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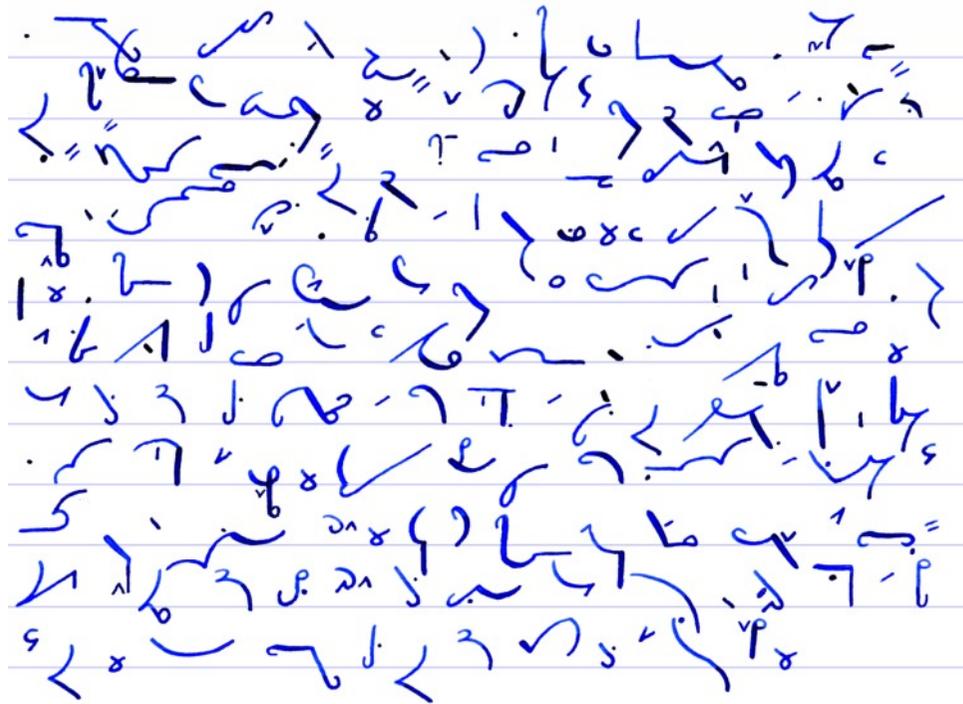
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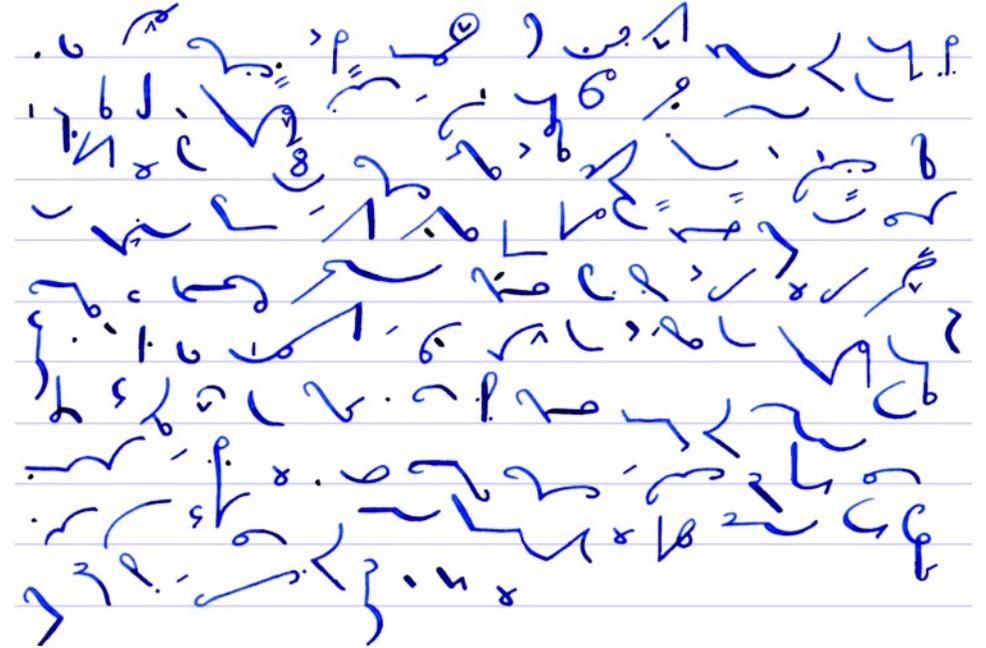


Sheep Drive

A couple of months ago we went up to London to see a traditional event taking place, the annual Great Sheep Drive over London Bridge. I imagined that the bridge would be closed and a whole herd of perfectly groomed sheep would be trotting across on cue*, surrounded by their shepherds, with crowds of onlookers lining the edges and at both ends. When we arrived, it was rather different. The traffic was still flowing over the bridge as normal, but on one side the path and the edge of the road had been closed off with railings to make two narrow routes across. In the pen

were ten well-behaved and very cuddly and woolly sheep, reasonably tidy but definitely a little muddy on the undersides. They were standing still, very calmly and patiently, with the occasional bout of milling around. They had their drink and food buckets nearby, and the green-shirted shepherds were stationed around the pen waiting for the order to open the gate and set off with the sheep. Another group of ten sheep were also penned on the far side.

* "cue" for signal or billiard stick, "queue" for a line of people



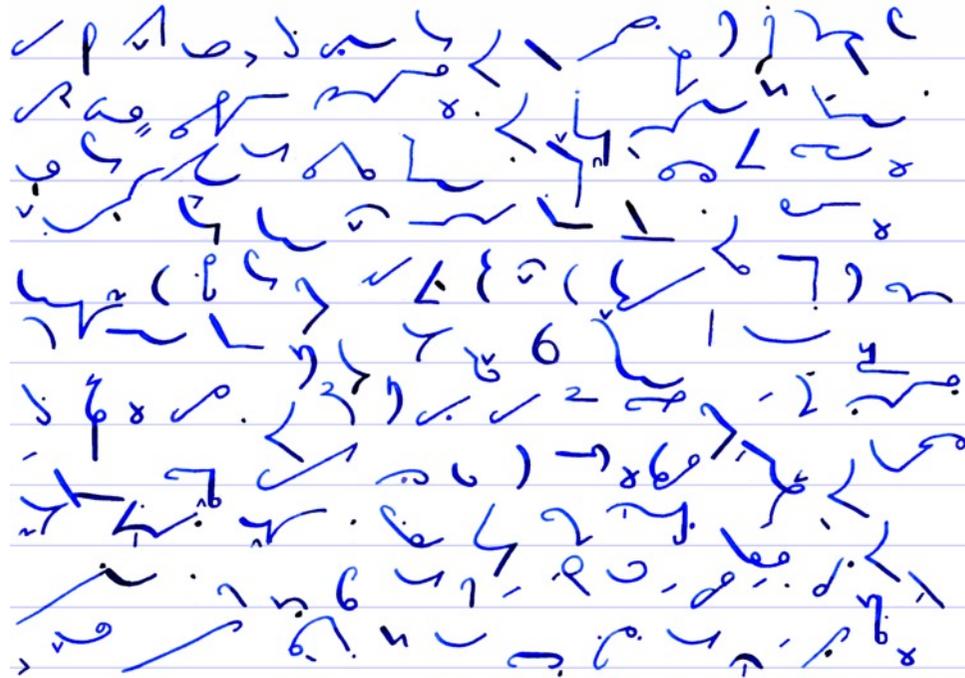
Sheep Drive

The event allows the Freeman of the City to exercise their ancient right to bring sheep into the city, but today it is done to publicise the lamb and wool industries, as well as raise money for charity. Over 800 Freeman and members of the Worshipful Company of Woolmen, dressed in billowing black and red robes, took turns to cross the bridge in small groups, with photographers recording their* progress every step of the way. We realised that it was an all-day event, unhurried and slow, to allow for all the stops for publicity photos, although it seemed that the shepherds might have

