



Million Daffodils

I am always looking for new parks or features to visit across London. Sometimes investigations will turn up an overlooked item that was missed on other visits. The aerial view of the online map can reveal lots* of possibilities*. A few days ago I found something of especial interest at this time of year, whilst perusing images of some of the parks, and I knew I just had to go to the place as soon as possible*. The location was Hampton* Court Palace on the River Thames at East Molesey to the West of London. The target of my interest was The Wilderness*, a woodland garden on the north side of the palace and formal gardens. It was apparently full of a million daffodils, and so I did not want to miss this spectacular display.

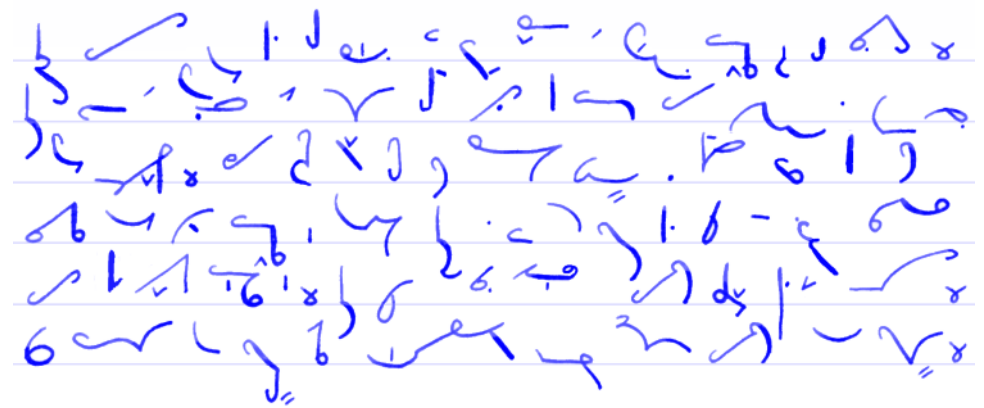
* "lots" Insert the vowel in this and in "masses" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "possibilities" Optional contraction

* Omission phrase "as soon as poss(ible)"

* "Hampton" Uses the Imp stroke, because in place names, the P sound is not omitted as it sometimes is in nouns, as context or grammar is no help with names

* "The wilderness" Not using Tick The, as it is part of the name, so written separately

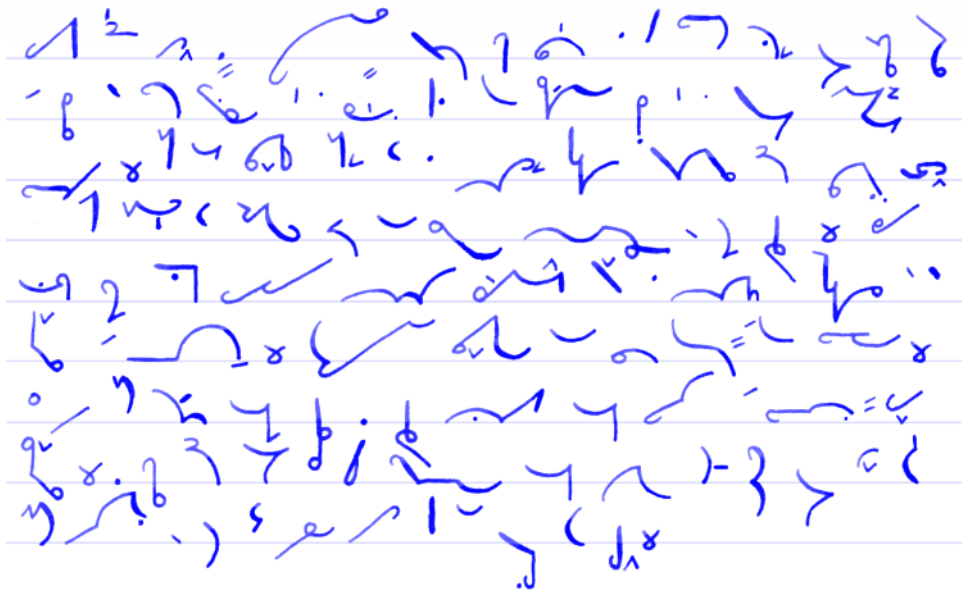


Million Daffodils

It would have been* wonderful if the day had been sunny with blue sky and fluffy clouds, but that did not happen. It was grey and overcast, and the early dawn rain had cleared away, leaving a thick mist over the countryside. As we travelled by train through central London, the tallest buildings had their heads in the low clouds, but fortunately it was not a cold or breezy day, just quite comfortable as long as one

had the right clothes on. It was still hat and gloves weather, despite the date on the calendar. This is normal for Britain, and it is unreasonable to expect warm weather in April.

* Omission phrase "it would (have) been" This phrase is not shorter than the full version, using V and hook N, but the join is easier and clearer



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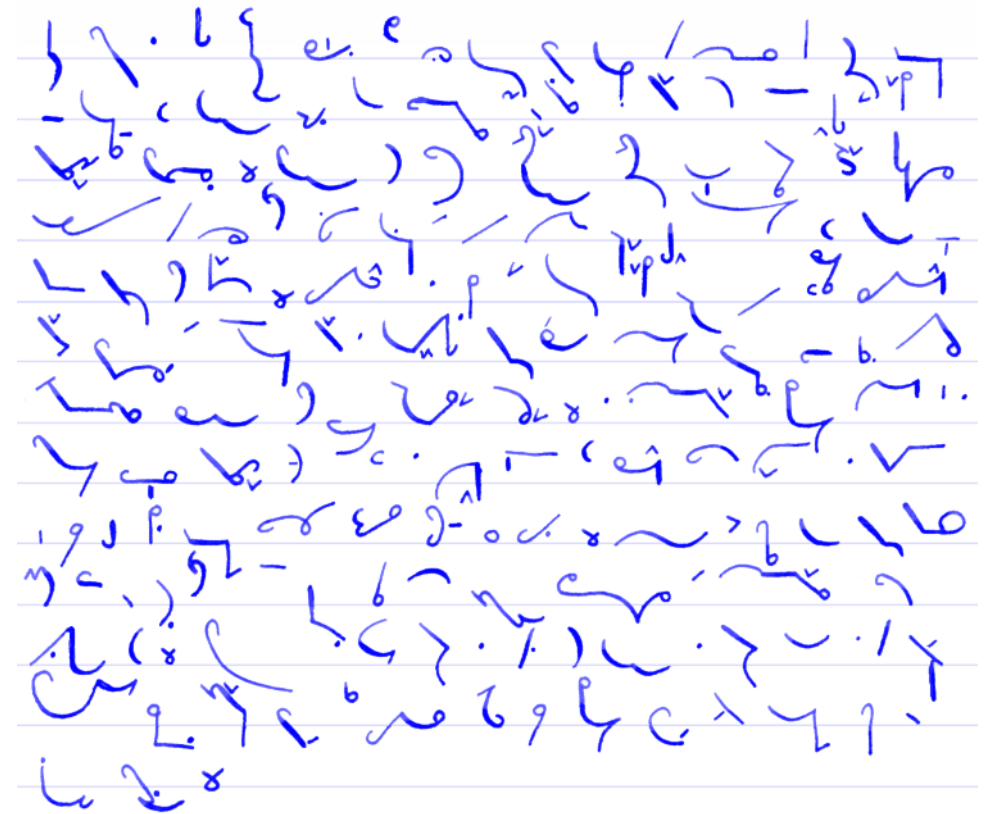
We had walked round The Wilderness before, during summer, a large grassy area full of trees, paths and seats, all very pleasant* on a sunny day for strolling, sitting on a bench and enjoying the greenery. I had not* the slightest idea that a million daffodil bulbs were sleeping underground, and had I known that,* I would have been here in spring many years ago to see the display. As we entered through the gate, we were immediately surrounded by a multitude of daffodils, of all types and colourings. They were not hiding in some far off corner. As our eyes roamed into the distance, the display merged into yellow and creamy* white stripes. The trees were only just breaking into leaf, so there was full light on them and I was relieved to see that the recent rain had not beaten them down.

