrase "at (fir)st



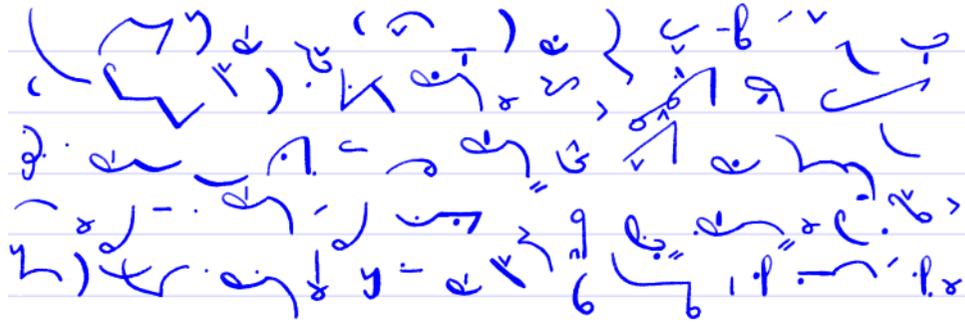
Stay And Sit

I arrived at the STATION where I found my train waiting at the platform. STRAIGHTAWAY I SOUGHT out a carriage that was reasonably empty where I could* SIT in peace and quiet. I was not wearing a SUIT but I was SUITABLY dressed in my casual clothes. I SAT in a SEAT facing forwards, so that I could enjoy the SIGHT of the countryside. This is easy if you are long-SIGHTED but I needed my glasses as I am short-SIGHTED. I remained SEATED as the train pulled out and we passed a building SITE and the factory chimneys black with SOOT. We passed the old church which had remained IN SITU for hundreds of years. The SEATING was very comfortable, almost as soft as my SETTEE at home. At the next STATION, as I was SITTING admiring the view, I caught SIGHT

of a SUITED gentleman*, with a SATIN bow tie, SITTING on the platform opposite on a three-SEATER bench, with his red SETTER dog beside him. I STAYED SEATED throughout the whole train journey and as we finally arrived at the town of SITTINGBOURNE I just caught SIGHT of the SETTING sun STEADILY sinking in the west.

* "I could" is not phrased, to prevent misreading as "I can". It is safe to phrase "I could not" as that is different from "I cannot"

* "gentleman" above the line, "gentlemen" on the line, following the second vowel in order to distinguish



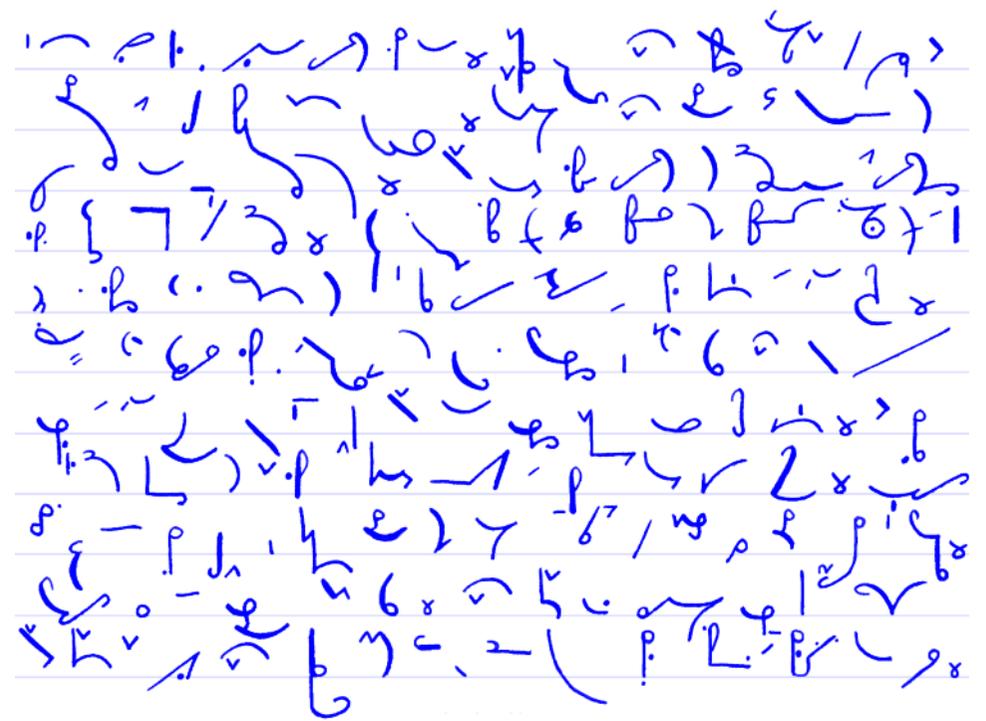
Stay And Sit

After lunch I was STUNNED to find that my coat was STAINED, especially the white STUDS, and I should have known that blackberry pie was a terrible STAINER. I went to the household STORE where the assistant, a STUNNING young lady called Miss STONER, found the right STAIN remover for me. She is quite a STUNNER

and she is engaged to her SUITOR STEVEN STONEHAM. However, the price of the item was unfortunately* a STINGER! I did not act STUNNED by these facts, but STAYED calm and STEADY.