preferred a more steady progress, to keep the sheep moving along calmly and sedately. The next group of Freeman and Woolmen would be doing the same a little later, with the same sheep going back and forth*. Tourists walking along the other side of the bridge were stopping and wondering what it was all about.

* "recording their" Doubling to represent "their"

* Omission phrase "back (and) forth"



Sheep Drive

We stood right next to the pen, waiting for the sheep to be released to start their controlled ramble over one of London's historic landmarks*. The sheep continued milling about, poking a nose over the railing, in the hopes of taking a bite of someone's jacket corner. I narrowly avoided* having my camera bag become a sheep's snack. Eventually they set off over the bridge and we joked that they might think they were getting their freedom or going back to their field, only to find themselves arriving at another identical* pen on the other side*. Once the sheep were on their way, we walked across the bridge and saw the marquees and bigger crowds where the main event was gathered. This was obviously the sheep farmers' annual jamboree, undoubtedly a pleasant* change from the mundane business of

sheep rearing, an opportunity to meet others in the trade and swap information and stories, and a chance to dress up to the nines rather than slopping about in green wellies in the mud and rain.

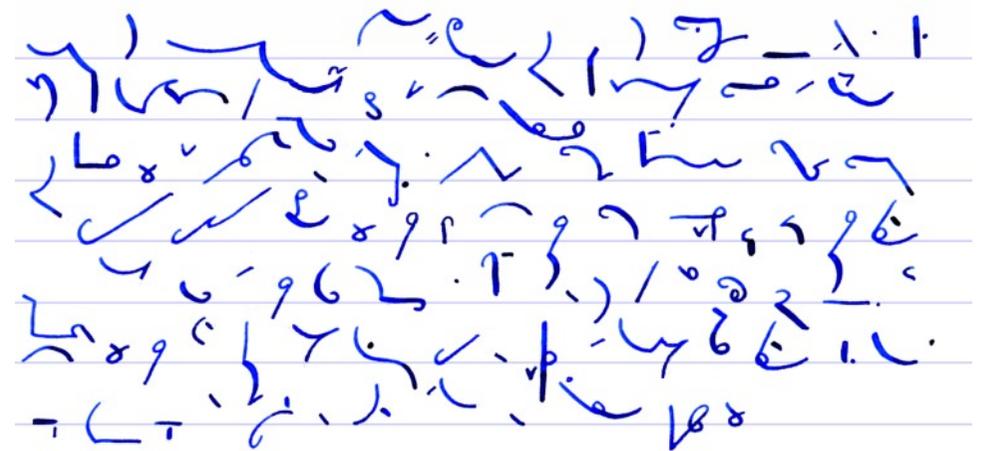
* "landmark" can also be written "land" with intersected M, but it is not a very clear outline due to the halving

* "avoided" "evaded" Vowels helpful as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "identical" is a contraction, therefore on the line

* Omission phrase "on the oth(er) side"

* "pleasant" Helpful to insert vowel, as



Sheep Drive

Nobody was interviewing the long-suffering sheep, who had so graciously given up a day of their valuable time*, which could have been spent on the important business of munching grass and avoiding* sheepdogs. I resolved to obtain a report from the dominant member of the group where we were standing. He told me he was very excited when he heard he was chosen to take part in the event, and he then organised a draw to see which of his

friends would be coming with him. He thought it was the only fair way to decide, and fortunately all those chosen did have a good thick coat of wool to show off to passing tourists.

* "valuable time" Halving to represent the T of "time"

* "avoiding" "evading" Vowels helpful as these are similar in outline and meaning



Sheep Drive

He went on to tell me that they had spent a lot of time bathing in the stream in their field and combing themselves as best they could on some thorny bushes. In the truck on the way up they all sang their favourite* songs, as one does on special day trips, and they planned to hold a get-together during the evening to tell all their friends about their interesting day in the big city. For some reason, not one reporter or photographer was able to get this story, being more interested in the ladies and gentlemen in their flamboyant* regalia, so I think you and I are quite privileged to be the first and probably only people to know the ovine (as opposed to human*) side of the story, much to the delight of the other rams, ewes* and lambs back home on the farm. (776 words)

* "favourite" Note that "favoured" uses normal Vr

* "flamboyant" Imp is only halved when hooked, see www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/theory-16-Imp-Imb.htm#halving

* "human" above the line following the second vowel, to differentiate from "humane"

* Singular "ewe" is also written with the stroke. The U diphthong short form is only used for the pronoun "you"



Christmas Nativities

The year is 1964 and Christmas is a few weeks* away. I was practising my fleeting role in the primary school Nativity play, as one of the host of angels appearing to the shepherds in the fields. The head angel had delivered the message of the birth of the Saviour in Bethlehem. We were waiting for our musical cue* to leave the stage and return to the place whence we came and this was Bach's* Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, which begins with several very dramatic chunks of sound with short pauses between, in the manner of an important announcement*. With each chunk, the backmost row of angels turned and rushed off the stage, and this was repeated until all four rows had gone. No doubt the loud organ music drowned out the sound of our clattering and thumping feet. A week before the big day, we angels