* "pleasant" Insert the first vowel in this and in "pleasing" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "I had not" It is quicker to write it as shown here, and not use the halving method to show the "not", as that would necessitate adding the Dot Hay and vowel, to distinguish it from "do not". If you have already written it that way, then inserting the dots is quicker than rewriting it.

* "known that" The following comma in the longhand is essential, to help with reading

* "creamy" Insert the final vowel, as "cream-white" would also make sense



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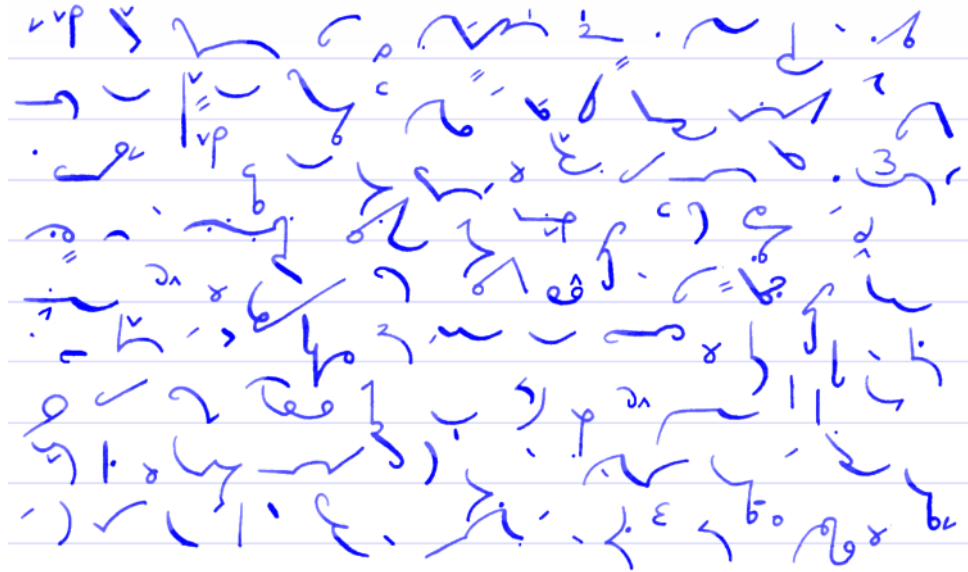
It was probably an advantage that it was not sunny, as that meant fewer people visiting, which makes it easier to get good photos* without having to wait for groups to pass by or go out of sight behind the evergreens. Everything was fresh and thriving, and there were* no patches of blind daffodils anywhere, which means that they are well fed and are left to die down naturally without being cut back before their time. We found a seat on the far side to have our sandwiches, surrounded by a variety of birdsong, mainly blue tits, great tits, robins and blackbirds, singing their ownership of various areas. A magpie suddenly landed on a branch close behind us, with a loud caw that sounded more like a bark, but he did not stay* to get the morsel that was thrown his way. Many of the trees have

bird boxes, and I was glad to see that they are quite deep, which is important to prevent squirrels and magpies from raiding them. Further along the path, a jay was having a bath in a large puddle, flashing the streak of bright blue on his wings, and then he suddenly flew up into the tree to continue preening.

* "photos" Helpful to insert the last vowel, and the diphone in "videos", as these are similar in outline and meaning

* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

* "stay" Advisable to always insert the vowel in this and in "sit" as they could easily be misread for each other, especially in phrases



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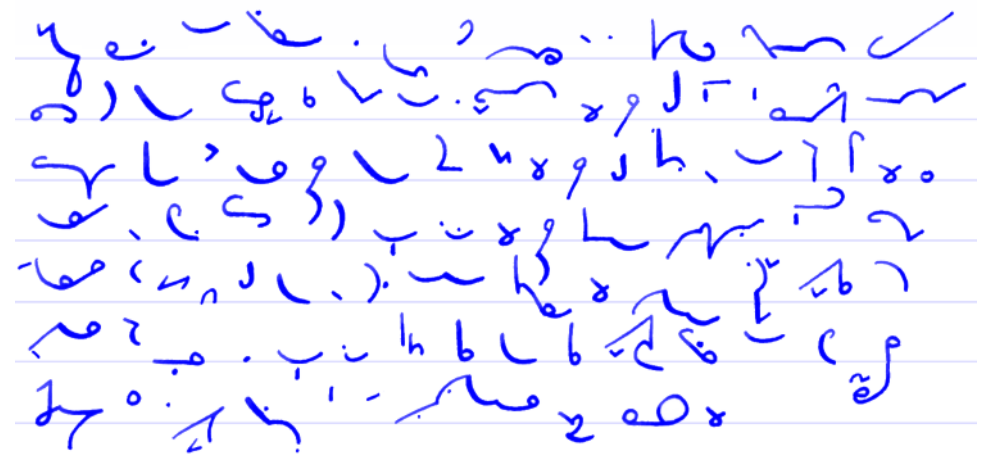
On the side by the perimeter wall is the Laburnum Walk, a long tunnel of arches covered in tied-in branches, with leaves and buds just beginning to emerge and that will be a glorious sight when it is in full bloom. Finally we came past the 300 year old Maze, made of impenetrable hedging and full of excited children, with their squeals and shouts echoing around. These were very happy sounds of well-behaved children having a great time, and all the daffodils were nodding in agreement. It was difficult to tear ourselves away from the magnificence and it would have been* no hardship to sit* around looking at it for the entire day. Fortunately the camera was full of lovely photos* and panning videos*,

and so I will have it all forever to relive and to share with you here as illustrations. (742 words)

