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Blogs - 2016 - August

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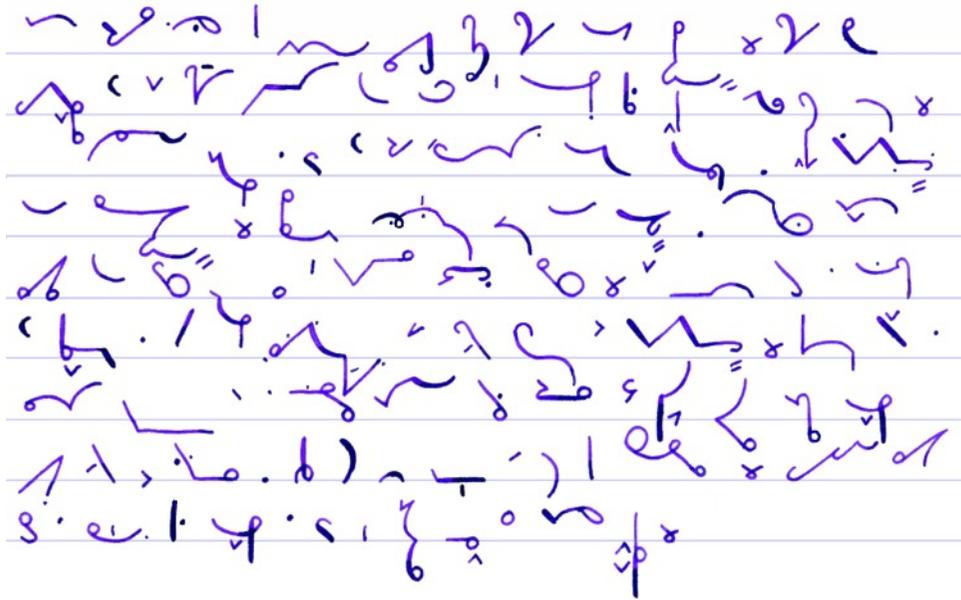
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PDF Date: 24 November 2020



Barbican

I am always amazed* at how many hidden treasures there are in the City of London*. There are several websites that I trawl regularly for information on interesting days out and events throughout the year. Last weekend* I visited a building that I would normally never have considered*, the Barbican in Central London. As it is now midsummer here in England, the emphasis of my searches for places to visit is on parks and green spaces. I came upon an entry that described a large conservatory on the upper floor of the Barbican. Tempted by a small picture of an expanse

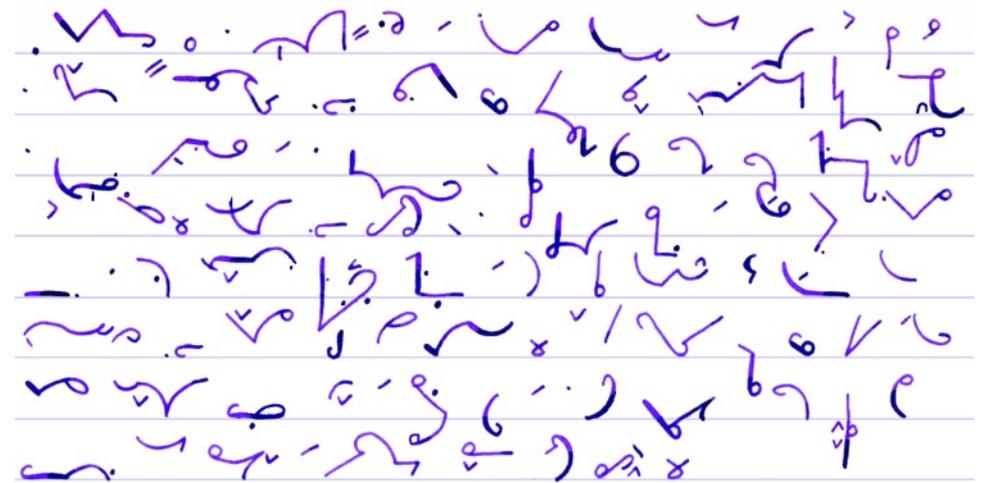
of long panes of glass with the shadowy shapes of trees inside reaching up to the apex, the decision was made to go and see it as soon as possible*. We would not as a rule* spend a sunny* day inside a building, but I think this counts as almost outside.

* "amazed, amused" Always insert the second vowel to differentiate

* Omission phrases "as soon as poss(ible)" "city (of) London" "Last (w)eekend" "have (con)sidered" "as (a) rule"

* "sunny" "snowy" Always insert the vowels

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



Barbican

The Barbican is a multi-arts and conference venue in the middle of the city and is a prime example of the concrete slab buildings which were considered* the height of modernity at the time, exuding a vigorous ruggedness and a determination to distance themselves from the frivolous and decorative styles of the past. Unfortunately* concrete weathers to a dismal, streaked and patchy appearance, giving an air of grimy* deterioration and decay, and so it is fortunate that the vogue for monumental concrete piles did not last too long. I much prefer today's buildings

which are often almost entirely glazed, light and spacious within, and a pleasure to behold* from outside, as they gleam in the sunlight and reflect the sky and their surroundings.

* Omission phrases "which (w)ere (con)sidered"

* "Unfortunately" Optional contraction

* "grimy" Insert the last vowel, as "grime" would also make sense

* "to behold" Phrase based on "to be" through the line

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



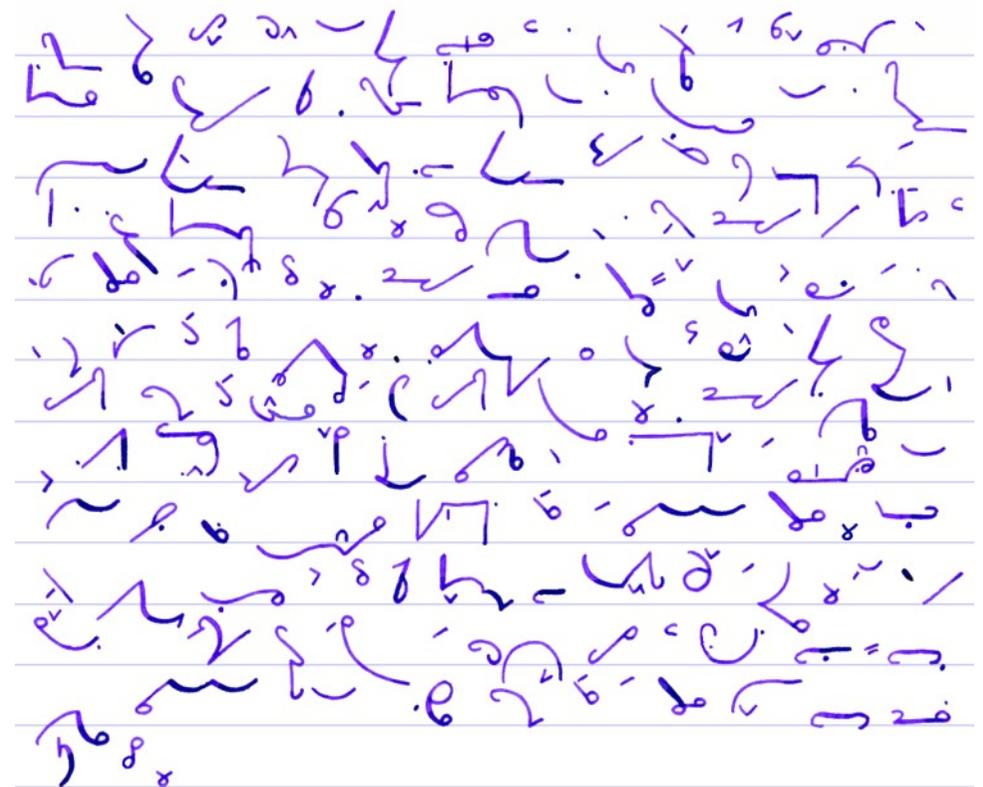
Barbican

We made our way to the third floor, passing all the notices and ticket/information desks for the various departments and performances, none of which interested us. We were here on a plant* mission and made straight for the conservatory entrance. We suddenly found ourselves in an indoor forest, with giant tropical plants, from pot plants to mature shrubs and trees growing up to roof height. The conservatory wraps around the fly tower of the theatre whose knobbly concrete surfaces are improved only by being almost completely covered in and hidden by the foliage, giving the appearance of a prehistoric stony* cliff or a vertical quarry face. The plants are in large soil beds, and

along all the edges are hundreds of potted plants. In the middle are a large and a small pond, connected by a narrow channel, with koi of various sizes and colours, judiciously screened by the greenery, so that its edges are kept at a small distance from visitors.