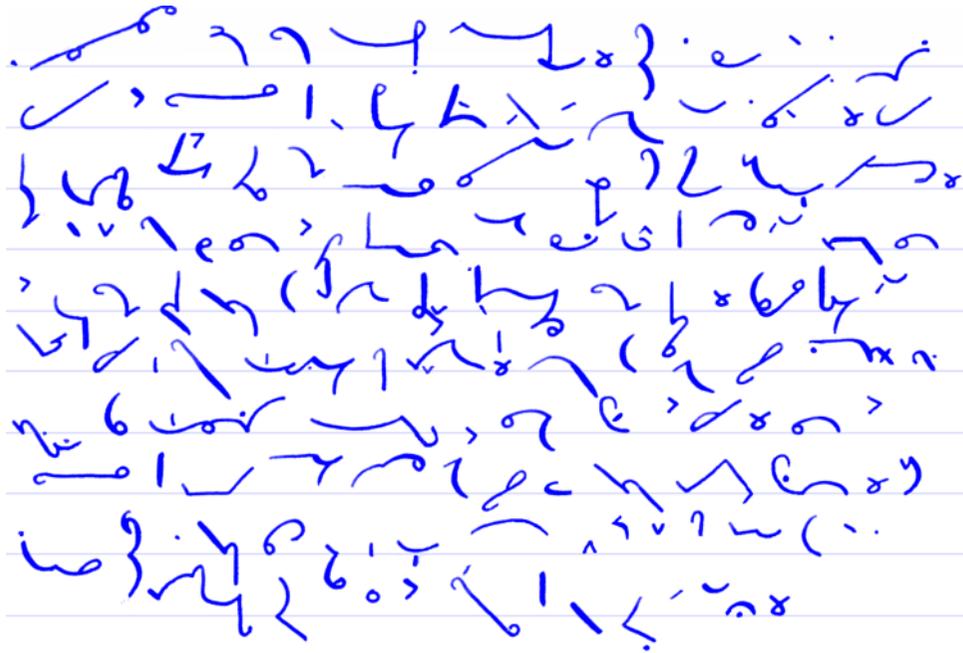
had a good time making our haloes. This was a crescent shaped piece of card that fitted over the top of the head, and we covered it by winding strips of gold paper round it, from one end to the other. Children often fuss over who is chosen to be Joseph and Mary, but I was very happy to wear the beautiful white robe and have a golden glow around my head.

* Omission phrase "few wee(k)s"

* "cue" for signal or billiard stick, "queue" for a line of people

* "Bach's" Little S sign through the stroke to signify the German guttural sound, similarly Scots words like "loch"

* Keep the last Nt short, so it does not look like Ing "announcing". The same applies to other words ending in "ment" that are using Nt instead of Mnt stroke



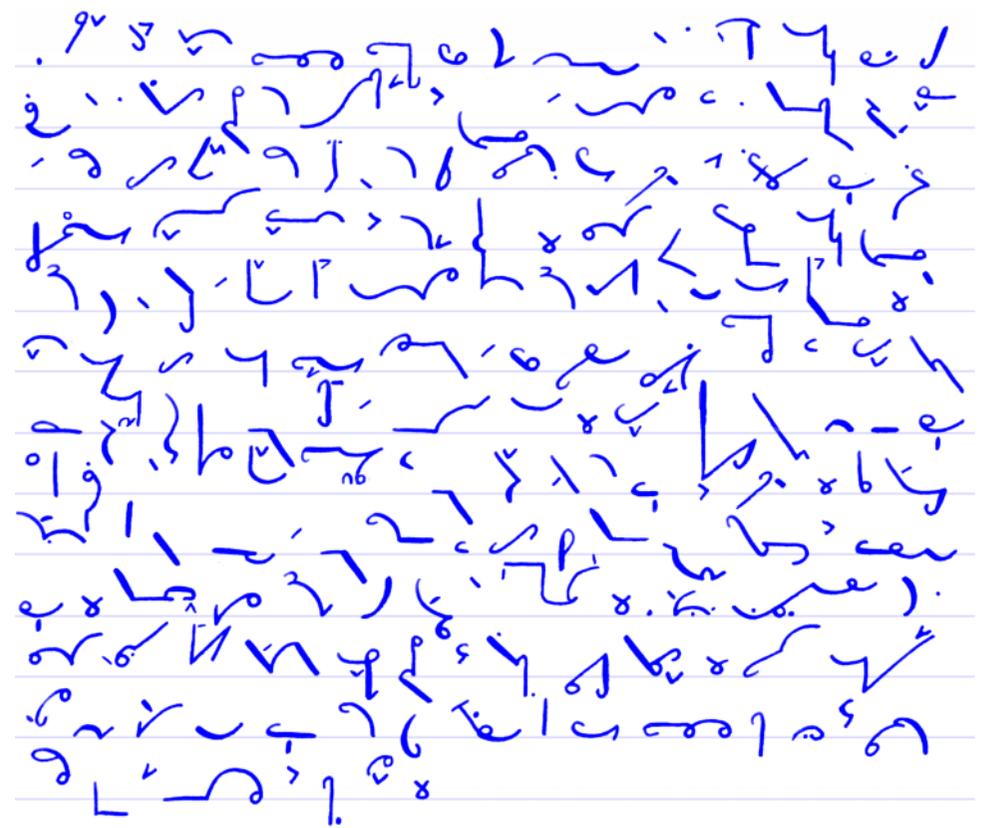
Christmas Nativities

The rehearsals* were very interesting and entertaining. There was a scene of a meal where all the characters had to suddenly jump up and leave in a hurry. Whether it was the villagers joining the shepherds or the kings hurrying to start their journey, I have no recollection. All I remember is that some of the children taking part in that scene found it impossible not to grab some of the food from the table before they left, despite the admonishments from the teachers. This was definitely not part of the story but probably unwittingly true to life! Maybe they should have used cardboard bread to prevent this unseemly interruption to the smooth flow of the story. Some of

the characters had to carry candle lamps and they used gold paper to represent the flame. I was convinced that there was a better solution to this, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not think of an alternative*, especially as all the props had to be cheap and hand made.

* Four unavoidable upstrokes, therefore write it sloping very shallowly

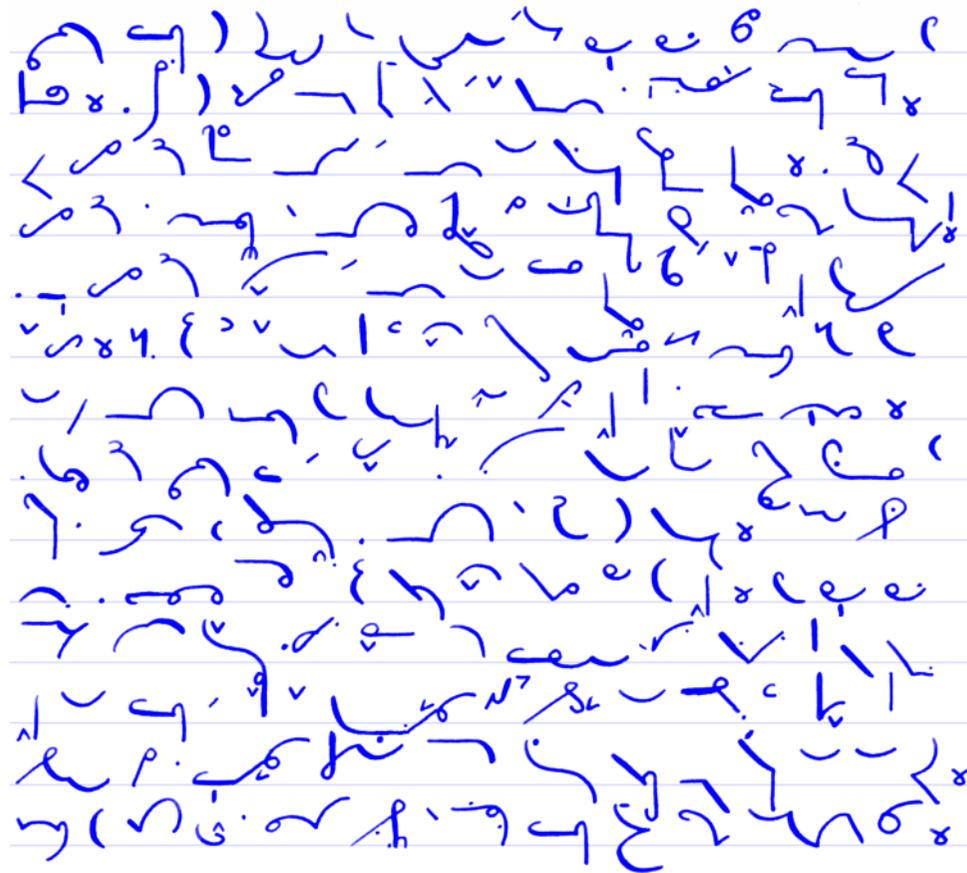
* "alternative" can also be written as an intersection using the Tr stroke, for common phrases such as "there is no (al)ter(native)". This should not be used for "alternate".