* "unfortunately" Optional contraction

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



Stay And Sit

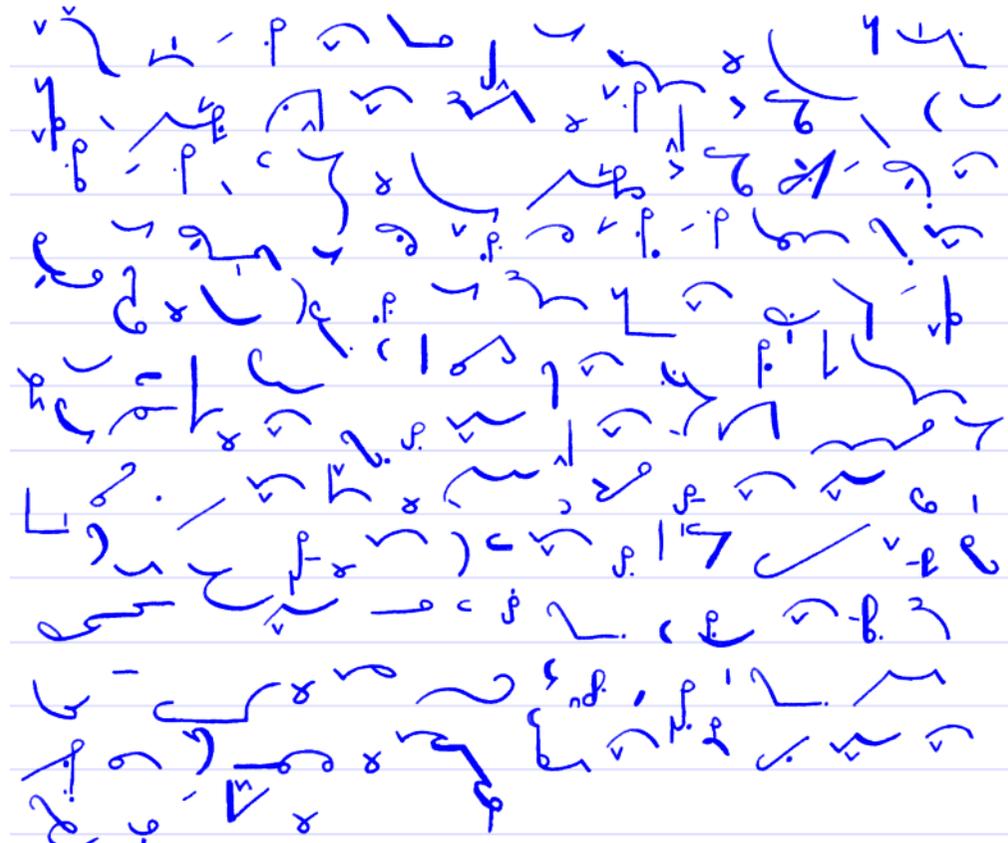
On my last day, the rainy weather SET in. I decided to view my bank STATEMENTS online, which listed all the STANDING orders* and the general STATE of affairs of my finances*. Fortunately my STANDING with the bank was STILL in good order. By now the STATE of the weather was worsening, and the weatherman STATED that it would get much worse. They had compared the STATS (that is, the STATISTICS or the STATISTICAL analysis) and had issued a STATEMENT that a STORM was on its way and that we should STAY at home and not travel. STAN thought this was STATING the obvious, or even an OVERSTATEMENT, but I thought this might be rather UNDERSTATED, and, not wishing to be caught out by any UNDERSTATEMENT, I took the next train

home. All the SEATS were taken so I STAYED at the end of the carriage and STOOD for the whole journey. No-one STANDS when they can SIT down, but at the time STANDING was the only choice, which I UNDERSTAND is the STANDARD SITUATION on Fridays. Everyone is quite UNDERSTANDING about this. My tired feet certainly UNDERSTOOD it very well by the time I reached my destination, and I was glad to walk after STAYING STATIC and STATIONARY for hours.

* Omission phrase "stand(ing) orders"

* "finances" Dictionary outline. Writing it above the line to follow the alternative "fye-" pronunciation would make it too similar to "findings"

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



Stay And Sit

I arrived home and SET my bags down in the bedroom. After I had unpacked, I decided to REINSTATE the layout of my wardrobe. I SET out all the clothes, put them in SETS and SET to with enthusiasm. After the REINSTATEMENT of the clothes STORAGE and STORING my souvenirs in the STORE cupboard under the STAIRS, I SEATED myself on the SETTEE and SAT for some time remembering all my travels. Being so comfortably SEATED in the warm, I took my STENO pad and decided to SET out* in great detail everything that had happened during my eventful STAY at the farm over the last week. My brief STINT of writing out my holiday memories only took half an hour of my time. Longhand would

always STUNT my writing efforts but they are now no longer STUNTED. I am so glad of my STINT at college where I STUDIED the subject of STENOGRAPHIC writing, because with CONSTANT practising, without STINTING, my STUDIES were finished quite quickly. I must mention that the STUDENTS who STINTED on practising are now RESITTING some of their exams. I am glad to be able to STATE that it is now my STANDARD way of writing my personal notes and diary. (1266 words)

* "for some time" "set out" Halving to represent the T of "time" and "out"