* "plant mission" Insert the thick dot vowel, so it is not misread as "planned". If you pronounce "plant" with a short A vowel, then the only other way to ensure differentiation is to write it with a full T instead of halving, not dictionary but better than misreading.

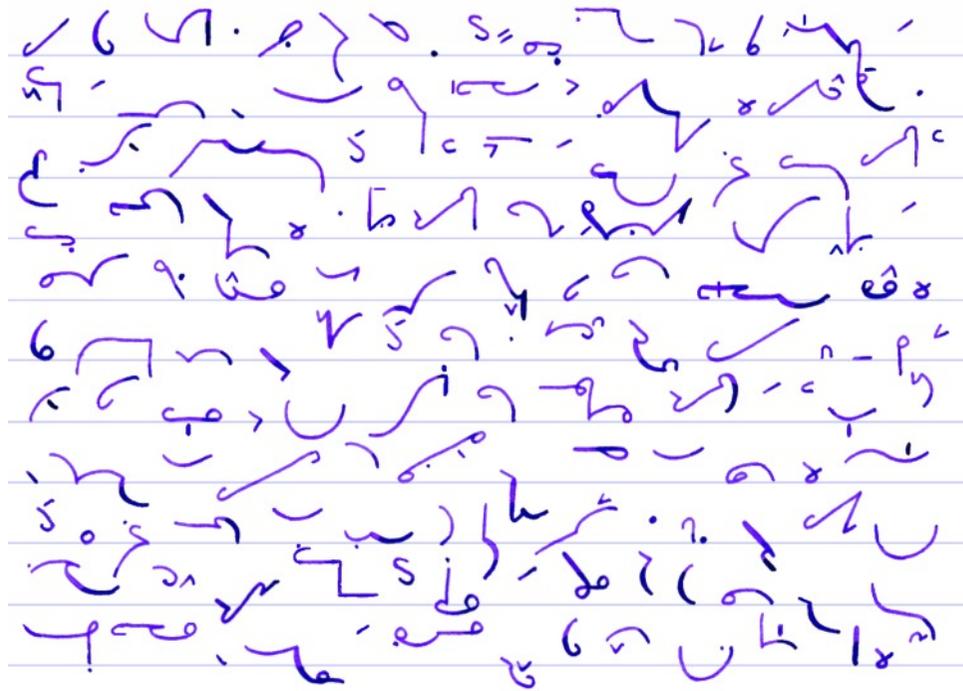
* "stony" Insert the last vowel, as "stone" would also make sense



Barbican

Brick paths wind around in gentle curves with a few puddles and the slight smell of dampness everywhere, just the perfect atmosphere for an afternoon in a tropical looking jungle, so much better than the "concrete jungle" that we passed through to get here, and at a comfortable temperature as well. Stairs leading to an upper walkway are adorned with wall baskets and air plants. The walkway gives a bird's-eye view of the scene and an opportunity to see the whole pond and its inhabitants. The conservatory is filled with the sound of

gently splashing water, from the pond fountains and other water features. The walkway leads on to the arid glasshouse to one side, containing hundreds of cacti and succulents, in long raised beds, numerous terracotta pots and hanging baskets. I gave up reading the names of the plants and just admired the great variety of sizes and shapes. Not all are spiny and there are plenty of softer and friendlier ones, with fleshy grey-green leaves hanging in swathes from the pots and baskets, like green wigs on their stands.



Barbican

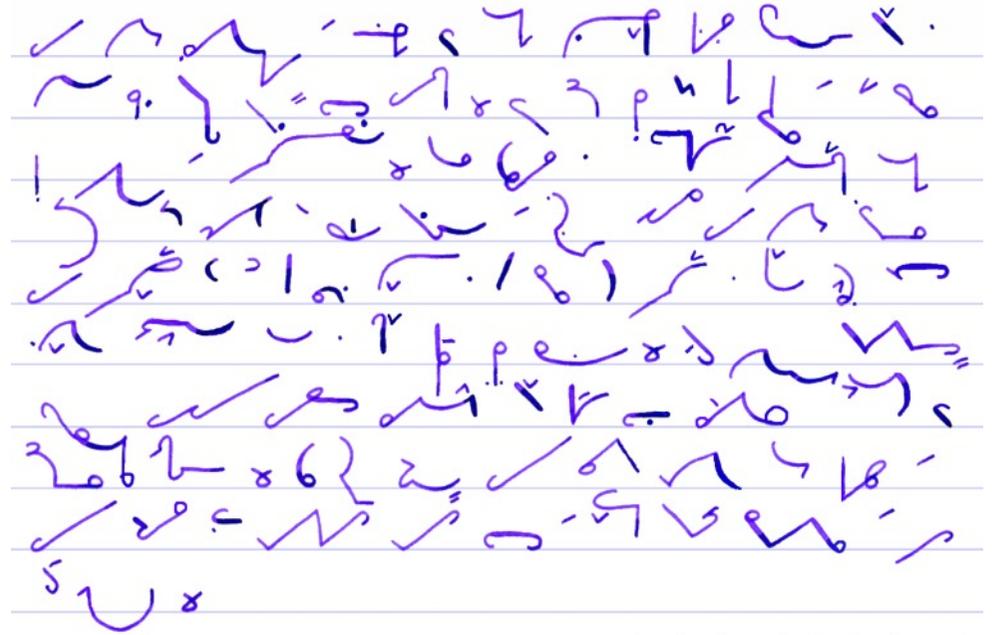
We then followed a raised path past the plant-screened café area, which is unobtrusive and quiet, and came to another separate corner of the conservatory. We found a delightful shallow rectangular pond with koi and goldfish, completely clear water with clean gravel bottom. A torrent of water from the submerged filter outlet and small spray fountains in the middle provided yet more gurgling sounds. This looked to me to be the ideal pond, from a human* point of view*, where you could* sit on the low wall close to the fish, shielded from extremes of weather, and with no ice to remove in winter or herons to defend against in

summer. My own pond is completely covered in netting, so it was really a treat to be able to watch the fish ambling around between the aquatic plant containers and baskets, although they seem to have fewer interesting corners to investigate and snacks to find than my fish at home do.

* "human" Special outline, above the line to distinguish it from "humane"

* Omission phrase "point (of) view"

* "you could" Not phrased, so that it does not look like "you can"



Barbican

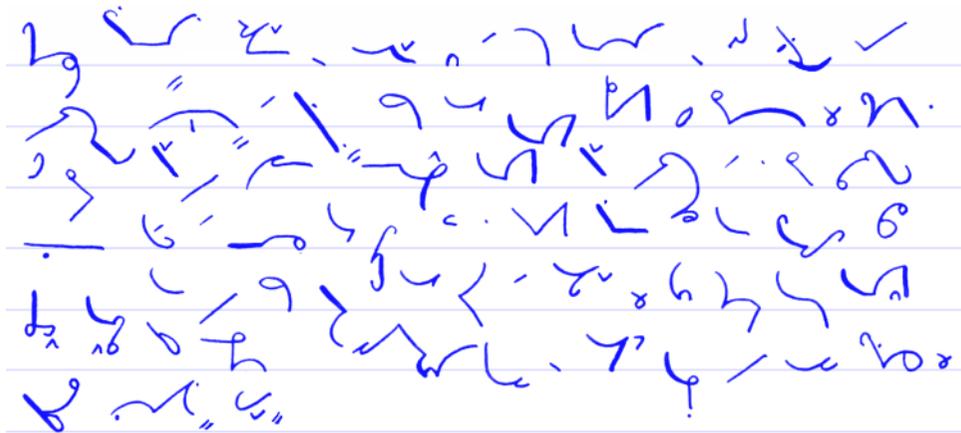
We left the conservatory and exited the building onto the lakeside terrace, flanked by a long straight body of pea green water. People were sitting about at the tables and on the steps, eating, reading and relaxing. For us this was a gradual re-entry into the harsh hard world of stone, paving and asphalt, and once we left the complex, we realised that what had seemed like a large space was really a tiny oasis* of green, alive and growing, in a dry dusty city centre. Upon leaving the Barbican precincts*, we were once again* surrounded by dull grey surfaces,

noisy building works and traffic. This aspect of London we are happy to leave for the tourists, and we are always glad to return to our own green and quiet part of the suburbs, and our own pond and fish. (921 words)