Christmas Nativities

The high point of my Christmas creative efforts was the making of a model Nativity scene, generally consisting of a barn, stable or shelter, all the figures and animals, with a backdrop of blue sky and stars, one giant star attached to or just hovering over the roof, and the compulsory snow, completely disregarding the likely climate of the area at that time. Small cheap plastic Nativity figures were easy to obtain and tiny toy animals were already to hand in the toy box. All my ingenuity went into creating the landscape and buildings, using cereal cartons with white paper stuck to them so that the details could be drawn and

coloured in. White detergent powder made good snow as it consisted of tiny granules that could be piled up or glued to the roof. Its pungent aroma had to be ignored, and could be forgiven when one stood back to view the perfection of the glistening snow. Background hills were the usual folds of cotton wool. The ultimate enhancement was a small solitary torch bulb inside the stable with the battery hidden behind. Yellow interior walls made the whole thing glow from within and placing it near the Christmas tree meant that the silver stars took on the colours of the tree lights.

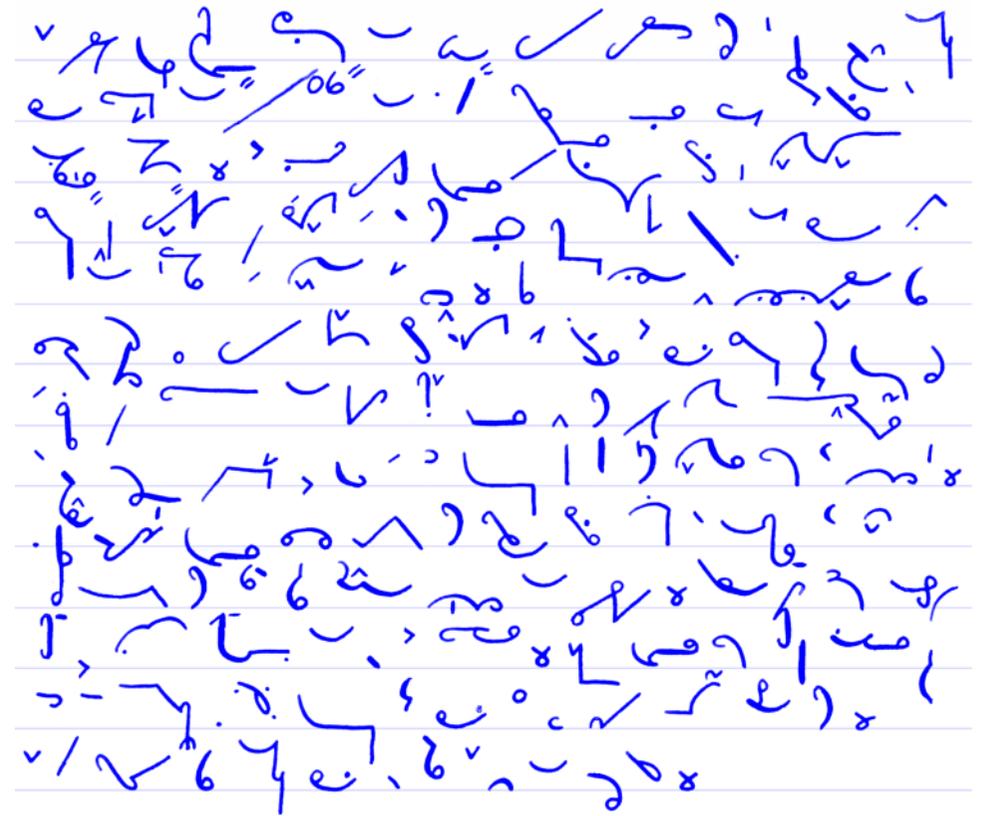


Christmas Nativities

Silver glitter was essential for finishing off the snow scene as well as making other decorations. The stash was always kept topped up, and I became a connoisseur of glitter quality. Cheap ones were dark coloured and came in bendy plastic tubes. The worst cheap ones were a mixture of colours, and despised as the unattractive sweepings from the factory! The good ones were lighter and came in glass tubes and those I sought out everywhere I went. I did with them what I now do with my printer inks - make sure I have several in each colour to cover every eventuality and not run out at a critical moment. The favourites were silver, gold and white, the latter being tiny pearlescent* flakes that brought a

shimmer without obscuring the colour of whatever was beneath. I could not resist improving the Christmas cards with them, before my parents sent them out. Every snow scene, candle, lamp, fireside, starry sky or glistening holly berry had to be picked out in glitter and I vicariously joined the recipient in gasping with delight at receiving such a gloriously dazzling card, far better than could be bought in any shop. I am sure they also found a small residue of excess glitter falling from the envelope as well.

* "pearlescent" Downward L in order to join the following stroke, like "lesson" and "coalescent"



Christmas Nativities

I recently visited Trafalgar Square in London where once again* there is on display the beautiful Nativity scene created in 2006*, in a large perspex case near the base of Nelson's Column. All the carved wooden figures are fairly plain but lifelike, spread out widely, each spotlighted, and all their gazes directed at the baby in the centre, wrapped in cloths and lying on the ground. It is amazing* how mesmerising this simple arrangement is, where time has been halted and the components of the scene separated, so that the viewer sees and considers each character in turn, trying to guess how their real-life counterparts of two thousand years ago reacted to the event and what effect it had on their lives from that moment on. The distance between the figures seems to represent their personal space, empty of intrusions that might interrupt their thoughts on this

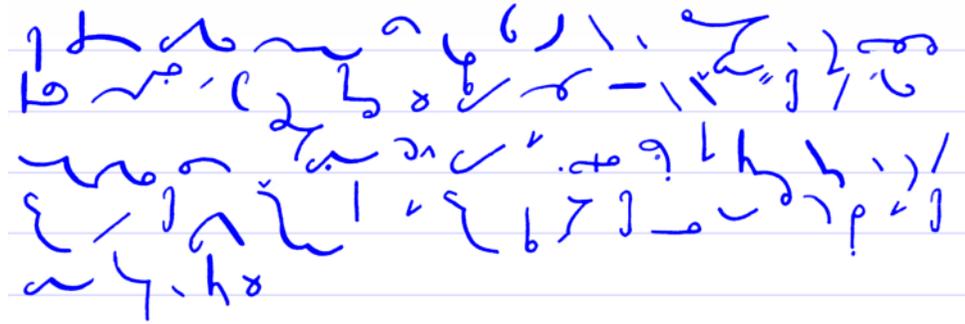
astounding* moment in history. Passing children were instantly drawn to the lamb and donkey in two of the corners. I took photographs from different angles but they cannot quite capture the arresting effect that the scene has when you are actually standing there. I much prefer this Nativity scene to all those I made in years past. (1025 words)