* "sit" Advisable to always insert the vowel in this and in "stay" as could easily be misread for each other, especially in phrases

* Omission phrase "it would (have) been" This phrase is not shorter than the full version, using V and hook N, but the join is easier and clearer

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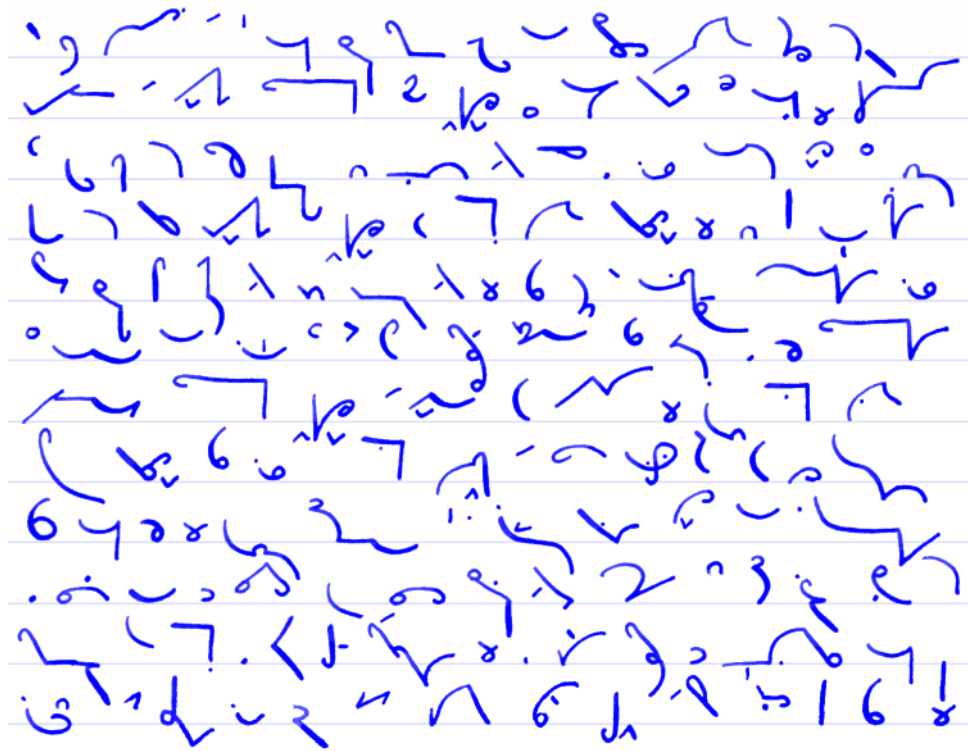
No Comment

I have just seen, in passing, a few short moments of a television programme where someone was being questioned on his part in a crime. He had been caught on security camera clearly doing all the things he was being asked about. He did not admit to any of it at all. His answer to every question* was "No comment". He was taking literally the caution from the officers that, "You do not have to say anything at present". Leaving aside the rights or wrongs* of that case, the "No comment" attitude does have

its rightful place in other situations, and it certainly has a real bearing on and relevance to shorthand success.

* "question" Optional contraction

* "rights or wrongs" Avoid phrasing this, as there is a standard omission phrase "right (or) wrong" which is also a common spoken phrase. If you phrased the one here, it would not be possible to know whether "or" or "and" has been omitted.



No Comment

All through learning and on into speed practice, and even in subsequent real life* assignments, your ability* to recall and write the correct shorthand outlines is only part of what is needed. It is likely that even during your very first* dictation, you came up against the "comments" in your mind, as you were* doing your best to write the outlines without getting left behind. You had no control over the speed of delivery and it was up to you to keep up. This issue of intrusive mental comments has nothing in common with all the other processes of shorthand writing*, that is hearing the words correctly, recalling the correct outlines, and writing them rapidly. If you get left further behind, those comments get louder and more insistent, although they may not form themselves into words. If you were working on a conveyor belt line in a factory, the same thing* would happen if someone sped up the machinery* beyond

what was comfortable, safe or practicable for getting the job done properly*. The whole process would collapse into confusion and the desperate comment would be, "Help, slow down, stop, I can't* do this!"

* Omission phrases "rea(l) life" "very (fir)st" "you (w)ere" "short(hand) writing"

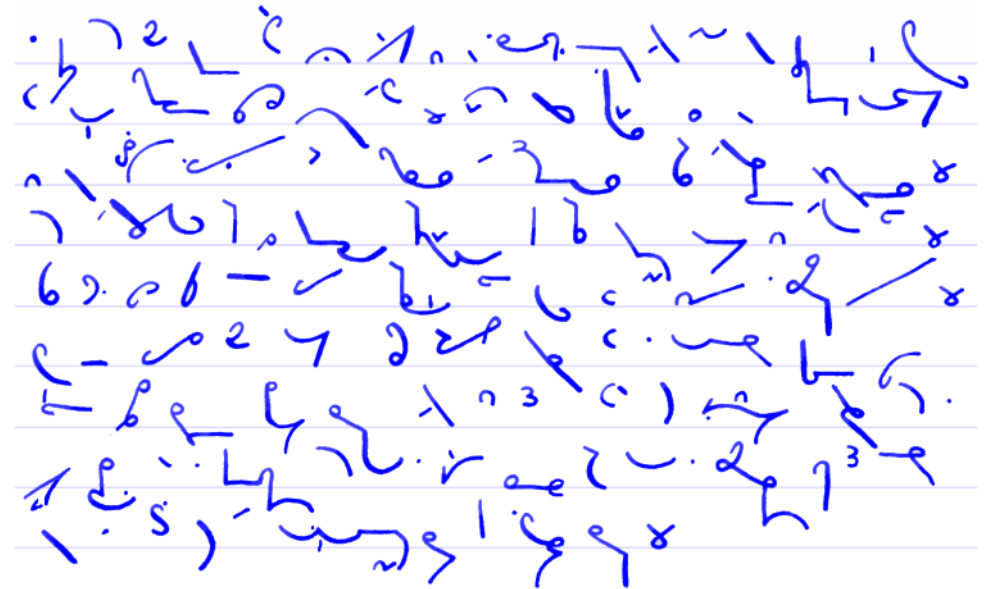
* "your ability" The disjoined B for the suffix -bility can be used for the whole word, where convenient and clear