* "oasis" Insert the dot vowel, thin for singular and thick for plural "oases"

* "precincts" This and similar words omit the K sound in the outline

* Omission phrase "wu(n)s again"



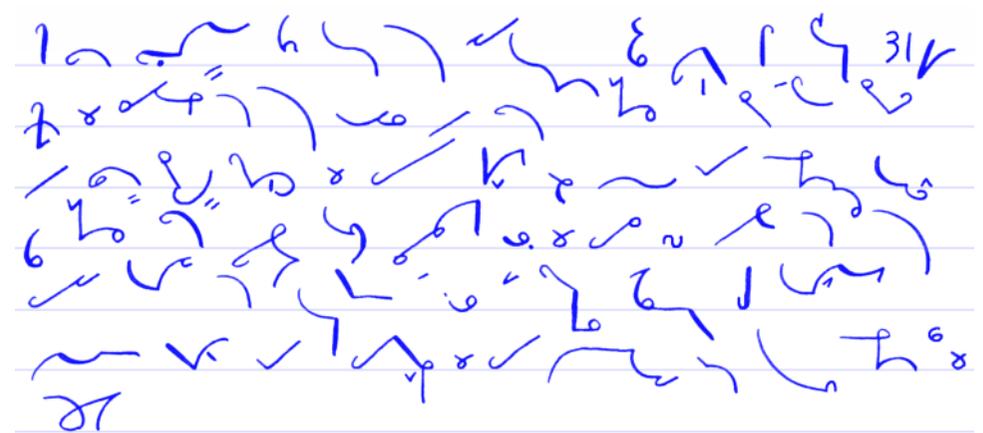
Short Letters 9

Dear Mrs Blackley, I would like to invite you and your family to attend the opening of our refurbished Mother and Baby store in the village on Saturday 1 September. There will be a short speech by our local councillor, followed by refreshments and a special celebration cake*, fun and games for the children, with a party bag for everyone, as well as discount vouchers for our store, both in the shop and online. Thank you so much* for your valued past custom and we hope that you will*

continue to enjoy visiting our new premises. Best wishes*, Martha White (100 words)

- * "cake" and "cookie" Always insert the vowels
- * "so much" Includes the M stroke in order to join the phrase
- * Omission phrase "we (h)ope that you will"
- * "Best wishes" Upward Ish to make a join possible

Handwriting practice lines consisting of horizontal lines for writing.



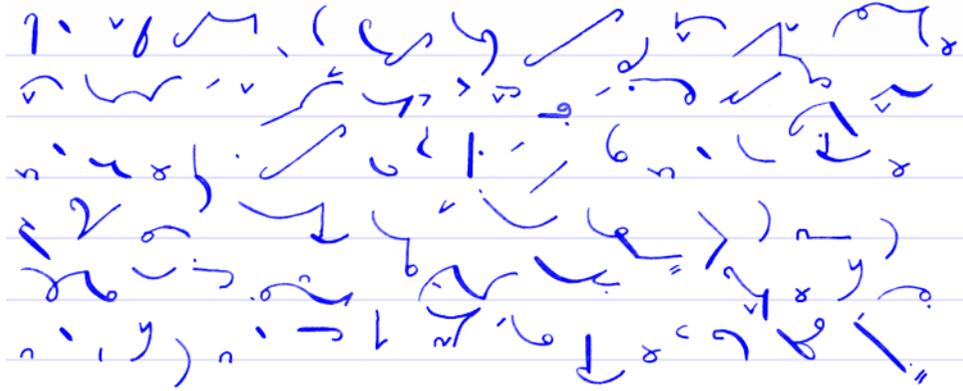
Short Letters 9

Dear Mr Grayling, Thank you for your order and we confirm that this will be delivered on Friday 31 July during the morning. As requested, your order includes our free items on special offer as part of our Summer Special* promotion. We are delighted to say that* many of our customers have found these items very useful for their household needs*. Once you have received your order, we would value your feedback and comments on the products, and this can be done following the link below to our website. We look

forward* to your future custom with us. Yours sincerely (100 words)

- * "Summer Special" As the second word is part of the name of the promotion, this means it has no exact context and so is best written as a full outline
- * Omission phrase "to s(ay) that" "look fo(r)ward"
- * "needs" Insert the vowel, as "ends" (= purposes) could also make sense

Handwriting practice lines consisting of horizontal lines for writing.



Short Letters 9

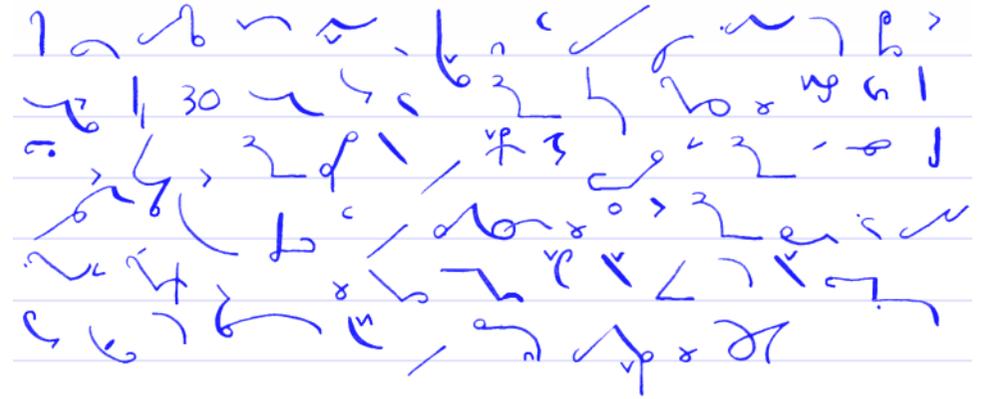
Dear All, I just wanted to thank everyone for their wonderful wishes on my retirement last month. My family and I really enjoyed all the kind gifts and cards, and we will be writing to you all individually*. It was a wonderful event on that day and our thanks to you all for attending. I believe there are some entertaining photos on the company Facebook page so you can see yourselves

in action, consuming the lovely banquet provided. I shall miss you all but I shall see you all again at the annual office dinner. With very best wishes*, Bobby (100 words)

* "individually" The contraction includes the "-ly" form but it is always in order to add an L stroke if felt necessary