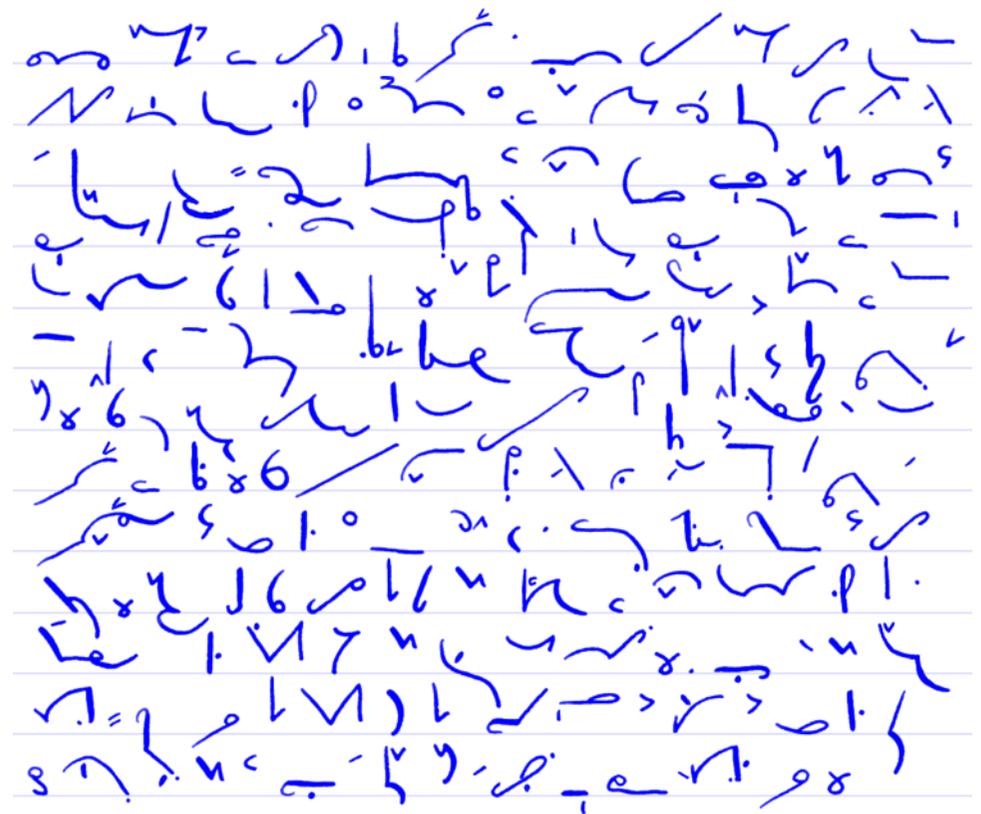


Winter Or Spring

21 February - Today has been a beautiful sunny* and mild day, with only a few clouds at intervals. It is far too early to be able to say that* spring has arrived, but the spring bulbs seem to think otherwise. On today's bus journey I enjoyed seeing the many displays of thickly planted crocus on the grass verges and municipal green spaces. They had all opened out in the sun making large yellow circles of blooms, dotted with a scattering of purple and white flowers. In southern England we have had very little really cold weather, and certainly no periods of frost, snow or freezing daytime weather. The only sub-zero temperatures seem to have occurred briefly at night. I would expect to see crocus at this time of year but the daffodils that are just starting to come out are at least* a

month ahead of their usual time. All our winter weather seems to have come in the form of* rain that has produced the devastating flooding of the rivers, breaking their* banks and filling the flood plains, many of which have been built on, and also causing damage to property through rising groundwater levels. It is not unusual for winter here to have long periods of quite dry weather, but this year the rain has been almost continuous since Christmas.

- * "sunny" Always insert the vowel in sun, sunny, snow, snowy, to distinguish
- * Omission phrases "to be able (to) s(ay) that" "in (the) form (of)"
- * "At least" "at last" Always insert the vowel
- * "breaking their" Doubling for "their"

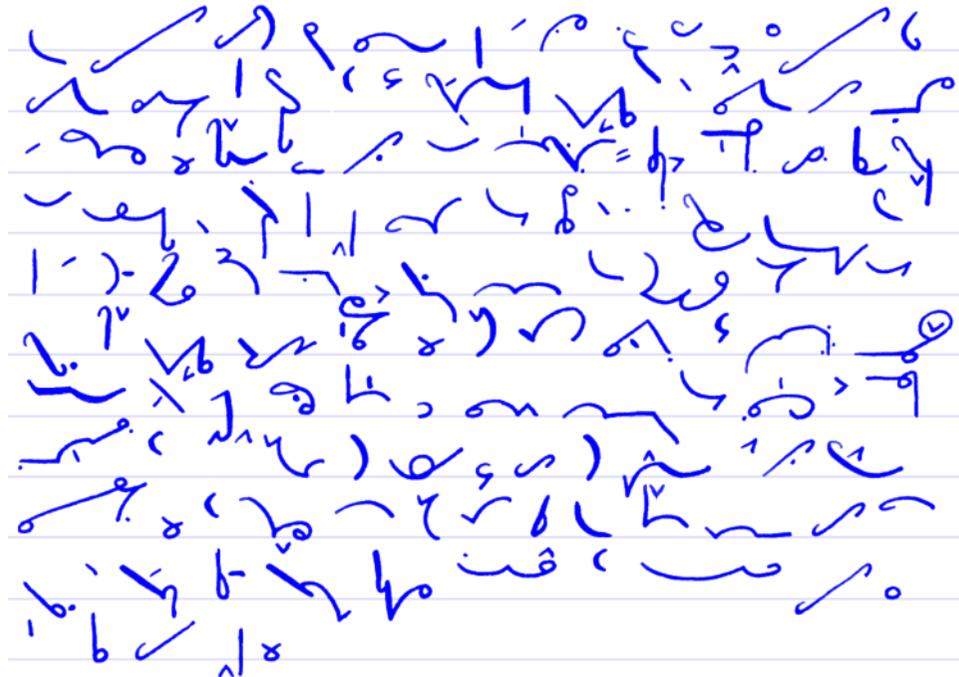


Winter Or Spring

Sometimes I enjoy the cold weather, but it is really a game where I only win if I can return home having stayed as warm as when I left the front door, well wrapped up and defying the finger-freezing temperatures with my thickest gloves. I do the same with the snow, which creates a more interesting battle, but if the snow or the cold go on for too long, then it becomes tedious. I start looking forward to the time when I can go out without quite so much defensive clothing and stride out without the danger of slipping on the ice. This year I feel that* we have not had any winter at all, due to the absence of any really cold

days. This is rather like staying up late, not getting much sleep and realising that the next day has come around without a clear and definite break with the one before. I have only done this once, at the age of about twelve, when my family stayed at a Boxing Day party until about four in the morning. The gain of about five eye-lid drooping hours at the party was at the greater cost of the whole of the next day, which was spent moping about with grey and tired eyes, and wasting good school holiday hours.

