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## Blogs - 2019 - November

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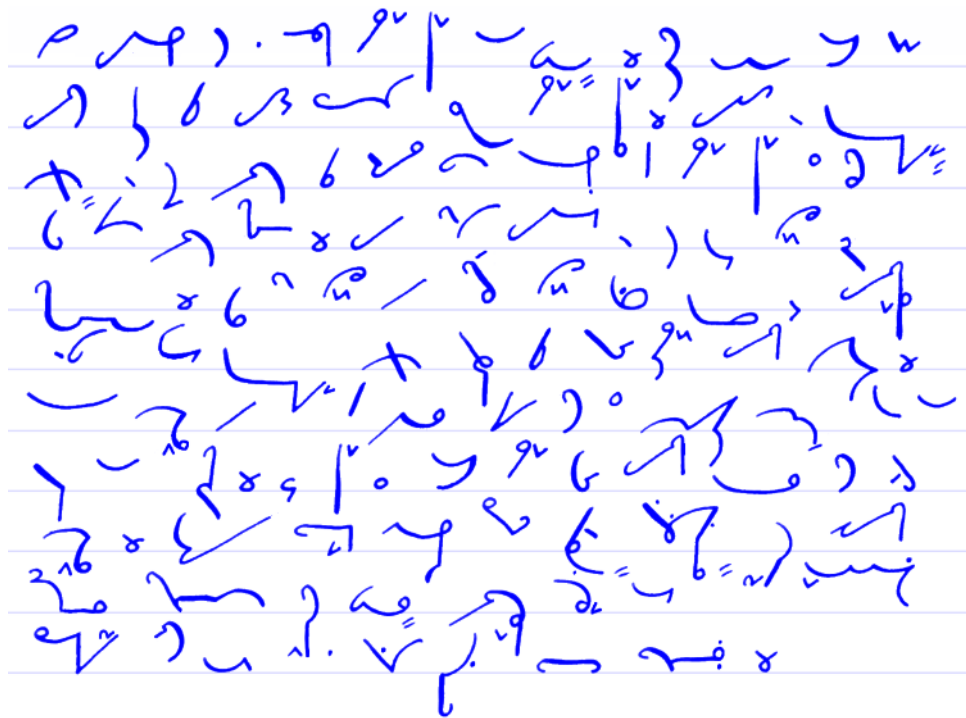
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PDF Date: 27 November 2019



**Drinking Lions**

Last Wednesday was an extra high tide in London. There was nothing unusual about the weather, it was just one of the normal "spring" high tides. We went to Victoria Embankment to see the river, which is always more interesting at high tide, as there is then much more\* river traffic. We particularly wanted to see if the lions would be drinking. These particular lions are bronze lion faces fixed to the waterside wall along the Victoria Embankment, positioned just above the highest\* water level. In their mouths are large rings which are there as emergency\* moorings for any boat in trouble. When the tide is unusually high,

then the water enters their open mouths. They were created and installed as part of Joseph Bazalgette's sewage and water works programme throughout London's riverside areas in the nineteenth century, and they are now a pale shade of green verdigris.

- \* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"
- \* "highest" Using halved S stroke, rather than loop, because of the triphone
- \* "emergency" Contraction that omits the N

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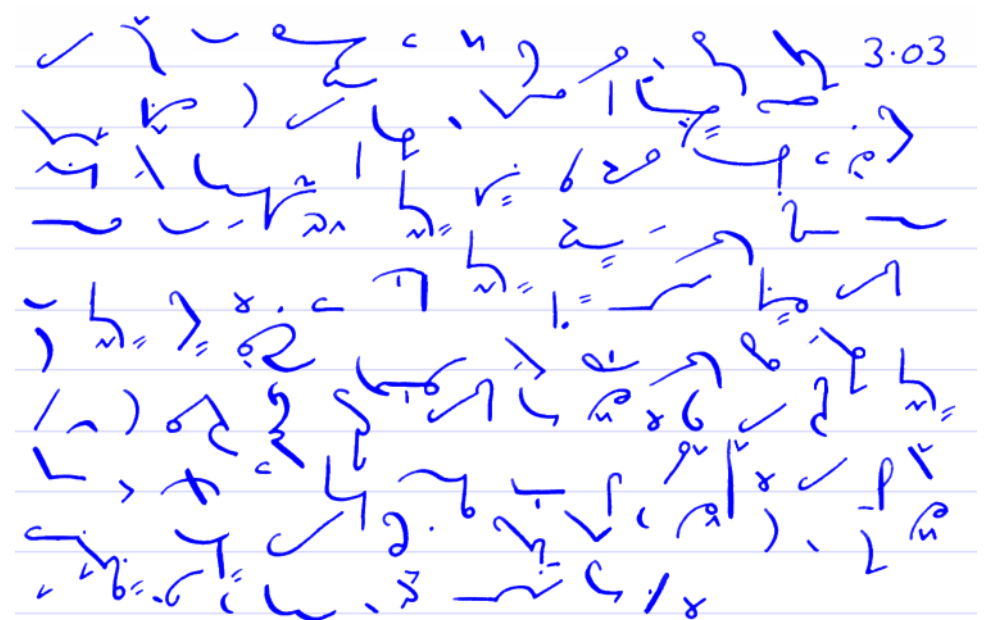
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**Drinking Lions**