* Omission phrase "wu(n)s again"

* "2006" Long slash to represent the current century, arbitrary sign with no phonetic value

* "amazing" "amusing" Always insert the vowel

* "astounding" Helpful to insert the diphthong, as the optional contraction for "astonish" is similar



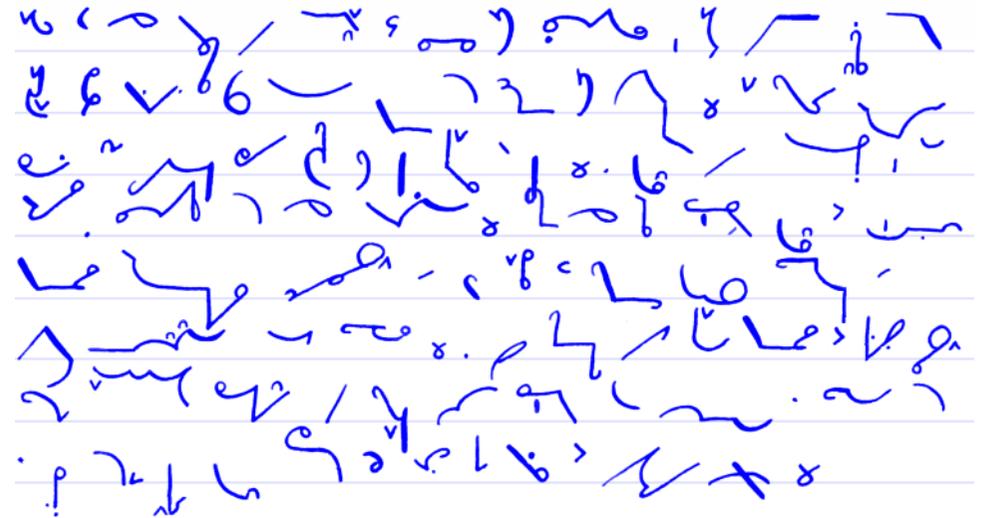
Mind The Gap

During December we have been making more visits than usual up to Central London*, to see the Christmas decorations, markets and other seasonal attractions. We mostly go up by train, which often involves some waiting around, whether on the concourse staring at the departures board to see which platform* our train will be arriving at, on the platform itself until the train comes in, or sitting on the train waiting for it to depart.

* "London" The L is written downwards to enable the hook and N to join, to form a shorter outline for a common place name. "linden" and "Landon" are written with upward L, stroke N, Dn, as per normal rules.

* "platform" Optional contraction

Blank lined paper for writing.



Mind The Gap

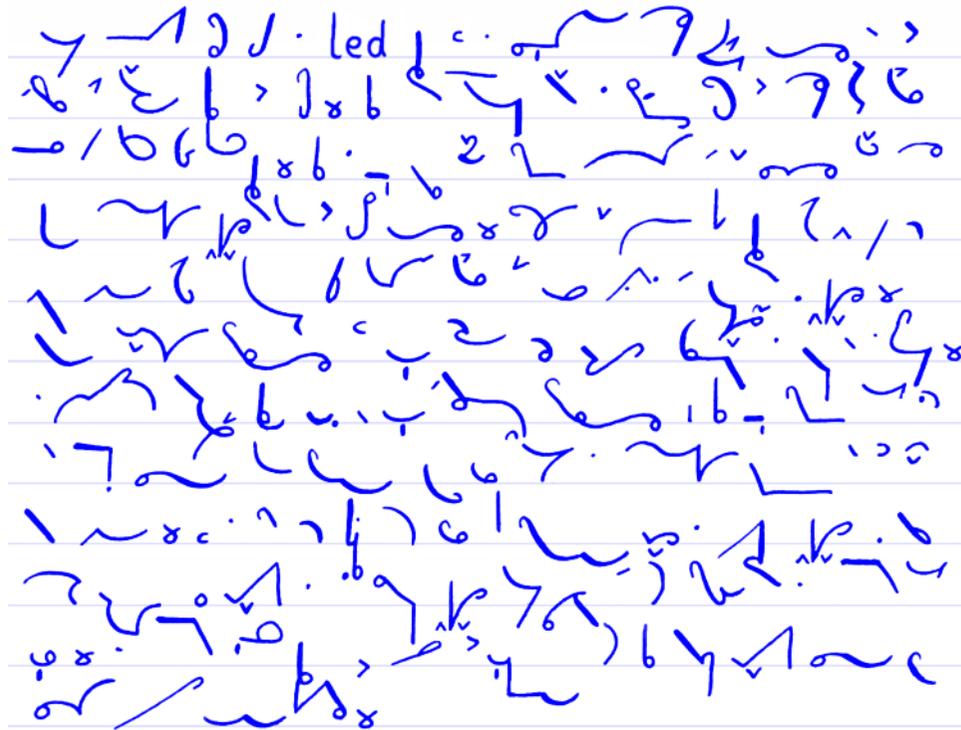
I find that most passengers are occupied with the screens of their smartphones* but I think the regular commuters can be identified as those who bury themselves in their book or work on their laptop. I prefer to follow the scene beyond the window as we travel through different types of district. The views are interesting but not always the smartest or most appealing. Most of it is close-up views of the unkempt back yards of factories, warehouses and building sites, with broken fences, graffiti and rubbish accumulating in the corners. The least attractive are the tiny backyards of the terraced houses from the 19th century,

which provide little scope for making a garden or a sitting* area out of the few square yards of land at the base of the railway embankment.

* "smartphones" The halved Ray is the "first up or down stroke", so as long as that is above the line, it does not matter where the F stroke comes

* "sitting" Keep the dot small if you choose to insert it, and an exaggerated large dot for "seating" as meanings are almost identical