- * Omission phrase "I fee(l) that"



Winter Or Spring

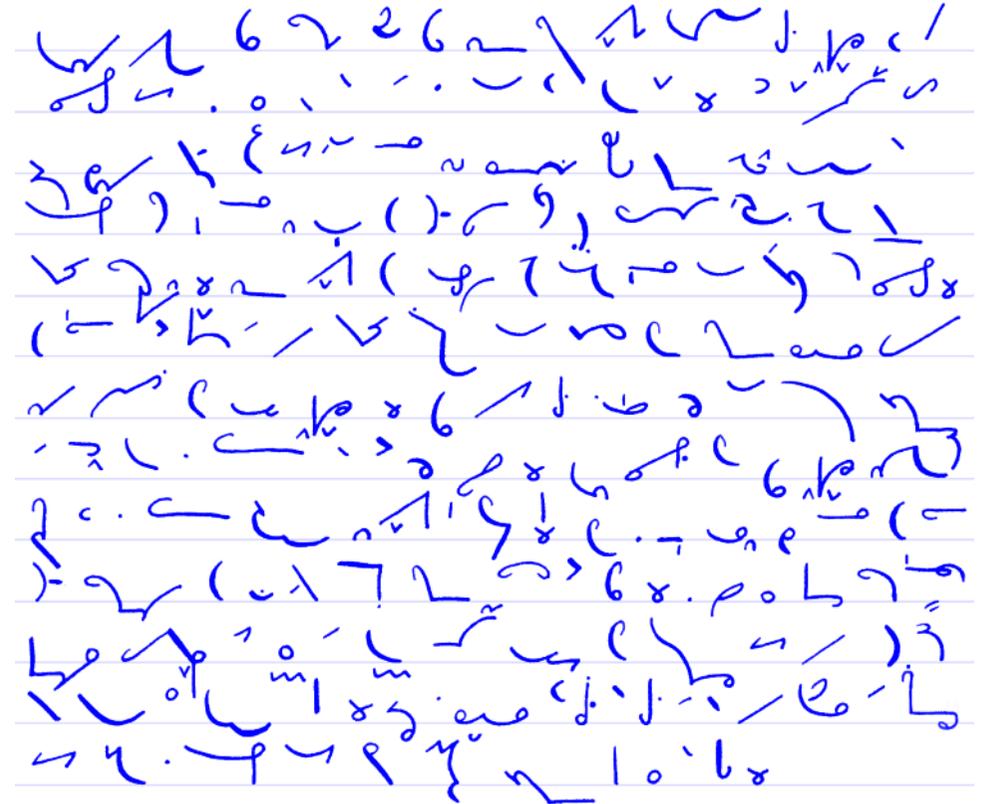
If winter weather has to be something different and less comfortable in order to* count as winter, then we have certainly had plenty of that with the prolonged periods of heavy rain, gales and storms. Driving cold rain in umbrella-destroying gusty winds does not provide any incentive to "battle it out" merely for the satisfaction of a personal victory over it, and so journeys were kept to the bare minimum, for essentials only, in the brief* dry periods between the squalls. I was also hoping that the limited exercise of going up and down the stairs at home would somehow make

up for the consumption of the extra calories that I felt was necessary when the wind was howling and the rain blowing horizontally. That reminds me, I think I will just have time to make one more piece of buttered toast before the daffodils announce that, in their opinion, winter is on its way out. (599 words)

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

* "brief" Always insert the vowel, to avoid being misread as "number of"

Four horizontal lines for writing practice.



Boring Shorthand

If you are reading this from the shorthand, then you can probably write the following ten outlines without much hesitation:

THE IS TO OF AND A IN THAT HAVE I.

What I really want to hear is that you are bored with them - not because you have skimmed the instruction book and found nothing of interest there, but because you know them so well that they are easy, normal, ordinary and have become "part of the furniture". You can write them instantly and they never cause any bother or hesitation. They occur all the time, and are part of the padding in almost every practice sentence where you are learning other new outlines. These are the ten commonest words, in order of frequency, and account for a quarter* of all the words used. If you hesitate over these outlines, you will have trouble with a quarter of everything you

write, on average! However, the good news is that, because they occur so frequently, they end up getting practised more than all the others. The list is taken from Oxford Dictionaries website, and the "is" and "have" actually include the other forms - are, was, were, be, being, has, having, had. Here is a sentence that contains all ten, and all are short forms and contractions:

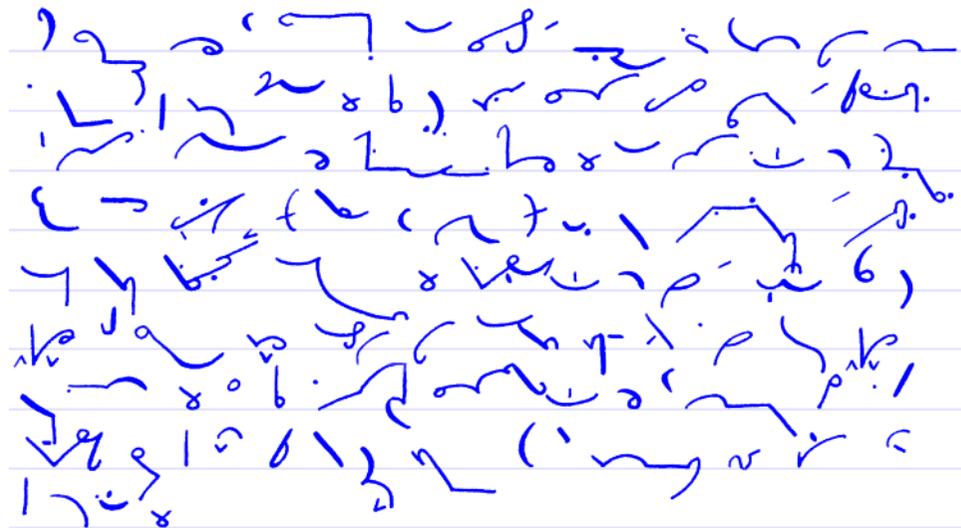
"I have an interest in the subject and I think that to practise it is of advantage."