* "best wishes" Upward Ish to make a join possible

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

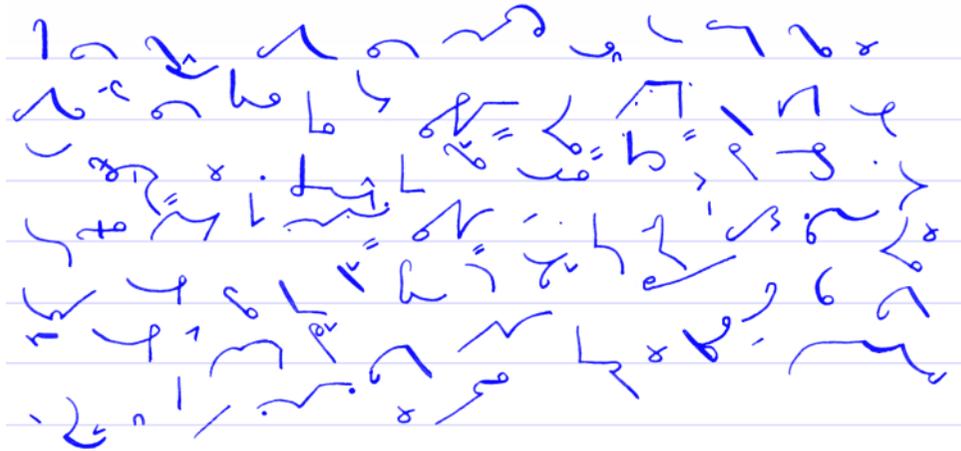


Short Letters 9

Dear Mr Waters, I am writing to advise you that we are still awaiting your settlement of the invoice dated 30 November for the building work at your premises. I understand that you had agreed to the changes to the work suggested by our Site Manager, and that the queries on the work and costs had been resolved after

discussion with our Services Manager. As all the work is now complete, we would appreciate prompt attention to this matter. Payment can be made either by cheque or by credit card over the phone or via our secure website. Yours sincerely (100 words)

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



Short Letters 9

Dear Mr Browning, We have some marvellous news for club members. We have been offered some advance tickets for the Historic Ships Regatta to be held next month* in Portsmouth*. The discounted ticket price includes admission to the special exhibition, a full four-course lunch at the Marina Hotel and a tour and trip on one of the sailing ships. If you are interested, please book by telephone or online, as we are sure this will be of great

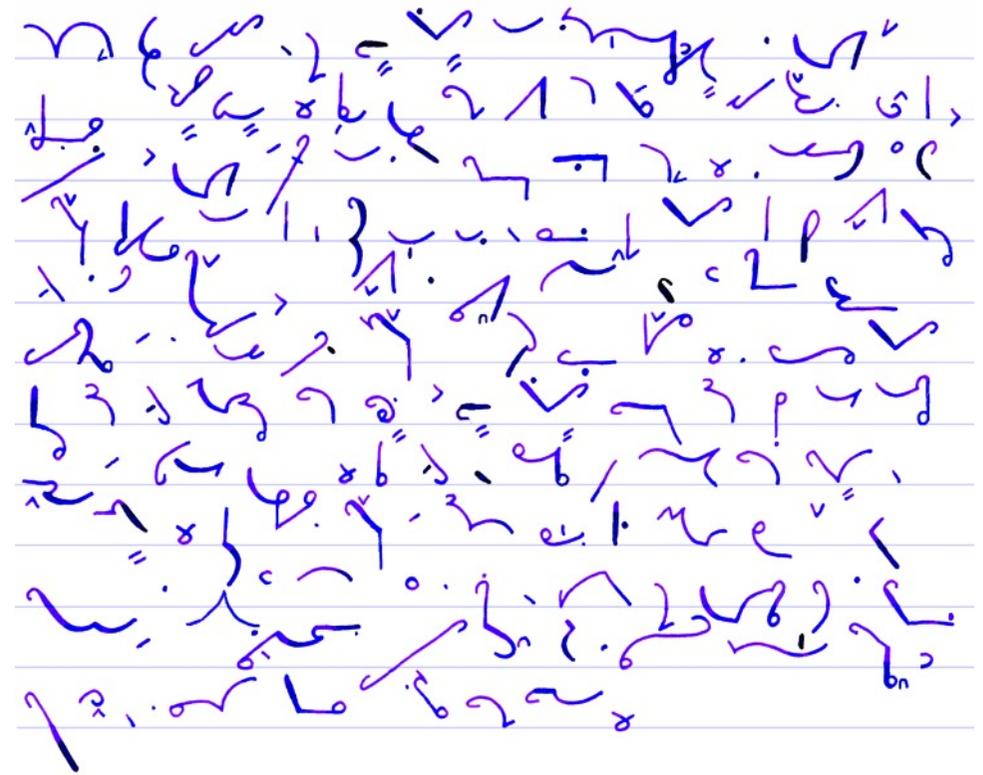
interest and the limited supply will be rapidly taken up. Best wishes* and looking forward* to seeing you at our marquee. Regards (100 words) (Total 700 words)

* Omission phrases "ne(k)s(t mon)th" "looking fo(r)ward"

* "Portsmouth" The outline for "port" uses full P + halved Ray

* "Best wishes" Upward Ish to make a join possible

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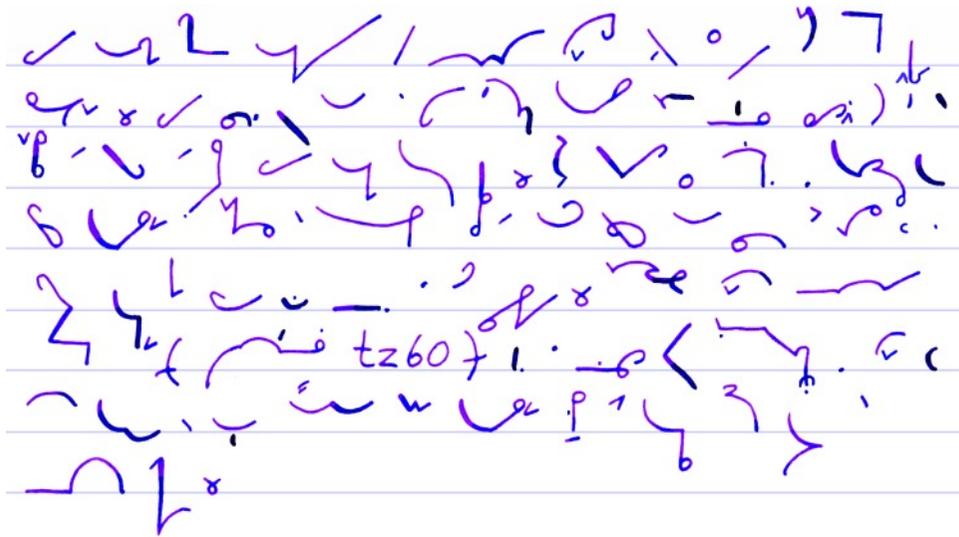
Great Barn

Earlier this month* we went to see the Great Barn in Harmondsworth, a village on the outskirts of West London. It is not visible from the road or bus, and we finally found it to the rear of the village and church, in a protected gated area. The enclosure has other private dwellings in it but there was no need to seek out the barn, it stood right before us, up a short driveway to the right, a huge long building with dark vertical weatherboards and a new roof of bright orange clay tiles. The enormous barn doors were open and

volunteers from Friends of the Great Barn group were sitting in the entrance, counting and welcoming the visitors. It is open two Sundays each month from April to October. It was a bright and warm sunny day and I felt as if I ought to be bringing a sheaf with me as a contribution, to help see the villagers through a bleak and hungry winter, although a selection of my own produce would probably amount to a small box of apples from the garden.

* Omission phrase "this (mon)th"

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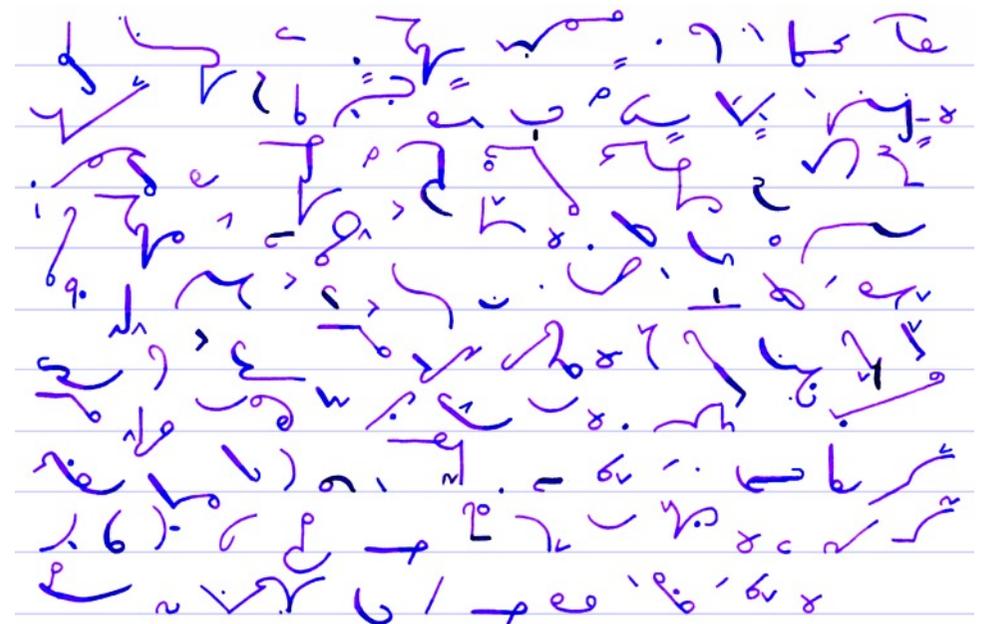