* "same thing" Avoid phrasing, as that would look like "something"

* "machinery" Optional contraction

* "properly" Insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately", as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "can't" Essential to insert the vowel, to show it is an apostrophied version

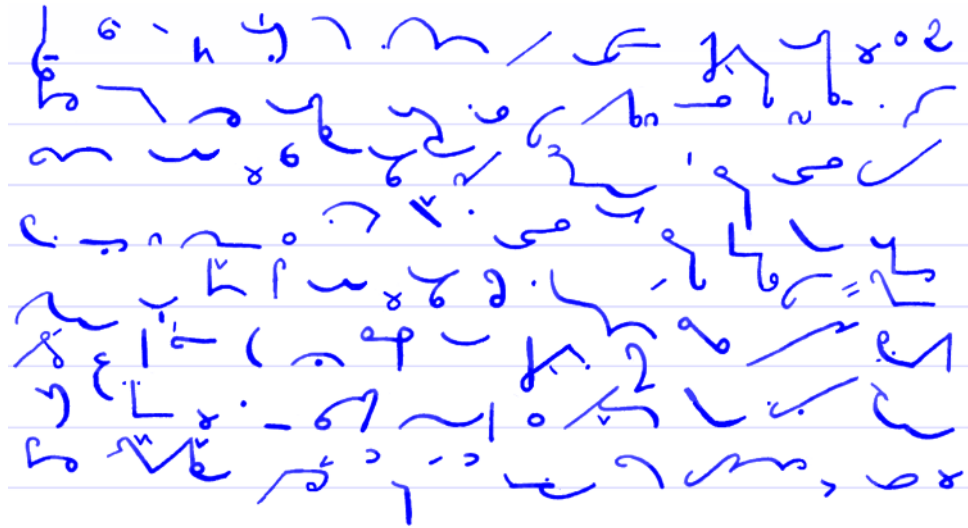


No Comment

A teacher or shorthand book author may urge you to concentrate, keep up and not be distracted, but further than that, no practical solutions may be offered. My best advice is to encourage you to be constantly aware of the presence and workings of this obstacle to progress. Your observation of it is the beginning of depriving it of its power to catch you off guard. This threat will not just go away of its own accord, even when you are a high speed writer. However good one's shorthand knowledge, there is always

the possibility that an unexpected difficulty will occur such as the speaker suddenly speeding up beyond what you thought was humanly possible or a real stinker of a technical term* or a whole succession of them in a short space of time*, during what you expected to be a bland, easy and innocuous speech at conversational speed.

* Omission phrases "tech(nical) term" "short space (of) time"



No Comment

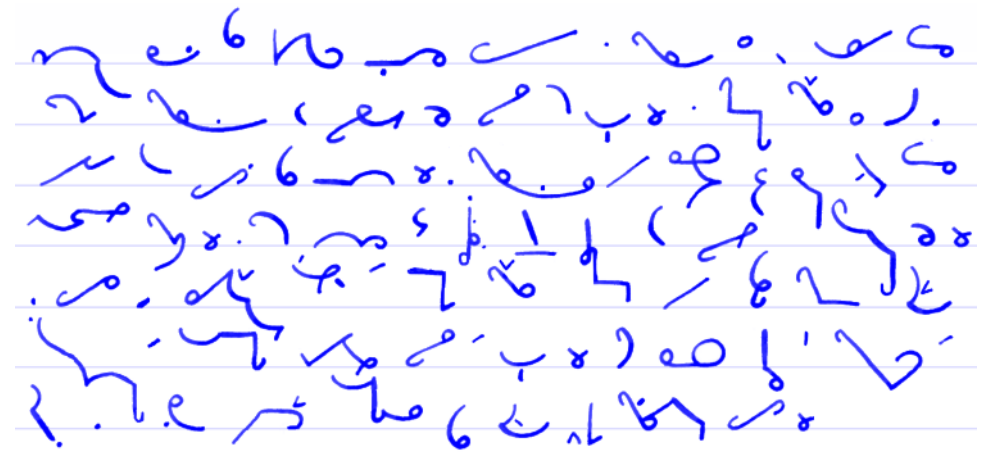
At those times, thoughts of doubt, unease or alarm are unwelcome and disruptive intruders. As shorthand capability improves, intrusive internal comments will reduce because you have a little more time* in hand. That is, unless you are working on speed increase, where every gain you make is matched by an increase in the speed of dictations being undertaken, leaving no time at all in hand. Unless there is a firm and well-practised response* when they do occur, they may succeed in disrupting through the surprise rather than the severity of their attack. A good soldier mentality is required, being aware of everything at all times* and prioritising

reactions, what to do and what to ignore, from one moment to the next.

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

* "response" This should always have the second vowel inserted, so it never looks like the contraction "responsible". Although they are different parts of speech, you don't have time to work out whether the context would make it clear.

* "at all times" Halving to represent the T of "time"