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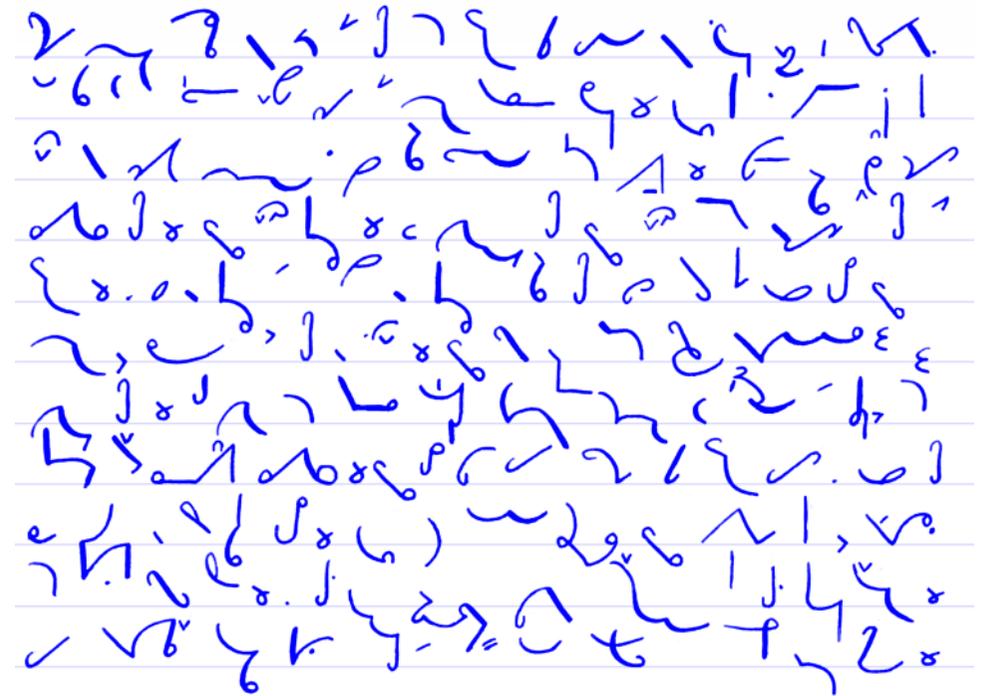
Mind The Gap

In each carriage there is generally an LED* display with a scrolling message showing the names of all the stops and the final destination of the train. It is accompanied by a spoken version of the message, although the voice goes much faster than the display. It is a good piece of shorthand practice material and I sometimes find myself doing mental outlines for all the station names. Firstly I look at the display and think how each word should be written, and then after that just follow the voice on the next repeat, and visualise the outlines. Being entirely place names with no ordinary words between, this can be a bit of a challenge. A learner obviously does not need to know obscure place names but it is good practice in the art of getting something for everything, even if it is* only

a mental picture of what might be written. When a particular word defeats your efforts at bringing to mind a readable outline, the best method to follow is to write a separate outline for each syllable, and so prevent a gap in the notes. A gap causes disturbance to the rest of the notetaking, so it is better to write something, however small, rather than nothing.

* "LED" Preferable to use lower case longhand for such abbreviations, unless it is pronounced as a word like "Nato"

* "if it is" Note that "if" can be halved or doubled for such phrases, whilst "for" does not, to help differentiate them

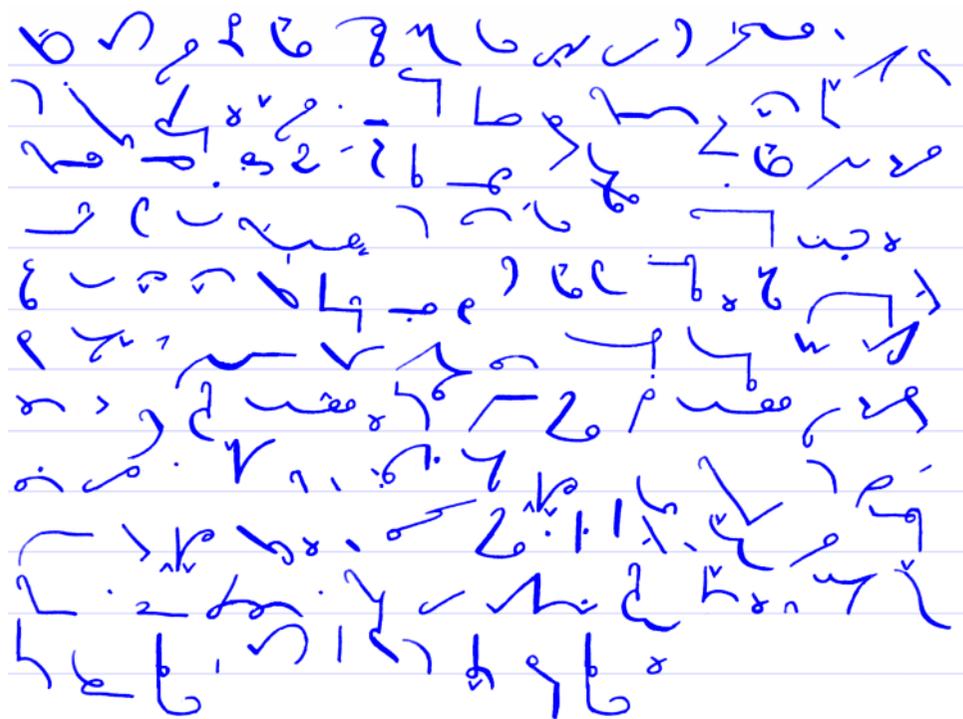


Mind The Gap

There are many other* messages to be heard on the train or platform, just waiting to be converted to shorthand, but preferably not those that occur whilst you are on the move, for the sake of safety. If you do a regular commute, it might be worth making a list of those occurring on your route. "Welcome to this south eastern service train. Please mind the doors. When leaving the train, please mind the gap between the train and the platform. The first two doors and last two doors of this train will not open at the next station, please move to the centre of the train to alight. Please remember to take all your

personal belongings with you when you leave the train. Do not leave your bags unattended, they may be removed without warning and destroyed or damaged by the security services. Please stand well away from the edge of platform one, the next train is not scheduled to stop at this station. If you see anything suspicious, please report it to the police or a member of staff. The ten fifteen to London Bridge will be arriving at ten twenty five. We apologise for this delay and any inconvenience caused to your journey."

* Omission phrase "many oth(er)"