Great Barn

We entered the dark interior which immediately lightened up as our eyes got out of the sunlight. We seemed to be in a well ordered forest of great oaks surrounding us on all sides and above, and stretching away into the far distance. Although the barn is empty, the volunteers have placed various items of interest and information posters in some of the aisles,

with a projected video at the near end giving a short history. I am glad to say that* my camera (Lumix TZ60) did an excellent job of capturing the light without me having to know anything about the various settings, and the photos were full of colour and detail.

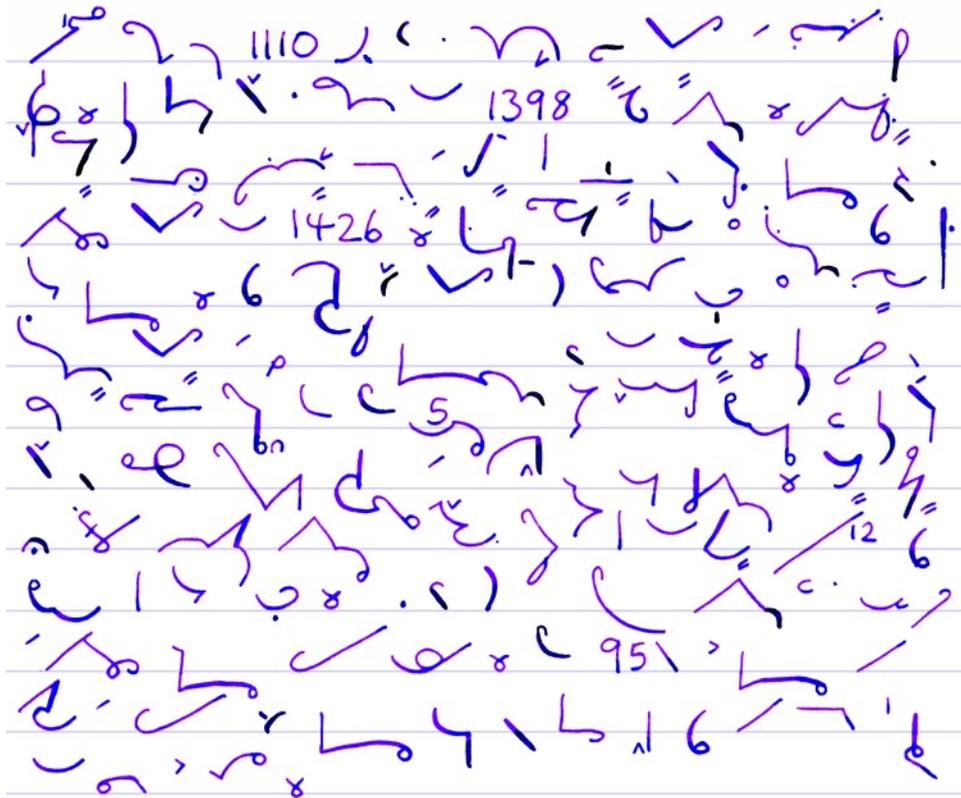
* Omission phrase "I am glad (to) s(ay) that"



Great Barn

It has been affectionately called "The Cathedral of Middlesex" a very apt description of the magnificent interior, although its location is now known as the London Borough of Hillingdon. The resemblance is not accidental, as the medieval carpenters and craftsmen would have also worked on churches, cathedrals and the great houses of the time. The best view is looking straight down the length of the building to the far end, a forest of oak posts and sunlight glinting through all the

vertical gaps between the weatherboards. I think probably the ventilation provided by the gaps outweighs any concerns about the rain blowing in. The multitude of rafters and bracing beams above us seemed to accentuate the great height and a photograph does not really show this so well, as it only gives the target area in isolation. When you are actually standing there, you have peripheral vision which gives the sense of space and height.



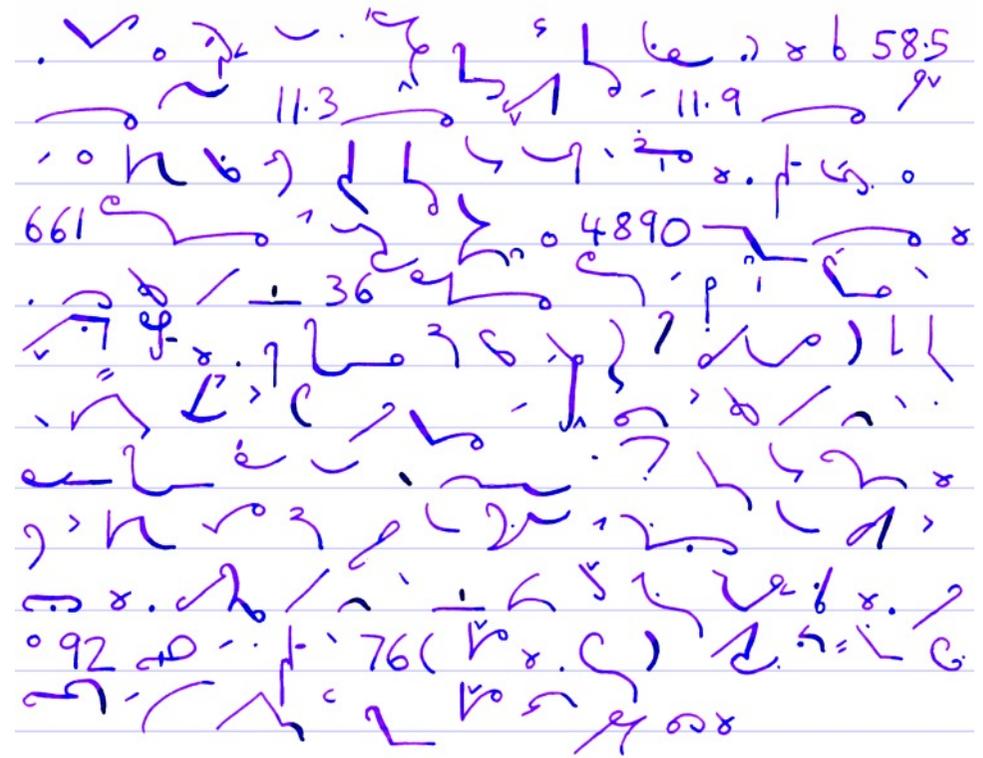
Great Barn

Records from the year 1110 show that an earlier Great Barn and granary stood on this site. It was damaged by a storm in 1398 and then repaired. Winchester College commissioned* William Kypping and John atte Oke to obtain timbers to build a replacement barn in 1426.

Dendrochronology testing has confirmed this date for the timbers. This medieval aisled barn was formerly known as Manor Farm Barn and is the largest timber-framed building in England. It was used to store agricultural produce for over 500 years, until the 1970's, when it was bought by two successive property developers and allowed to fall into disrepair. English Heritage made compulsory emergency repairs and finally

purchased it in January 2012*, thus saving it for the nation. The building was further repaired, with a new roof and replacement of timbers where necessary. Over 95%* of the timbers are original, and where old timbers have had to be taken out, these are kept on display in some of the aisles.