We arrived in central London with about three hours to spare, before the 3.03pm deadline, so we visited the two parks at Vauxhall, crossed the bridge and ended up eventually at Tower Hill, which is always interesting with lots\* going on in and around the Tower of London, and river traffic going under Tower Bridge. The cold muddy tea-coloured Thames water was sloshing vigorously up the stone river steps opposite the Tower, which made us hopeful

that there would be plenty of water for the lions. Then we travelled back to the Embankment, with twenty minutes to go till high tide. We stood by Cleopatra's Needle, where there is a protruding part that allows us to see the lions on the wall, without having to point the camera over the edge.

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

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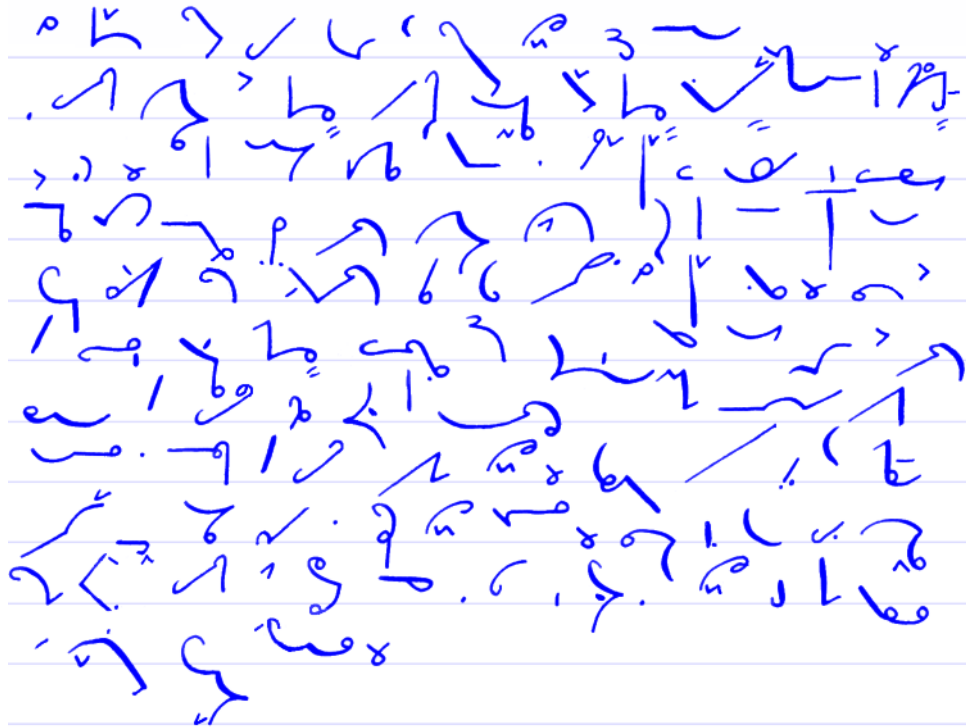
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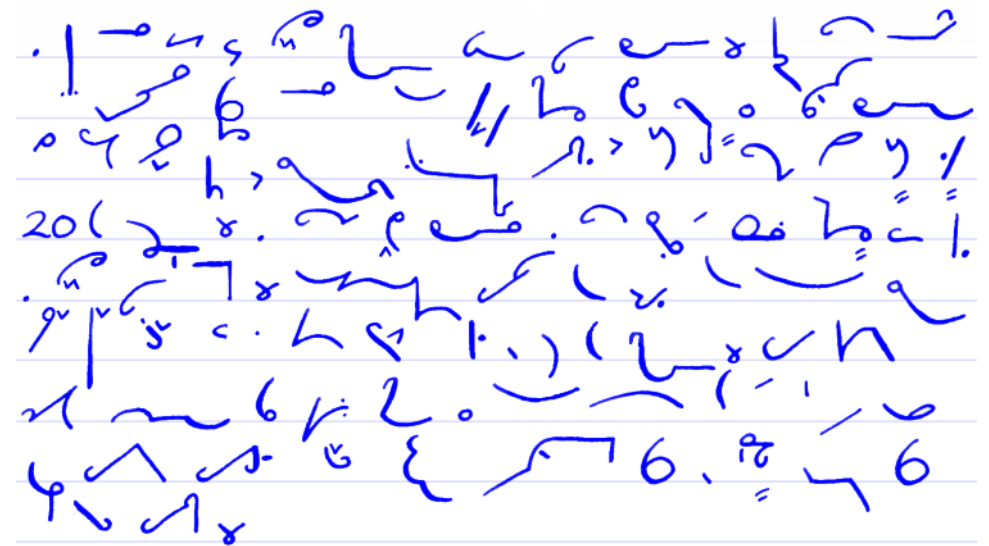
**Drinking Lions**