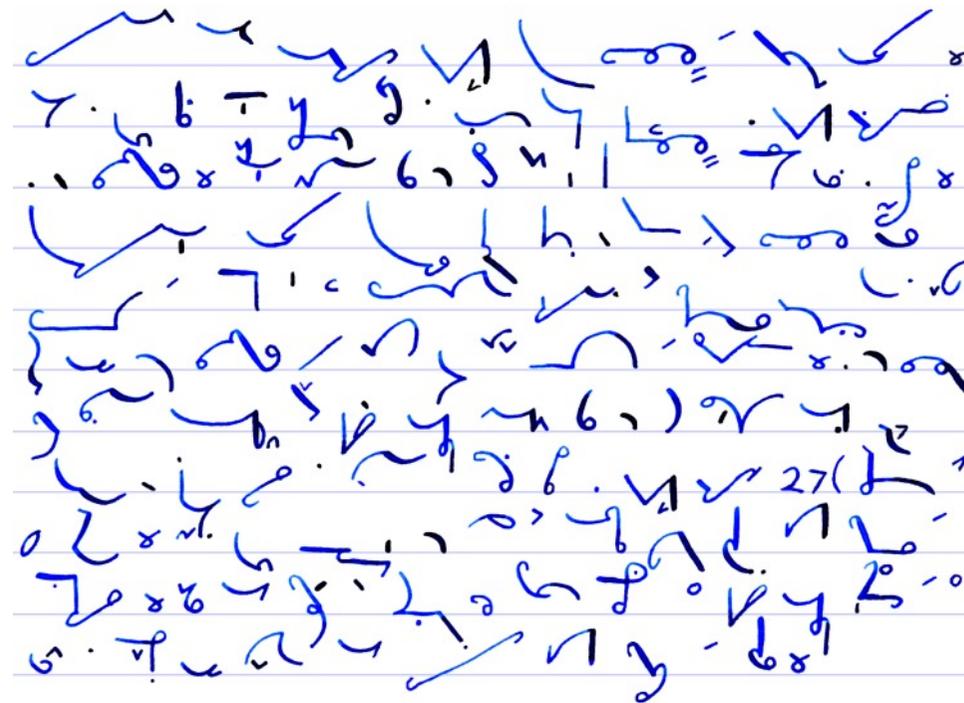
Mind The Gap

Buses also use standard voice messages, and I have often wondered whether they are recordings of real people or computer generated. I use a good quality text to speech programme to check my typed paragraphs against the scanned shorthand, and although it is excellent for this purpose, the voices are not always accurate either in pronunciation or, more often, correct intonation. With this in mind, my best educated guess is that they are voiceover actors. I then looked up the subject online and the link below reveals some interesting facts about the origin of some of the British travel announcements. On your regular journeys, such announcements will always be the same ones, an ideal opportunity to

consolidate knowledge of outlines, if you prepare your list and look up the outlines beforehand*. Two half-hour journeys a day add up to five hours of extra practice a week, which seems to me* a profitable way to redeem the travelling time. You not only arrive at your physical destination, but also at your desired speed destination. (796 words)

* "before(h)and" Optional contraction

* Omission phrase "which seems (to) me". Advisable to insert the vowel in "me" as there is a similar phrase "which seems important"



Twixmas

We are now in that in-between period after Christmas and before the New Year. Only a few days ago I discovered that there is a name for it, Twixmas, the period "betwixt" the two celebrations. I do not know how long this word has been about, but it exactly fits the situation. If there* were no New Year afterwards, it would be tempting to pack up the Christmas things quickly and get on with normal life*, but we need all the trimmings to remain for a while so that the New Year celebrations are also full of light, colour and sparkle. The word seems to be* British slang introduced by the tourist industry and no doubt this word was sorely needed to avoid* having to continually use a long phrase such as "the period between the 27th of December and the first of January". If you Google the word, most of the entries will be

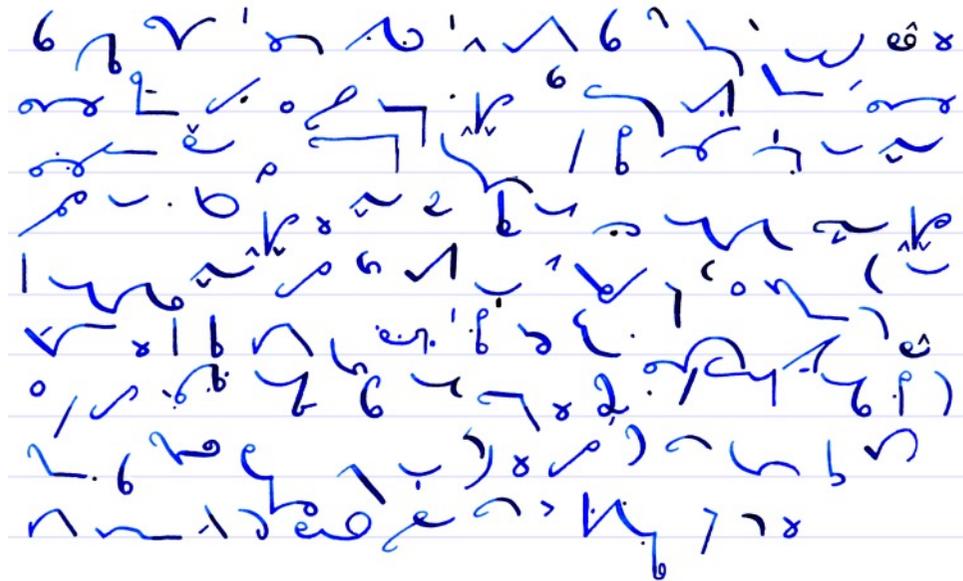
advertising holiday breaks and get-aways. I think it is in the process of escaping from its former existence as tourist industry jargon and has found an exciting new life in the winter holiday brochures and adverts.

* "if there" Note that "if" can be halved or doubled for such phrases, whilst "for" does not, to help differentiate them

* Omission phrase "normal (l)ife", see more at www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/phrasing4-omission.htm#OmittingRepeatedSound

* Omission phrase "seems (to) be"

* "avoid" "evade" Vowels helpful as these are similar in outline and meaning



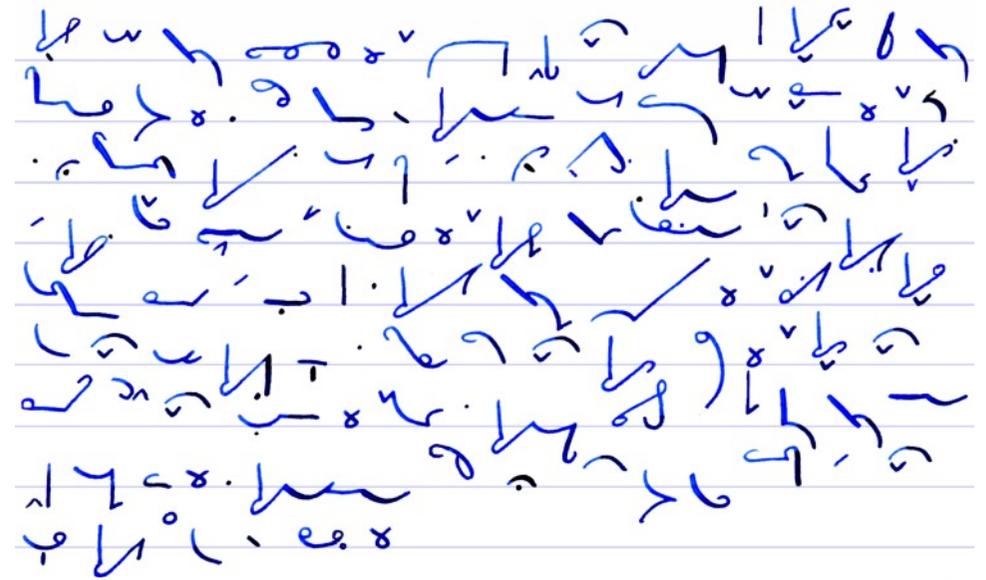
Twixmas

This leads very well* on to some revision on how to represent this particular pair of initial sounds. Sometimes the stroke Way is used to get an outline that is clearer to read back and sometimes the semicircle sign is the correct form, which, as it is mostly omitted in writing, results in a faster outline. Writing shorthand does not in the main involve creating outlines, it involves writing ones that you already know, and the best way* to do that is to practise them in bulk. It does help if you concentrate on sets of words that have a similar rule or sound, as each one consolidates knowledge of the others in that group. There is not* a

large quantity in this set, so practising these paragraphs several times should be no hardship. Once they are more familiar, it would also help to make up your own sentences using more of the derivatives of each word.