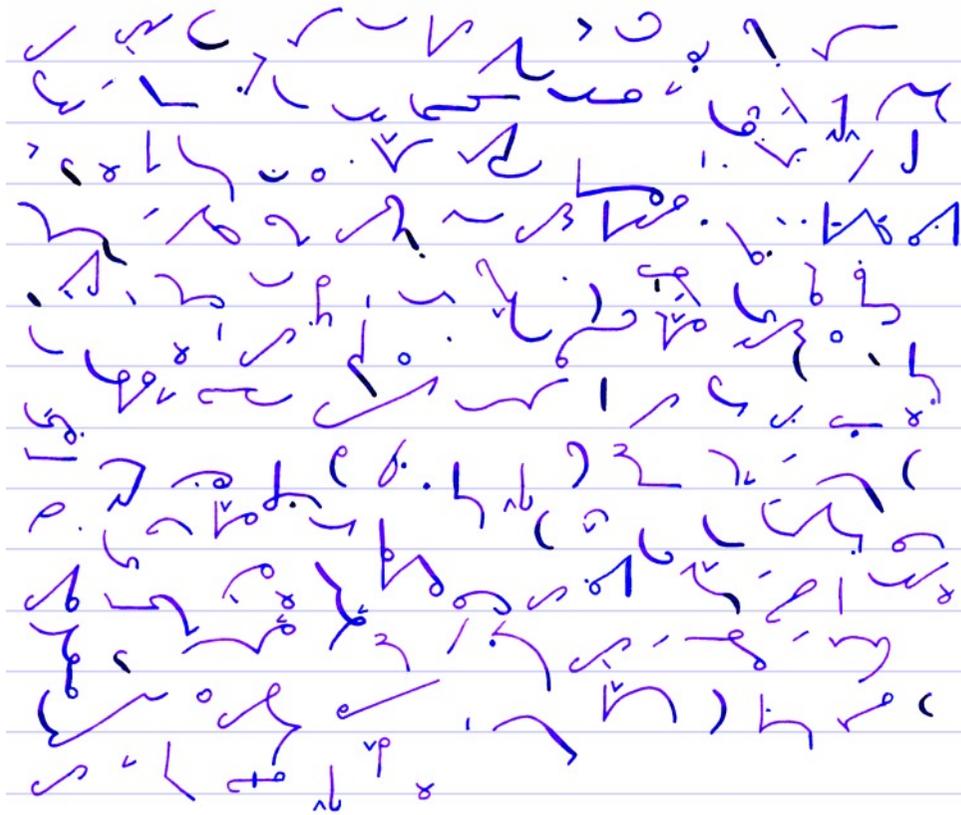
- * "commissioned" A small number of outlines do not use the Con Dot
- * "95%" Use stroke P for percent only with numerals. If you write the number as an outline, use the full outline for "percent"
- * "2012" Optional long slash to represent current century, arbitrary sign with no phonetic value



Great Barn

The barn is oriented in a north-south direction with the doors facing east. It is 58.5 metres long, 11.3 metres wide and 11.9 metres high and has 12 bays and 3 double doors for the entry of wagons. The total footprint is 661 square metres and the internal volume is 4,890 cubic metres. The main posts are oak, 36 cm square and sitting on blocks of Reigate sandstone. The tree trunks were placed upside down so that the larger circumference was at the top, to help the joining of the other roof

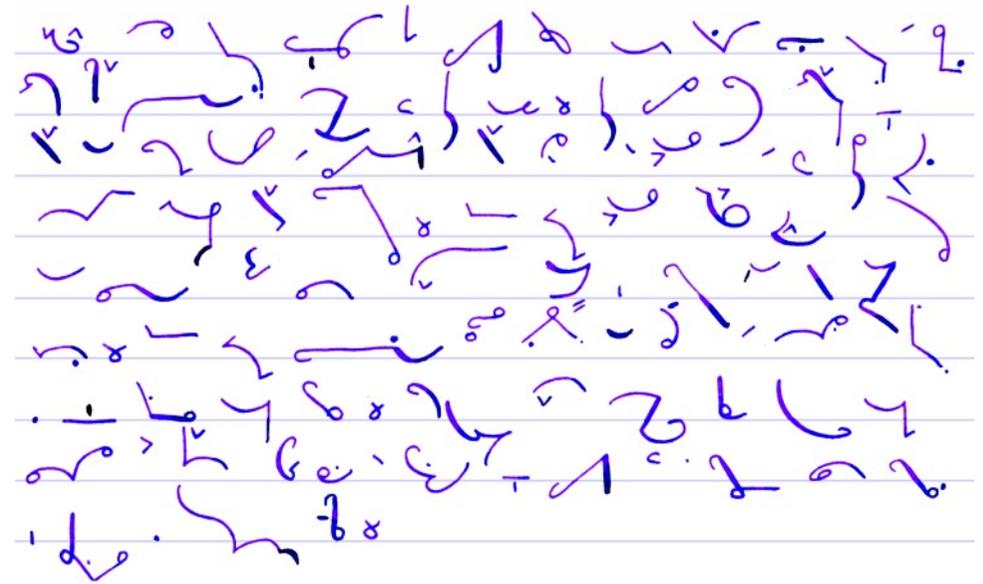
beams, and some of the posts are made of a single trunk sawn in two, making a matching pair for the frame. Three of the 12 aisles were used for threshing and the remainder for storage of the grain. The weatherboards are made of oak, elm, pine and fir, of various ages. The roof has 92 courses and a total of 76,000 tiles. The floor was originally hard-packed flint gravel, and later repaired with brick, tiles and more recently cement.



Great Barn

We wandered along to each aisle in turn, reading all the information sheets, remembering to look forward and back for new photographic angles on the views up and down the length of the building. At the far end is a pile of original timbers on a pallet, which had been removed and replaced from the weatherboarding, and in one of the doorways a piece of a doorpost head, too rotten to remain in situ, but now providing an easy close-up view of its construction for visitors. On one table is a selection of tiles and one of them

has two deer footprints on the corner, where the animal had run over the wet clay. I can imagine the men's dismay as they chased the deer out of their work area and maybe they lost a few more tiles in the disturbance, they might even have forfeited some wages to cover the loss. Obviously someone went ahead and fired and used it anyway. In those days building materials were much harder won and expensive, and I am sure they were not as wasteful as we are, but maybe the tiler was tempted to use that one on the top course, out of sight.

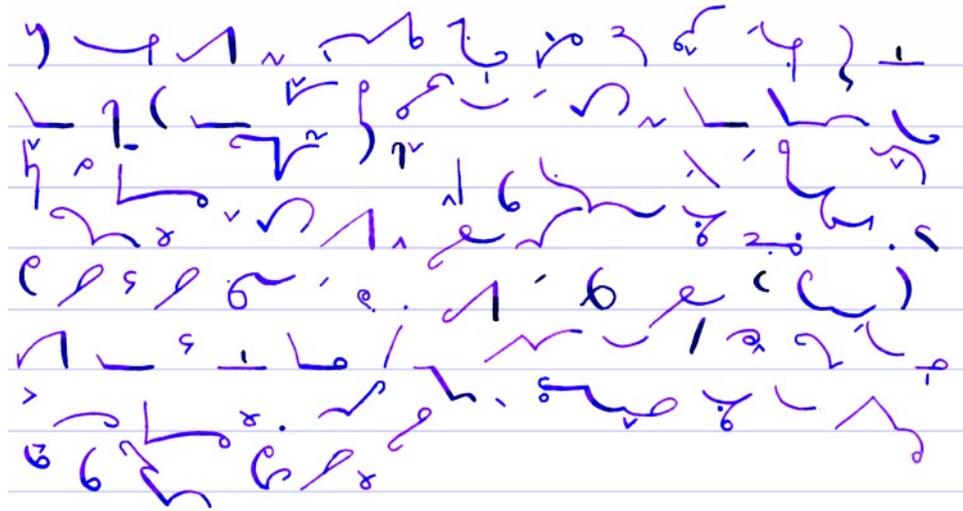


Great Barn

I found myself peering closely at the wooden posts, now pale grey, pitted and streaked, and very dry looking, imagining when it was new. It was once fresh and bright, cut by hand from the forest, and surrounded by lots of noise and effort as it was shaped, marked and installed by the carpenters. I can hear the noise of voices shouting orders, in something that would seem like English but probably not be intelligible to me. I can hear the creaking

carts, rasping hand saws and mallets tapping the oak pegs into place. Very conveniently, my imagination does not venture into the smells of the time, other than the scent of freshly* cut wood, with a brisk summer breeze to disperse the farmyard odours.