* "quarter" Optional contraction

www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/the-oc-facts-about-the-language

PDF downloads of common word shorthand lists at

www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/vocabulary-word-lists.htm

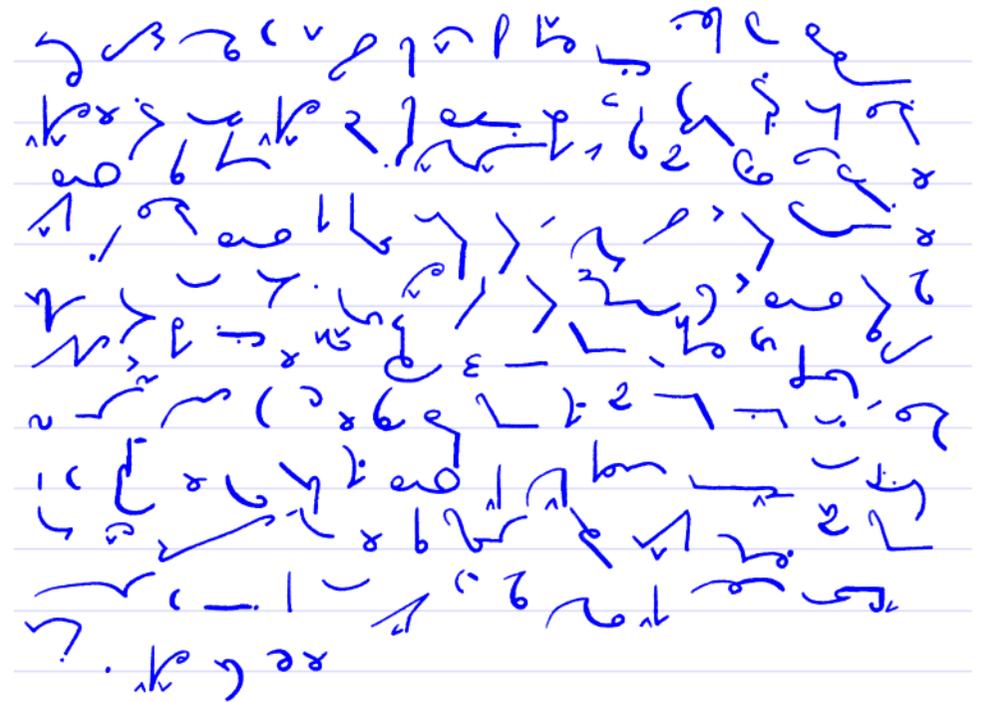


Boring Shorthand

Their frequency means that correcting any hesitation and gaining complete familiarity will make a big difference to your shorthand writing. It is easy to let the small ones slip and just concentrate on learning longer words and technical terms. Any little common-word escapees that have gone AWOL (Absent Without Leave) need to be recaptured and retrained into better

behaviour in future. Perusing the common word list and noting those whose outlines do not spring to mind instantly will enable you to draw up a list for your outline boot camp. As it is a relatively small number of common words that make up such a large percentage of speech, it might just be easier to practise them all to make sure you have the whole lot at your command.

Blank lined paper for notes.



Boring Shorthand

Here is one of the methods that I used during my study times, to gain mastery over specific outlines. Completely new outlines would be drilled singly to start with, but then they would be planted into simple sentences which is much more* lifelike and the shorthand flows more comfortably. Write each sample sentence at the top of the notepad page and leave the rest of the page blank. To drill, fill in only a few lines on each page, working through all the sentence pages, and then return to the start again. I find that it is only* when you come back to items that you discover whether you have actually learned them or not*. This is not speed practice, so the shorthand can be kept neat and smooth,

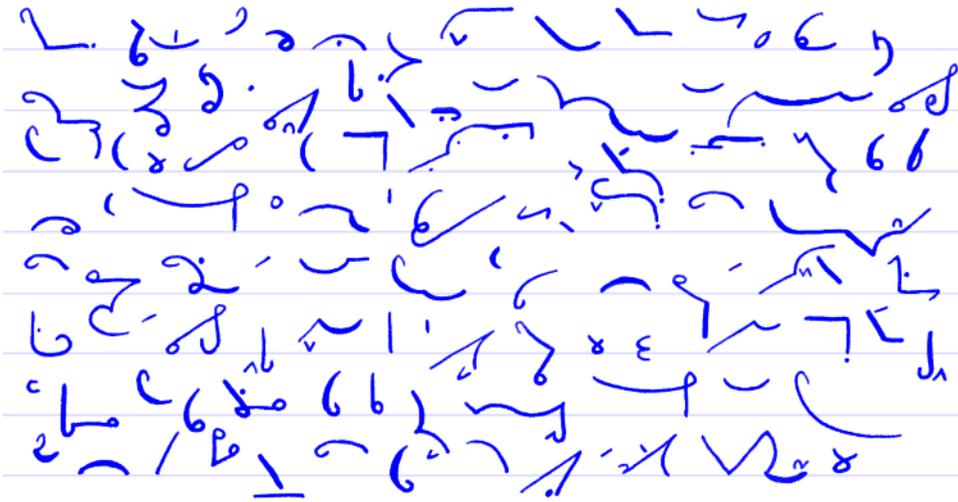
but without dawdling. Even better, say the sentences out loud at the same time, to counteract any tendency for the mind to wander off. It is perfectly possible to write reams of shorthand practice material without giving it any real thought and this leaves out the most important ingredient of matching the outlines to their words.

* Omission phrase "much mo(re)"

* "that it is only" On its own, "only" is written with full N and L strokes

* "or not" Using N Hook and halving for "not"

Blank lined paper for notes.