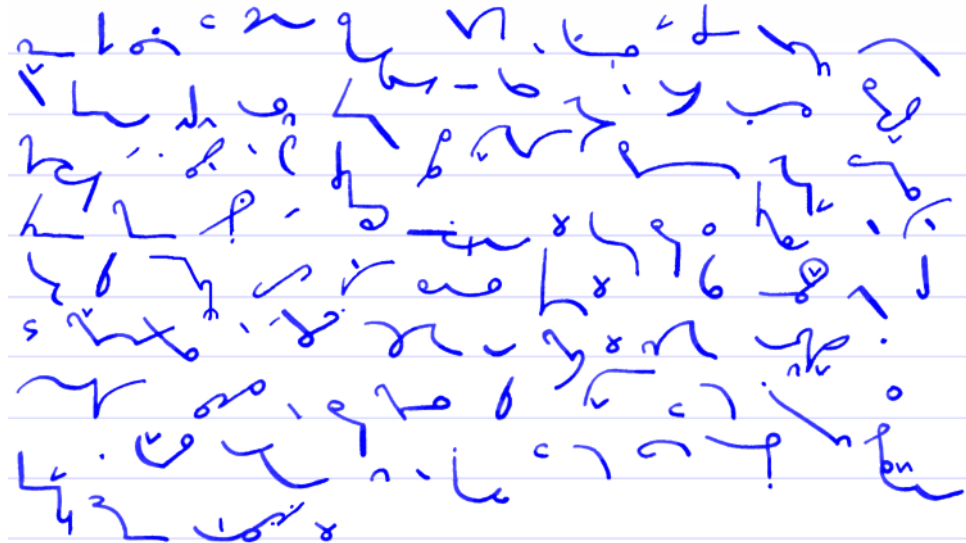
No Comment

You may have seen those television games where a person has to answer questions* from the presenter* without using the words Yes or No. An attractive prize is usually the reward for winning this game. The presenters are successful when they speed up the questions* and increase the pressure. The very moment that the contestants become distracted, they use the forbidden words. The ones who survive the onslaught and get the prize are those

who have practised saying Affirmative and Negative, to replace the Yes and No. Their success depends on preparation and establishing the safe reaction in advance, thus shutting out the prohibited one.

* "questions" Optional contraction

* "presenter" Insert the vowel before the N, so it is not misread as "person"

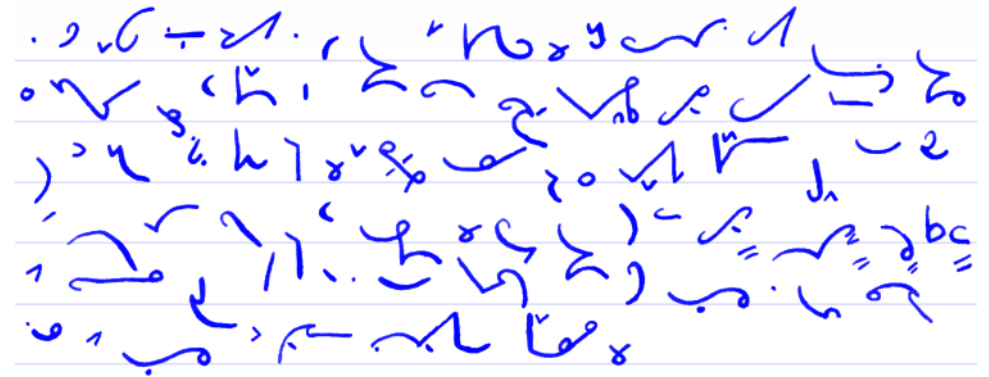


No Comment

You can do the same with shorthand writing*, strengthening the ability to focus* on the task before you, maybe by taking down the news, which can be quite fast and full of unusual names, specialised* terminology and a host of other distractions, such as the lively subject matter and video* clips, which you can practise resisting and ignoring. If your speed is at present too low for that, just capture one whole sentence at a time. This exercise should be done with the primary purpose of observing yourself under pressure. You will have neutralised a mental hindrance to speed progress, just like when your computer has deactivated a virus, enabling

you to continue with your more interesting and satisfying work unhindered. (805 words)

- * Omission phrase "short(hand) writing"
- * "focus, fix" Always insert the first vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning
- * "specialised" Always insert the diphthong, to differentiate it from "specialist" which has the same meaning
- * "video" Always insert the diphone, and a vowel in "photo" as these are similar in outline and meaning

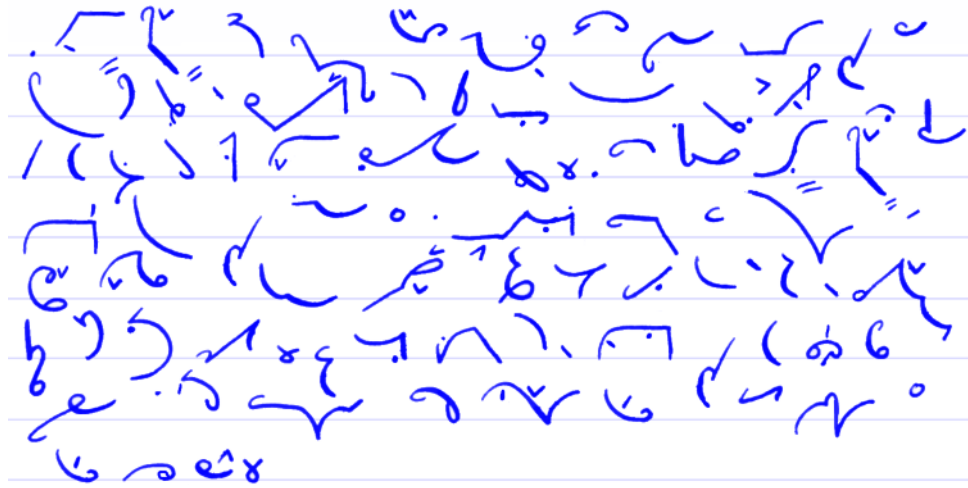


One Million Years BC

A short while ago I watched an old film on the television. I do not normally watch fiction films, as I prefer to spend that time on more fruitful pursuits, ones where I can see what I have achieved at the end of it. I suppose the answer to that is to write the dialogue down in shorthand, and maybe I will remember to do that next time*. However, the film was called One Million Years* BC and the characters did not have

much of a language, apart from their names, a few simple commands and the names of the local marauding dinosaurs.

- * Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) time"
- * "Million Years" Normally this could be phrased, but as it is a title, context would not help, and it if phrased could be mistaken for "millionaires"

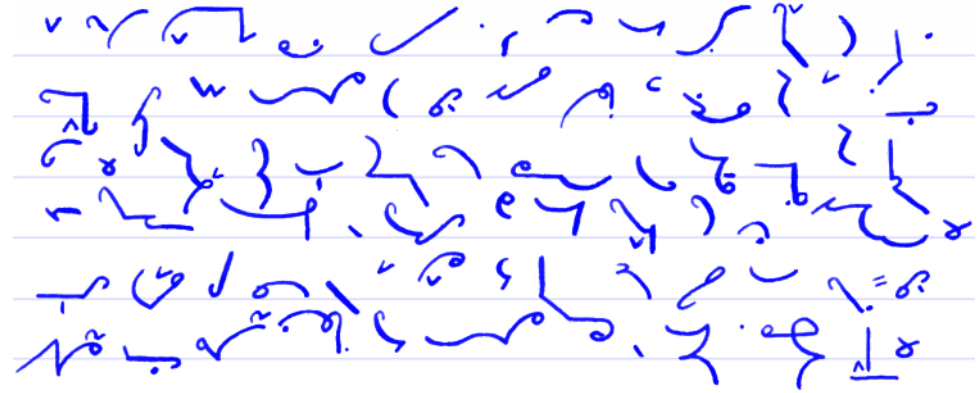


One Million Years BC

The Rock Tribe were primitive, violent and vicious, and more than willing to kill each other, in order to* further their position of superiority, or just to gain another piece of the roasted meat dinner, which they fell upon and ate like snarling beasts. The more advanced Shell Tribe looked after each other, acting as a co-ordinated group, with orderly and civilised lives, having realised

that this is the only way for all of them to survive the dangers of their harsh world. When they needed help or to locate each other, they summoned the others using a horn, clearly the very first* mobile phone, literally, as phone means sound.