* "freshly" Shel always goes up, Sher always goes down

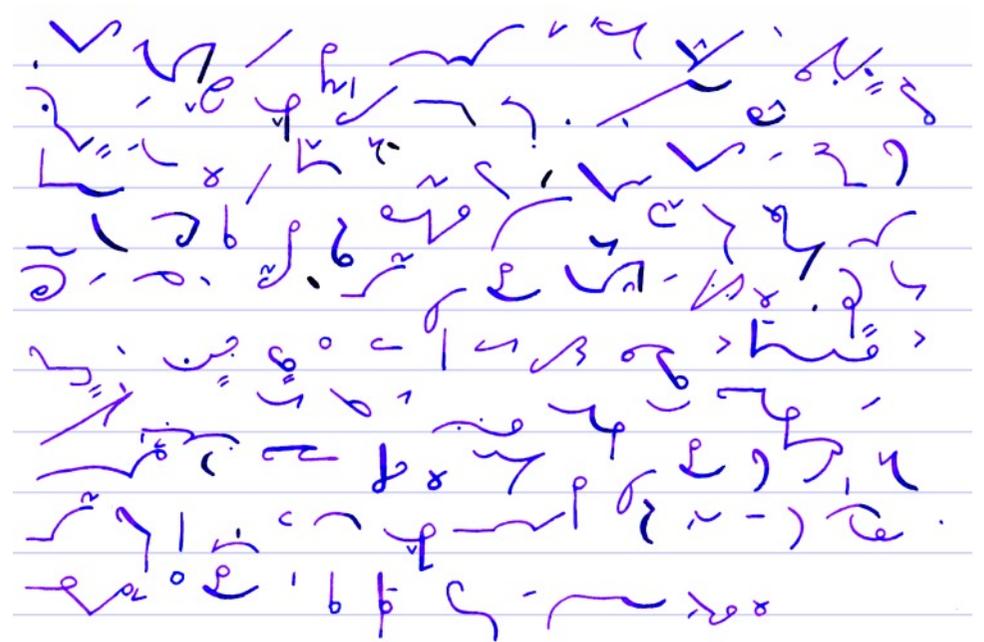


Great Barn

I was interested to read how the mortise and tenon holes were slightly offset, so that the oak peg drew them together tightly as it was hammered in, and also how the peg became even tighter as the timbers gradually dried out, thus firming up and strengthening the entire frame. I also read how using metal nails weakens the building

as they rust, with the rust swelling and splitting the wood, and this is the reason that everything was held together with the oak pegs, which could be made rapidly in large amounts from the offcuts of the main timbers. The modern use of galvanised nails for repairs avoids this problem as they will not rust.

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

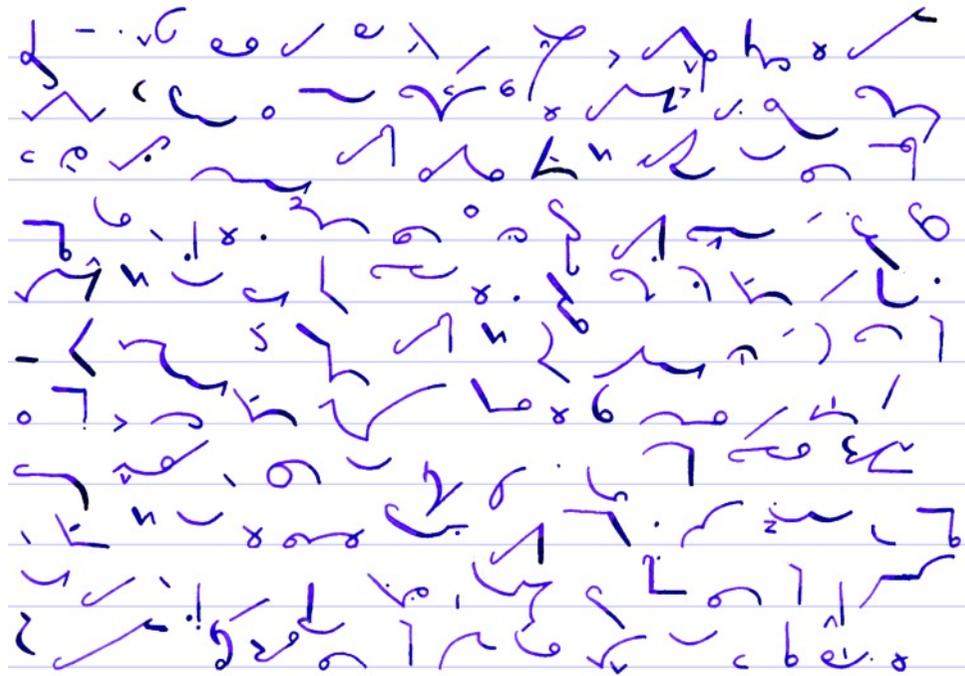


Great Barn

The barn and village are situated immediately on the north boundary of Heathrow Airport and whilst inside we kept hearing the roaring sound of planes taking off. Each time, I thought how the people who built the barn and worked there could not have imagined its situation all these centuries later, under the flight path of strange metal machines, and, most of all, actually still standing, valued and cherished. The Society for the Protection of Ancient

Buildings has called it "One of the symbols of the dominance of the rural economy in the past, and the immense investment in craftsmanship and materials that agriculture deserved." Not only is it still standing there, but I have actually brought it home with me inside the camera, although not quite so magnificent an experience as standing on its dusty floor and looking upwards. (1373 words)

Horizontal lines for taking notes.



News From The Pond

It has been quite a while since we sent up our newsletter to the website department. We are glad to report that everything is going very well* with us. We enjoyed the wet spring very much, with lots of rain making the water surface jump about and washing in some extra goodies for us to eat. The warm summer has meant plenty of weed growing and comfortable places to lounge* about in near the top corner. The bubbles from the air pump are doing a good job of moving the pond bottom water about, especially shifting the mud and so more of it is getting to the main pump and filter box. This makes our home much

clearer and nicer to swim in, but there are still a few muddy corners that we like to poke about in. Sometimes the blanket weed can be a little annoying if it gets in the way of eating our dinner pellets, but fortunately the people drag some of it out regularly, although we are glad that there is always some of it left for us to lie in when it is sunny.

* "very (w)ell" Remains readable without the insertion of the W sign

* "loungel" Helpful to always insert the diphthong, so it is not misread as "lunch"

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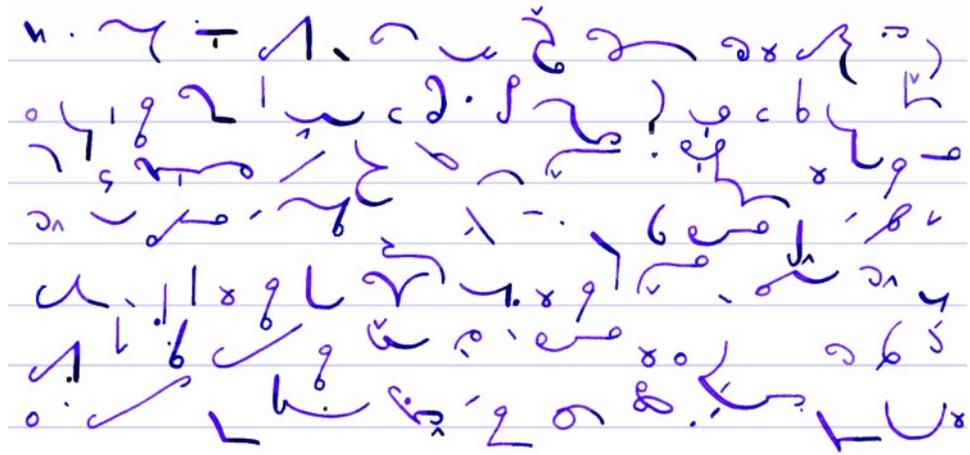


News From The Pond

This has been quite an eventful year for us. In December we had two new arrivals, who had been living peacefully, unknown to us, in a pond in a neighbour's garden. The people moved away and so the two big fish came to live with us. We were quite excited when we heard about it. The buckets were lowered in and our new

friends just swam out slowly without any bother at all. We showed them around and where all the good snacks are to be found. They soon learned the feeding time routine and we are very happy to have them with us. The year has gone so quickly and it feels as if they have been part of the family forever.