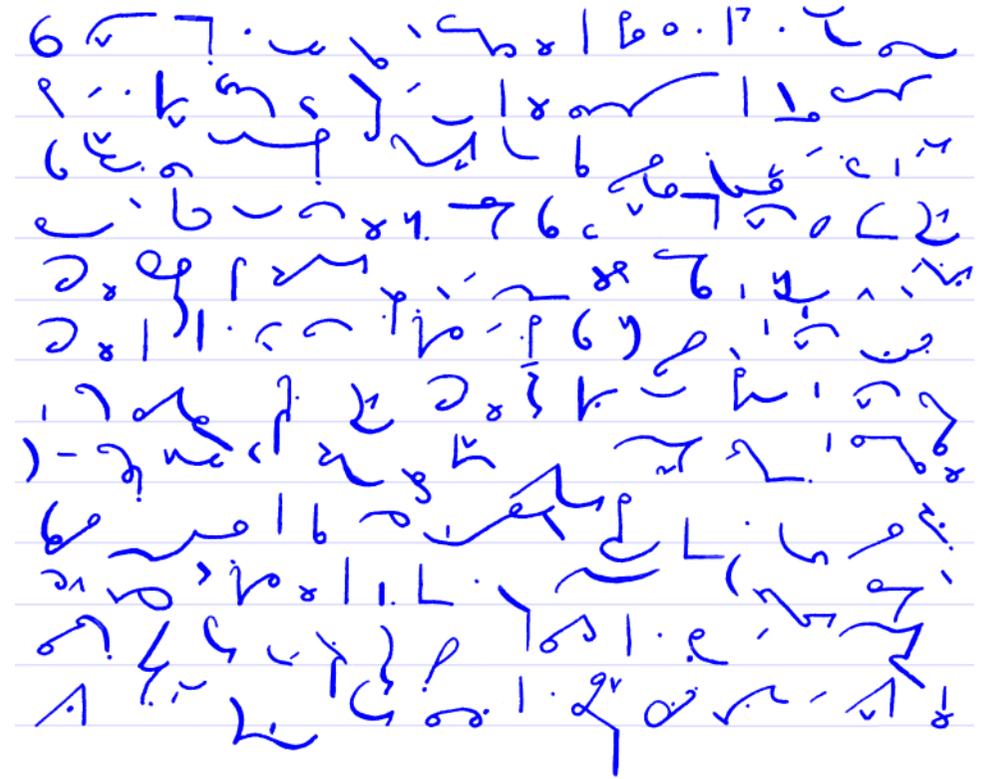


Boring Shorthand

Practising all these common short words may feel like being back in the first lesson, but their frequency ensures that there is a huge advantage to be gained in removing any lingering hesitations over them. Once they get relegated to the "boring" category, I hope that this just means that interest has moved on elsewhere - to acquiring more vocabulary, more skilful phrasing,

Blank lined paper for writing practice.

and in fact everything that will improve speed and reliability, and take the tension and hesitation out of writing it on real projects. When you are not getting bogged down with difficulties over these basics, then it is easier to maintain the interest in further shorthand improvement, which starts to become more within your reach and worth pursuing.

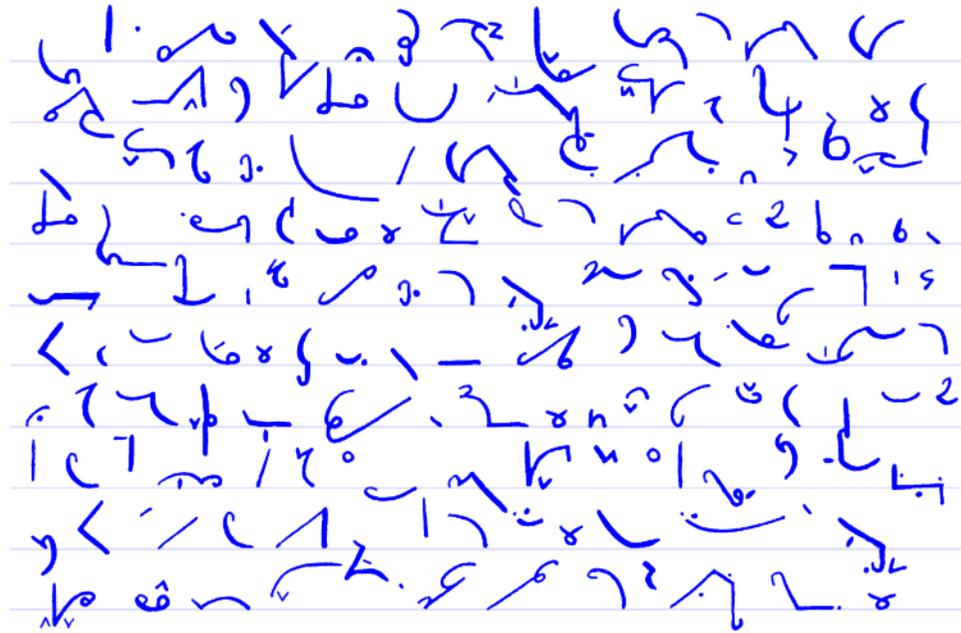


Boring Shorthand

This is like getting a new piece of equipment. It starts as a toy, a novelty, something special, and a delight that you were able to obtain and own it. Some time later it becomes normal, then finally somewhat uninteresting, appreciated for its usefulness, convenience and comfort, but not the centre of attention any more. I did exactly this when I got my first electric sewing machine. As soon as it was delivered, I wanted to set to and make all sorts of clothes, but I did not know how to operate the machine. It had a lot more controls and settings than I was used to on my ancient but very serviceable treadle sewing machine. Although the delay in starting on my projects was quite frustrating, I knew that I would have to spend time reading the manual and

practising on scraps. This was impatience at its most unreasonable, as it only took a few hours of playing around to master all the controls. It did take a bit longer, though, to perfect the skill of hovering gently over the foot pedal, so that the stitching happened at a safe and manageable rate, not zooming along the seams at a high speed, swerving* to left and right!