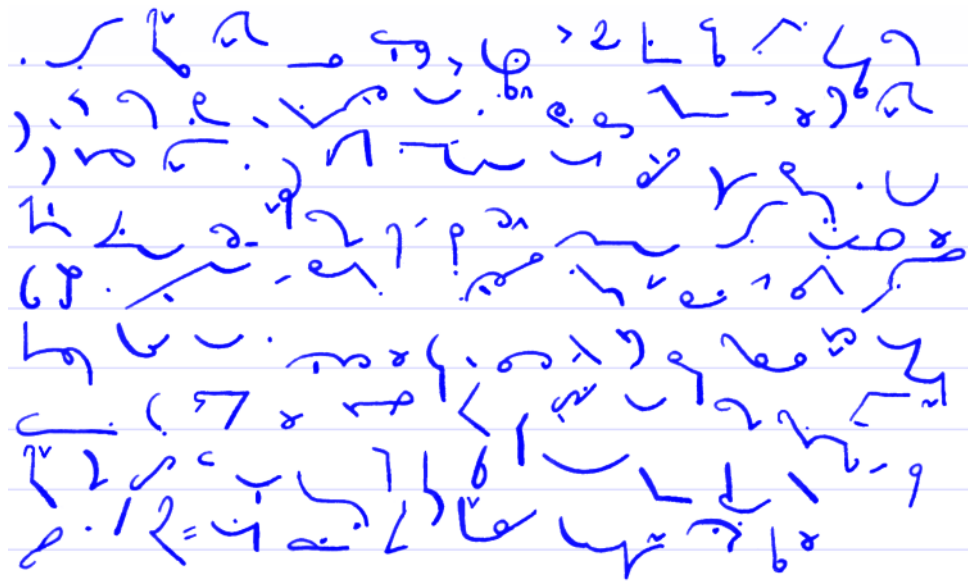
* Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "very (fir)st"



One Million Years BC

I particularly liked the scene where an old man in the Shell Tribe was teaching a crowd of children about the animals they hunt, and was illustrating with paintings of them on the cave wall. Obviously there was no escape from schooling even for those kids, although it would be of great practical

interest to everyone as that knowledge provided their meat and clothing. Current theories generally seem to be on the lines that the depictions were used in pre-hunt rituals to gain spiritual mastery over the animals, to ensure a successful outcome.

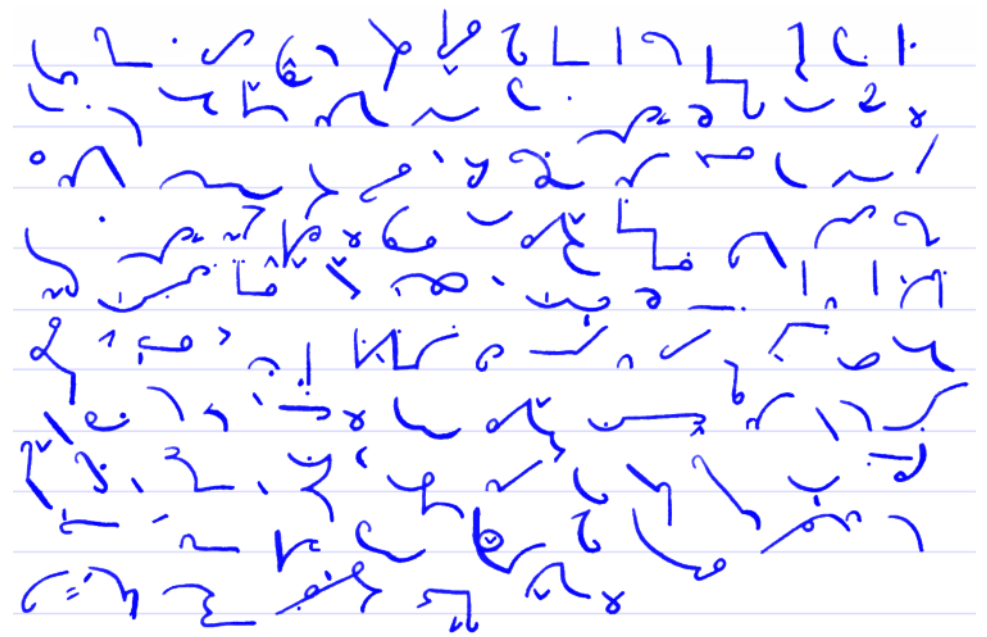


One Million Years BC

The Shell Tribe's life comes closest to the vicissitudes of the shorthand take, with its rapid changes from easy to hard, from safe to perilous, in a split second, and back again. Their life was almost like a seaside holiday, cavorting in the surf, easily spearing the fish, and at home shaking fruits from the tree and sitting around making shell necklaces. Then all of a sudden* a roaring and snapping allosaurus appeared on the scene and the happy

relaxed atmosphere vanished in a moment. They had to summon up all their speed, presence of mind, ingenuity, quick thinking and courage. Of course the chap who had wandered in from the primitive Rock Tribe was the one with no fear of it, it was just another big dinner-to-be, and he used a large sharp-ended stake on which the dinosaur eventually impaled itself.