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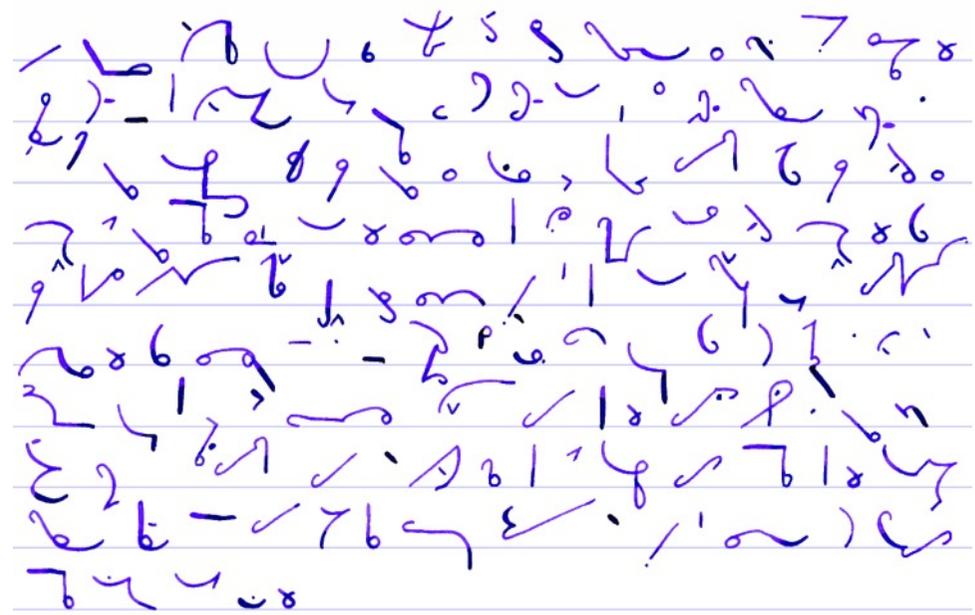
News From The Pond

About a month ago we had two more new arrivals from some other* friends. One of them can't see his food but he is very good at knowing when there is a sudden movement, so he knows when it is feeding time or when the bread crumbs are falling past him like a snowstorm. He goes around in circles and manages to clear up quite a bit, then sinks down and rests on the shelf

to eat it. He is doing very well indeed. He likes to hang around under the weed at the edges where he is finding lots of snacks. His shubunkin friend thinks the pond is a wonderful big adventure playground and he can swim as fast as the bigger fish.

* "from some other" Doubling for "other"

Blank lined paper for taking notes.



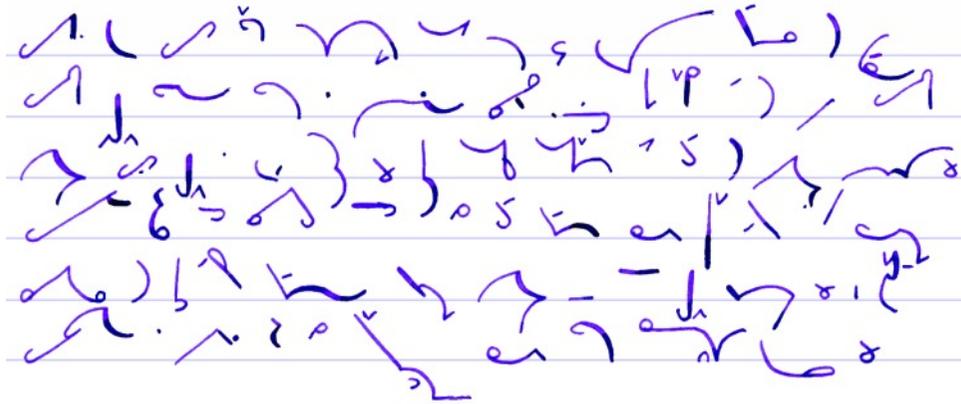
News From The Pond

Our biggest oldest fish, who is in charge of the pond, has been perfecting his bread catching skills. He is not so good at lunging for the bits when they are thrown in, but has trained the person to throw a larger piece in his direction*, just as he puts his face to the top of the water, and then he opens his mouth and the piece gets sucked in. Sometimes it lands directly in his open mouth. Then he turns rapidly and dives down to spend some time chewing on it in private under the water lily leaves. This seems to be quite a good arrangement as

he needs more food than us and it would be a lot of work if he had to chase all the crumbs like we do. We can't resist a piece of bread falling through the water, we all rush towards it and the fastest one gets it. Fortunately the person doesn't go away until it is clear that we are all chewing on something, so everyone gets enough in the end.

* Omission phrase "in his d(ir)ection", similarly "in this d(ir)ection"

Blank lined paper for taking notes.

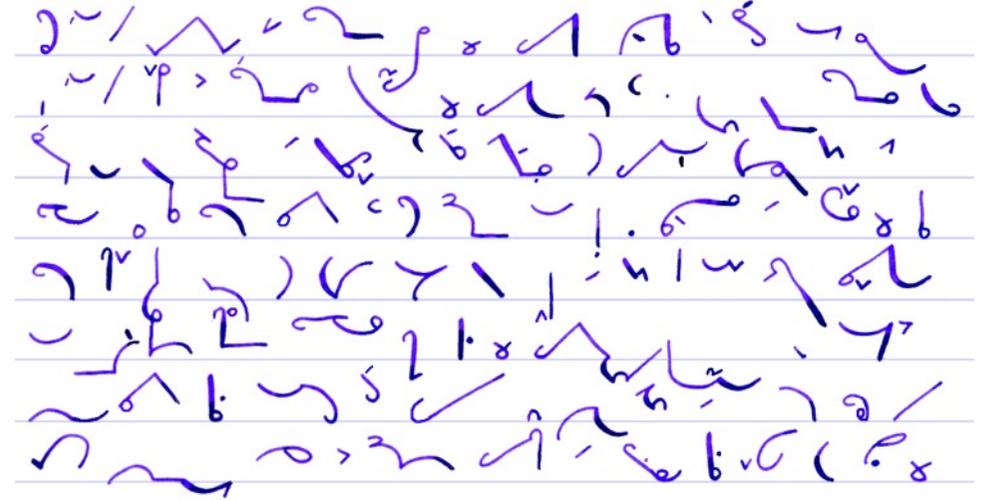


News From The Pond

We did have one fright earlier in the year, when the filter box was losing water down the garden from a leaking hose connection at the side and so our water level went down a foot or so. It was noticed in time and the pond was refilled immediately. We are glad that this cannot happen again as

the pond pump is now tied up much nearer the surface, so it would stop pumping before the level could go down too much. But I don't think we will have a repeat of that as the pipework is now very securely fixed.

Horizontal lines for writing.



News From The Pond

There is not much to report on the frog situation. We had loads of spawn in the spring but not much sight of the froglets after that. We have heard that a few big frogs have been spotted under bits of plastic and behind pots and buckets, so we know they must be* about, and the gardener is very happy with their work in eating the slugs and flies. It is very dry at this time of year, so they will only be out

and about at night, and probably hiding in cool dark corners during the day. We hope that you are* continuing to enjoy many happy days in your own pond where you live and that you and your friends are also making the most of the warm water and pleasant days while they last. (854 words)

* Omission phrases "mus(t) be" "we (h)ope that you are"

Horizontal lines for writing.