* "swerved" Special outline, see www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "served swerved server swerver"



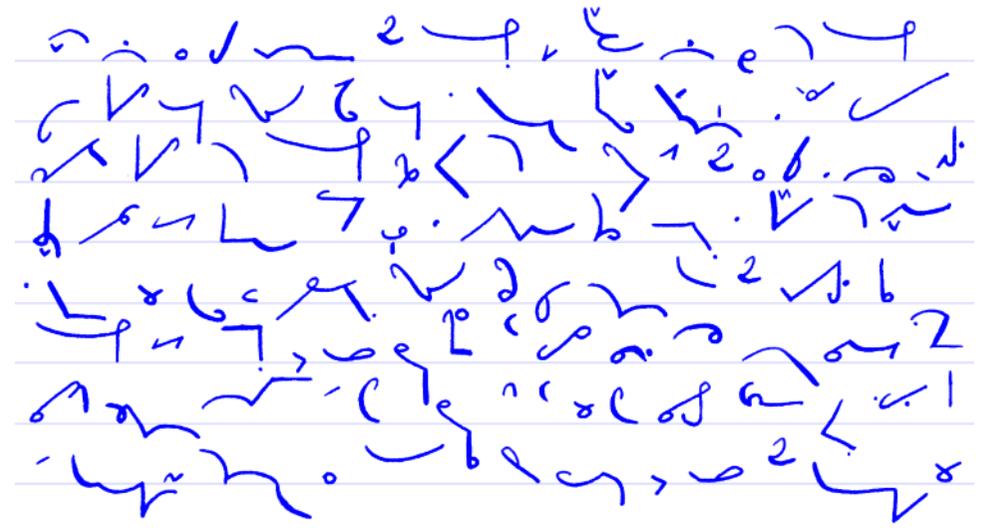
Boring Shorthand

If you had a servant, butler, maid, assistant, employee, adviser, volunteer or helper, they will hopefully carry out their tasks efficiently, unobtrusively, quietly and without drawing attention to themselves. They had to be "acquired" and then trained, after which they will be able to relieve you of the minor tasks so that you can concentrate on other things. Unlike staff or helpers, with shorthand it is you who has to undergo the training, but on the other hand*, once trained, your obedient shorthand-writing brain and hand will get on with the job without any fuss. They do not need to be given wages, they are never absent, unwilling or late, and they never

decide to go elsewhere to work. But you might well find them doodling in shorthand at every odd moment, which I think as owner you should be delighted about, as it proves that they are dedicated to their job and are ever ready to jump at your command. Being commander of obedient outlines sounds to me like a worthwhile* result from all that repetitive practising.

* Omission phrase "on the oth(er h)and"

* "wor(th)while" Optional contraction

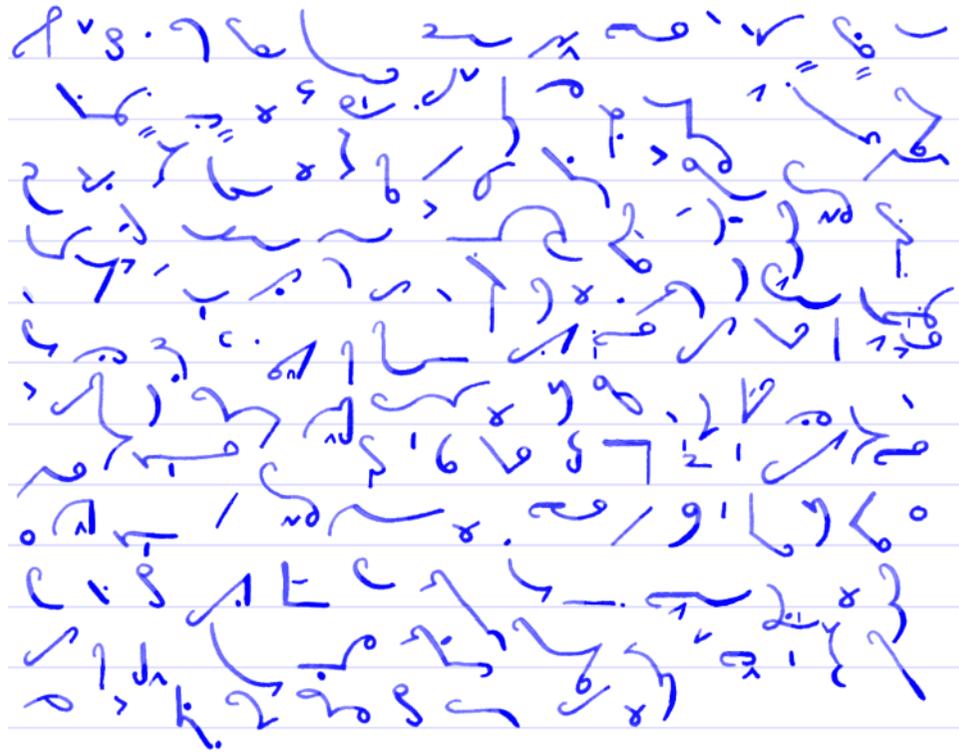


Boring Shorthand

My aim is generally to make shorthand interesting, but the final aim is that your interest will turn into proficiency, and then into a benevolent* type of boredom, the sort where you are able to turn your interest towards the job or project, and the shorthand is just the means to attain the desired result - taking college notes, a reporting assignment, keeping a diary or writing a book. Even when reasonably proficient, there is still room for shorthand

to retain its interest - getting to the next speed target that once seemed impossible, maybe hitting the magic 100 words per minute mark and other speeds beyond that. Every hesitation that you can chip away at and eventually remove is another step nearer to the next shorthand victory. (1182 words)