* Omission phrases "very (w)ell" "bes(t) way"

* "not" It is safer to always insert the vowel in "not", especially in phrases, so it is not misread as "no" or "any"

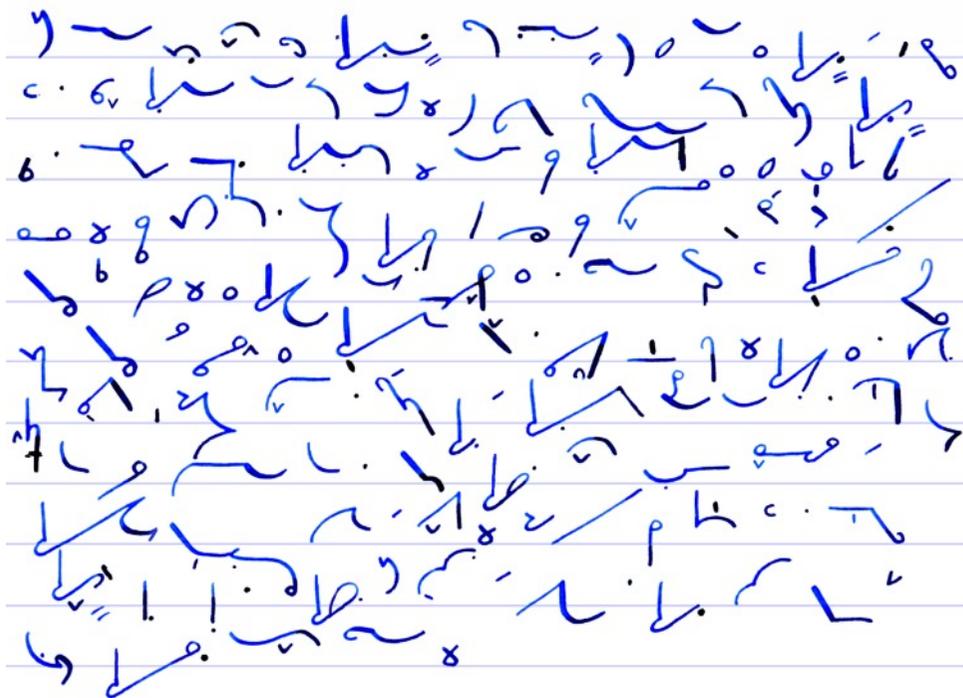


Twixmas

'Twas the night before Christmas. I looked out of my window at twilight*, just before darkness fell. The stars began to twinkle in the clear night sky. I heard a late blackbird twitter in the tree and a lone robin tweeting from the top of the twining and twisting vine growing on the fence. I twisted the belt fastening on my twill fabric skirt and gave it a twirl before the mirror. I searched twice for my new tweed coat, a present

from my twin sister. I twined my scarf around my neck. I felt a twinge of hesitation at the door, before going out into the cold. The twinkling frost made me feel even colder and my nose twitched as if to sneeze.

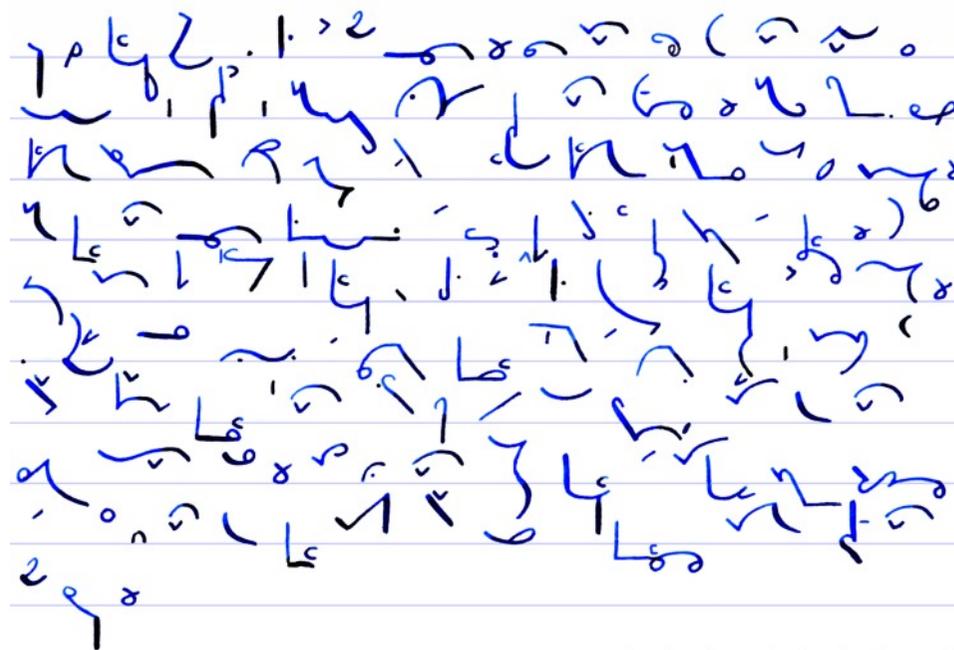
* "twilight" Upward L to keep the original form of "light". Compare with "twill" below, and "dwelt", both downward



Twixmas

I was going to meet my friend Edwina from Ghana, whose first language is Twi, and who speaks with a slight twang in her English. She will be bringing her brother Wayne who is an expert guitar twanger. In fact* he twanged* his first notes at the age of six. He is also an enthusiastic twitcher, which means he likes to spot all the rare birds on his list. His dwelling in the countryside has a garden planted with dwarf shrubs to attract the birds and his house is dwarfed by a huge oak tree. Twitching is a healthy outdoor hobby*, but I would feel like a proper twit and twerp* standing in a muddy field for hours looking for a bird, twisting my neck skywards, and twirling the binoculars left and right. I would rather sit at home* with a cup of Twinings tea, eating a Twister ice lolly, and reading a twee little book on the feathered tweeters in my garden.

- * Omission phrase "in (f)act"
- * "twanged" Stroke Ing cannot be halved
- * "hobby" Helpful to insert the vowel, so it is not misread as "habit" which has a similar meaning
- * "twerp, twirp" was current in the mid 20th century, meaning a stupid or inept person
- * "at home" The H is always omitted in this phrase, although it can be inferred by the fact that the vowel is against the M and not after the T



Twixmas

Today is the twenty-first* of January, the day of the shorthand exam. Some of my friends think my writing is nothing but twaddle but I have not been lazily twiddling my thumbs. I have been practising since the twelfth of September last year and filled up twelve notebooks in the first two months. I have tweaked my exam technique and cleaned out the pen with tissue paper and tweezers. So here I am at the college at twenty to ten on the day after the twentieth of the month. The saying goes "Many a slip twixt cup and lip" but I am sure that by the time the twigs on my apple tree are in bloom I will have my

certificate in my hands. I will not let my enthusiasm dwindle and I will continue to practise betweentimes* and, as you might have twigged* already, by next Twixmas I will have doubled my shorthand speed. (790 words)

- * Omission phrase "twenty-(fir)st"
- * "betweentimes" Halving for the T of "times"
- * To twig means to find out or suddenly realise, derived from Irish or Gaelic