* Omission phrase "all (of a) sudden"

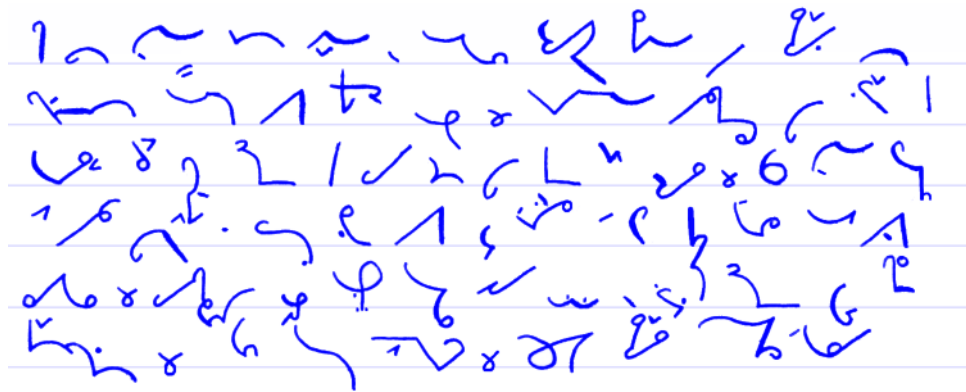


One Million Years BC

If you practise a one thousand word passage twice, and then take it from dictation, and do that every day for a year, in that time you will have written over a million words in shorthand. As you will be making full use of intelligent phrasing, you will of course have written much fewer than a million actual outlines. Lessons in survival tactics will be learned from the unrelenting attacks by the monsters of unknown words coming at you at ultra high speed, and the claws of the meat-eating pterodactyl will

not carry you away to its rocky nest, never to be seen or heard of again. Having survived the encounter, you will put your Shell Tribe brain to work, to ensure that next time* you are even better prepared, no casualties occur and you can deal with everything decisively, and then afterwards resume your well- ordered, methodical, resourceful and creative life. (600 words)

* Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) time"

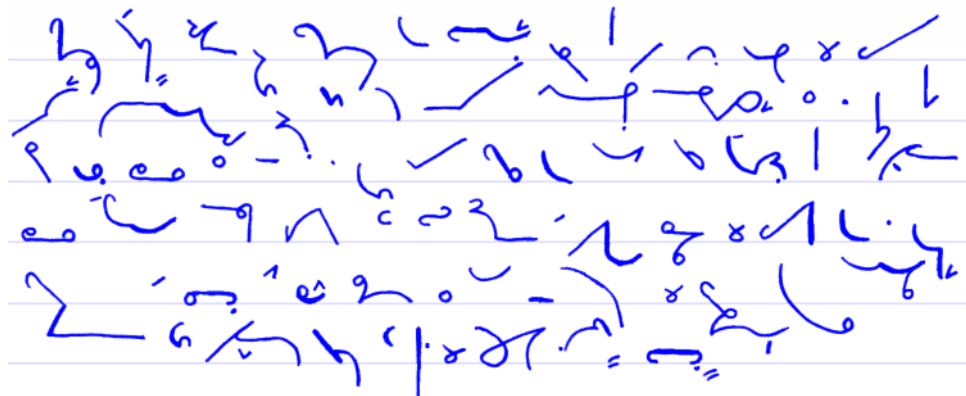


Short Letters 13

Dear Mr Long, I am writing to inform you that we shall be starting our highway improvement program in your road at the beginning of next month*. Parking restrictions will apply at various points throughout the work, which we estimate will take about two weeks*. This is long overdue and the result will be a clear safe road without the potholes and other

dangerous faults in the road surface. We trust* that you will understand the necessity for this and we intend to complete the work within the target timeframe. Thank you for your cooperation. Yours sincerely*, Highways Management Officer (100 words)

* Omission phrases "ne(k)s(t mon)th" "two wee(k)s" "We trus(t) that you will" "Your(s) si(n)cerely)

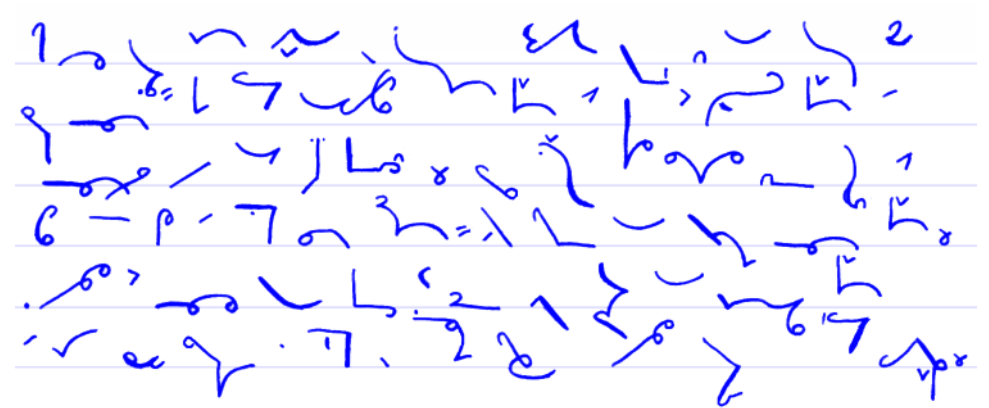


Short Letters 13

Dear Mrs Potter, I would like to thank you very much for agreeing to speak at our meeting next month*. We are really looking forward to hearing about your career and interesting experiences as a teacher at the special needs schools, as quite a few of our members have in the past volunteered at local schools offering

extra help with craft work and reading skills. We do have a video projector and screen, and the sound system is in good order. Please let me know if there is anything else that you require before that date. Your sincerely*, Albert Green (100 words)

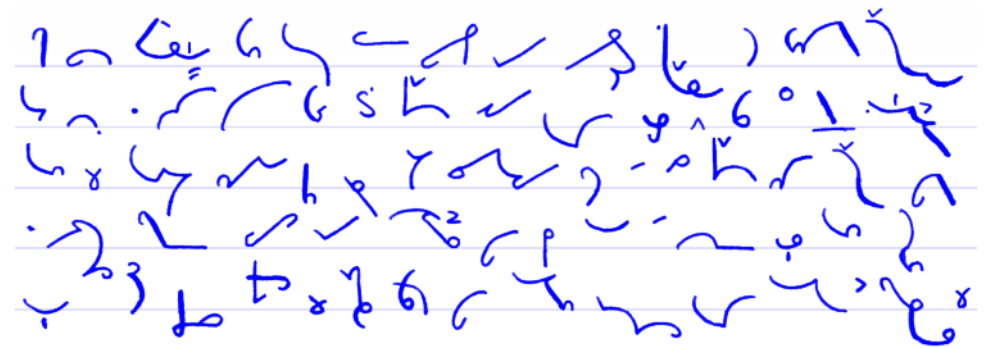
* Omission phrases "ne(k)s(t mon)th" "Your(s) si(n)cerely)