* "benevolent" Optional contraction

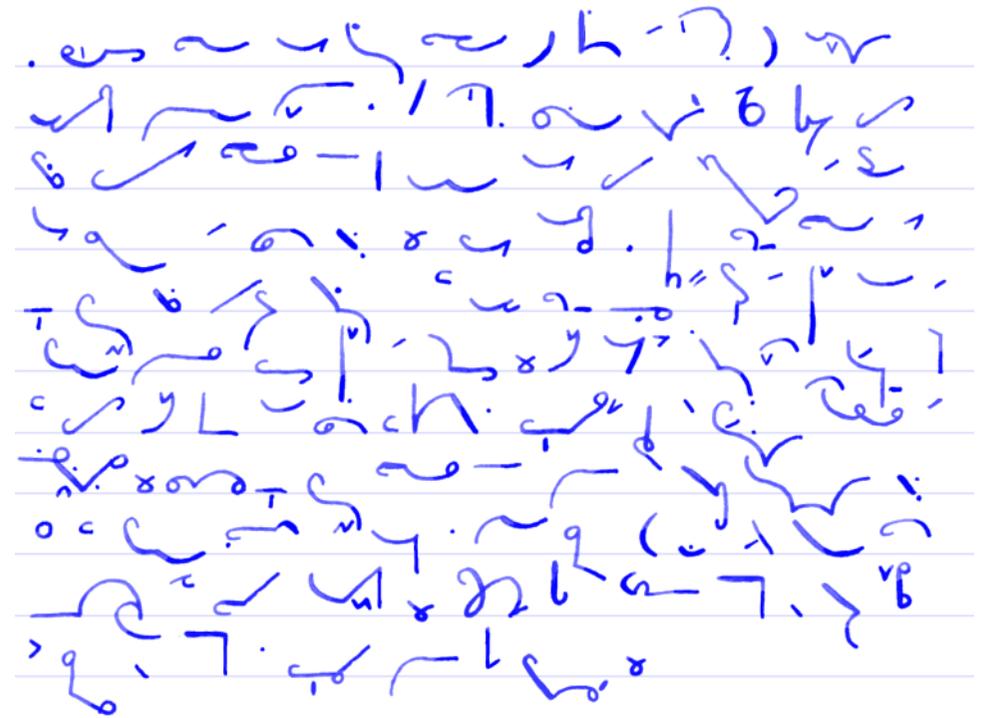


Afternoon At Hall Place

Yesterday I spent a very pleasant afternoon walking round the gardens of Hall Place in Bexley, Kent. With the sun shining, it was impossible to stay indoors and the computer projects would have to wait until the evening. Although the trees are still bare, all the spring flowers are now fully open, including many of the colourful shrubs, and so there was plenty to enjoy, and no rain or wind to battle through. The river was flowing vigorously over the main weir, with a huge tree trunk wedged across one part of it, and the noise of the waterfall was very much louder than normal. I was

surprised to see the turf maze full of rings of crocus flowers, planted on those parts that do not get walked on, where the grass is allowed to grow much longer. The gardeners are as usual on top of all their jobs, as every bed has been weeded, dug over and prepared for the coming growing season. There was one tree down, after the gales, and broken branches here and there* on the ground, but I think that probably most of the debris from the storms has been cleared away.

* Omission phrase "here (and) there"



Afternoon At Hall Place

The sunken garden in the far corner, usually damp and mossy, was entirely underwater, looking like a large muddy swimming pool, and this is definitely one place where the gardeners can do nothing in the way of preparation and planting* for the spring and summer bedding. Near the entrance, the Tudor* fruit garden and the cut flower beds are completely bare, with new fruit canes planted and tied in, and everything looks clean, tidy and organised. I shall enjoy comparing my photo of it with one I shall take in summer, when it will be a glorious display of floral magnificence and exuberance. Sometimes cut flower gardens can look better than formal bedding, as with everything crammed* into a long strip, they end up being more colourful and with

greater variety. There is also the advantage that you can get to both sides of the strips to get a closer look at the blooms.

* "planting" keep the P short, as "planning" could also make sense here

* This is also the outline for "tutor". The plurals of both do not use doubling, as the diphthong is no longer attached, but instead have stroke with R hook.

* Compare this with "cramped" which omits the lightly-sounded P and uses halved light M. The halved and thickened M stroke is always MD, and the Imp stroke is only halved when it has an R Hook.



Afternoon At Hall Place

The big greenhouse is a real delight, absolutely packed with tropical plants and with long benches on every side, full of pots of brilliant coloured plants and flowers. Many of them we know as small exotic houseplants but here they grow to their true size, becoming large shrubs and tall trees. In the centre is a long goldfish pond with a waterfall running into it. As all the top windows were open, a robin had come in and was singing loudly from various high perches, proclaiming his ownership of this

very luxurious and spacious accommodation, where I am sure he will be building his nest. With every sound reverberating around the glasshouse, his song was loud and piercing, and no doubt* the echoes of it that were escaping to the world outside did a good job of warning off other robins from entering his territory.

* "no doubt" Helpful to insert the vowel after the N. "Any doubt" would be above the line.



Afternoon At Hall Place

I was reminded of the robin that nested in my garden shed some years ago, with plenty of space and shelter, and one hundred per cent safety. This robin was obviously thinking along the same lines, but on a truly palatial* scale and with much better scenery - palms and banana trees, thick greenery for nesting in, an indoor water supply for drinking and bathing, and heating pipes under the staging to keep it all cosy on a chilly spring day. It almost makes me want to move in there as well! Unfortunately*, by mid-afternoon I had to

leave the agreeable surroundings in the greenhouse and make my way home, where I hope to see my own resident robin somewhere outside the kitchen window, waiting for a free meal of pellets or spare crumbs. (630 words)

* "palatial" Shel always goes up and Sher always goes down

* "unfortunately" Optional contraction