Short Letters 13

Dear Miss Fields, I am writing to confirm that we have booked you in for your shorthand speed exam at the college in one month's time and the details of the location, time and exam requirements are in the attached document. Please arrive as early as you can, so that you and the others can

settle and get some warm-up practice in before the exam time. The results of the exams being taken that week should be available in two months' time and I will send you separately a code to access the personal results page of the college website. (100 words)



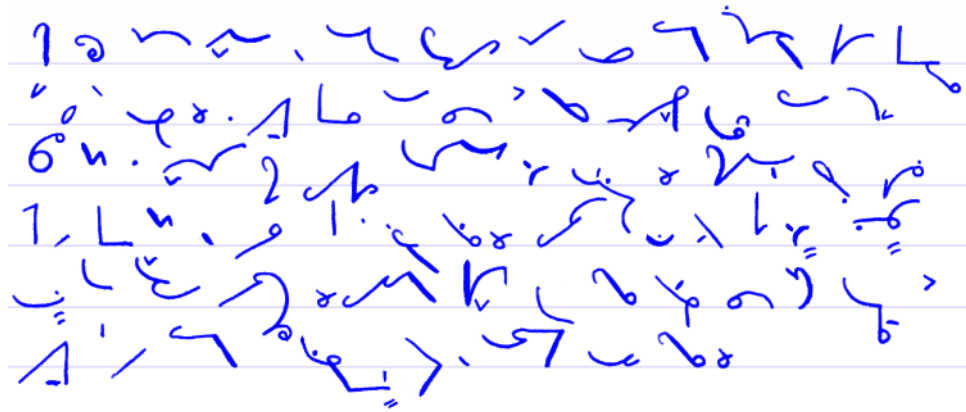
Short Letters 13

Dear Mr Johnson, Thank you for your call yesterday to our receptionist, advising us that you will be arriving for the meeting a little later than the planned time, and we fully understand how this has become unavoidable* for you. Fortunately, you are not due to speak until halfway through, and, as the time you will arrive will be a refreshment break, one of our employees will sit in and make notes for you, so that

you know what was discussed at the beginning. I trust* that this arrangement will enable you to remain fully informed of the proceedings. (100 words)

* "unavoidable" The similar word "inevitable" has full V and T strokes, in order to differentiate

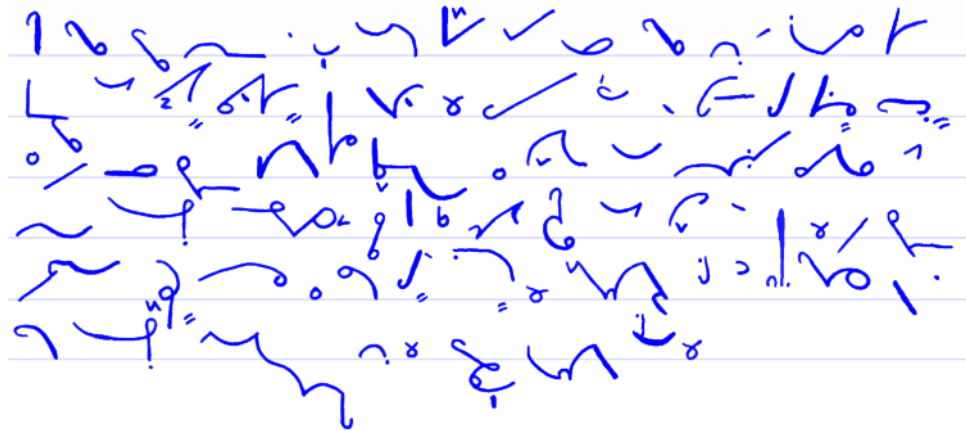
* Omission phrase "I trus(t) that"



Short Letters 13

Dear Friends, I am writing to inform everyone of our next club ramble which will take place on the first of next month. The route takes in some of the best countryside views in our area, as well as about a mile through the woodland following the old footpath. There are no steep hills and it

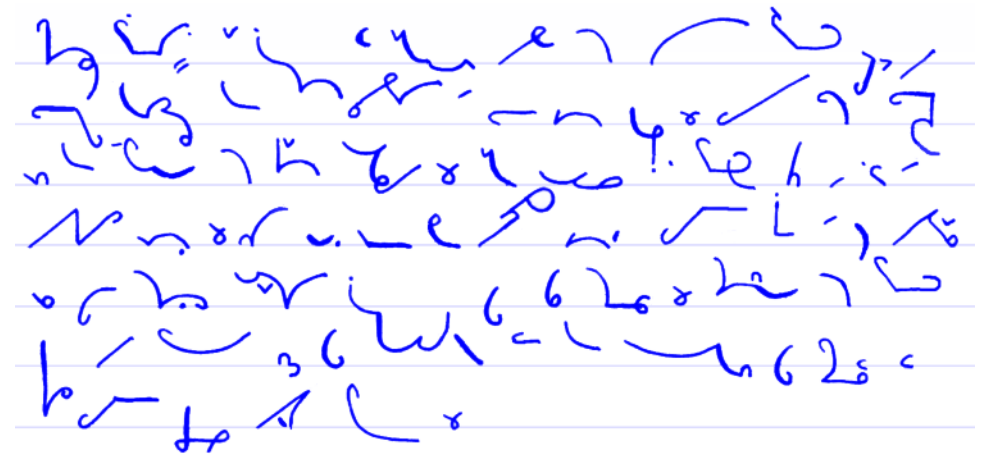
should take about two hours at a comfortable pace. We will end up at the Old Castle Inn for final refreshments. We would be delighted if members posted some of their photos of the route on our club Facebook page to encourage new members. (100 words)



Short Letters 13

Dear Members, Please make a note in your diary of our next members' meeting and conference which will take place in the Royal Hotel, details below. We are honoured to welcome General James Green as our guest speaker, who will be describing his life in military service and the many interesting experiences he has

had on his world travels in the line of duty. Our speaker regarding Society matters is Sir John Carr. I hope you will be able to attend what promises to be a very interesting and informative meeting. Please let us know if you will be attending. (100 words)



Short Letters 13

Dear Mrs Blackley, I confirm that I have now received your letter of application to join our group of volunteers for hospital and care home visiting. We are very grateful to you for offering your time in this way. I have enclosed an application form which you should complete and return to me. You will need to give several

references whom we can contact, and whose replies to us will remain entirely confidential within this organisation. Assuming your application details are in order, you would then be called for interview within three weeks, when we can discuss the role further. (100 words) (Total 700 words)

Blank lined area for writing a response to the letter above.