As the time approached, we felt that probably the lions were not going to drink. The water levels of the Thames are controlled nowadays by the Thames Barrier at Charlton to the east. It not only holds back a high tide when necessary, but closing the gates also keeps the city river level lower so that it can accommodate any flood surge from upriver, which is then released as the tide ebbs. Some of the large cruise boats and Thames clippers were zooming past in the middle of the river, sending large waves towards the shore at intervals\*, and I had the camera

ready, in case an extra large wave reached the lions. This would be rather cheating, though, and doesn't really count, unless you are a thirsty lion, of course. Some of them\* did have wet mouths from the choppy water and the splashes against the wall, but overall, the lions did not do the business and imbibe the fluvial offerings.

\* "intervals" It is the V stroke that is in position through the line

\* Omission phrase "some (of) them"



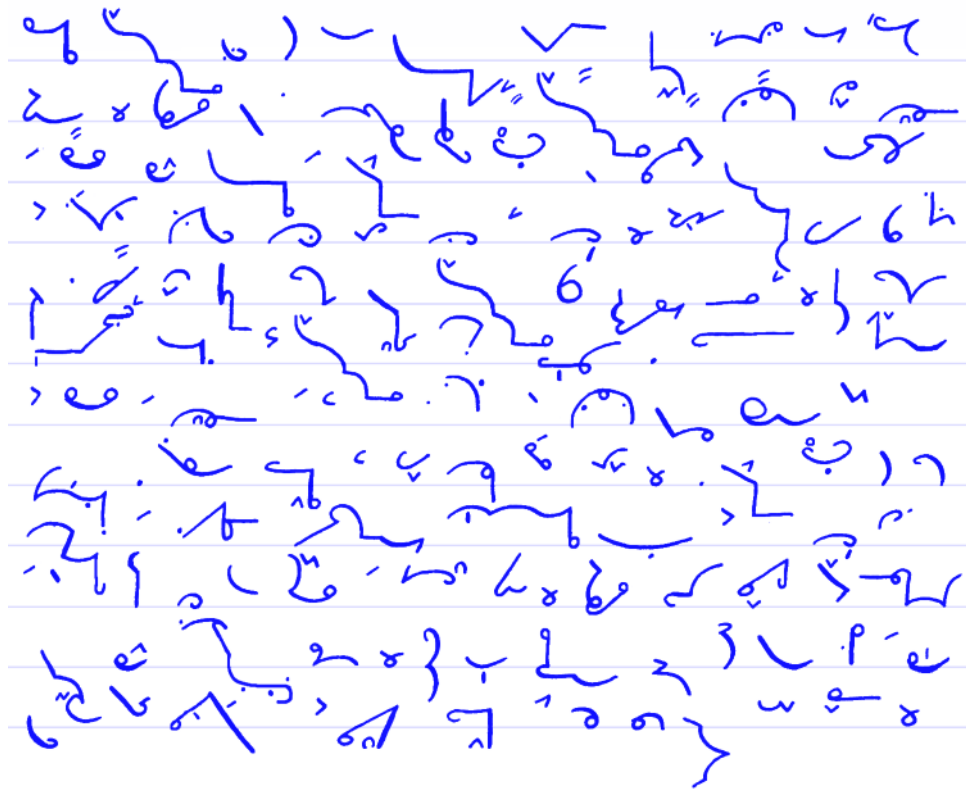
**Drinking Lions**

The ditty goes, "When the lions drink, London will sink". It would be more accurate to reverse this statement, because in geological terms southern Britain is slowly sinking, as the north rises, due to the springboard effect of the retreat of the ice from the last Ice Age 20,000 years ago. The more the south sinks, the more sips and swigs of Thames "cold tea" the lions will get. In the meantime, we will have to wait for another spring high tide, combined

with a much more\* blowy day, to see them drink. Whether it will be worth making this chilly journey is another matter, though, and on our next visit, we hope\* we don't find that they have relocated themselves to Scotland to keep themselves above water. (569 words)

\* Omission phrases "much m(ore)" "we (h)ope"





**Moon Landing Fireworks**

Sunday's fireworks event was in Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets, in the north of London. This was to be an impressive display of fireworks, laser lights, music and songs, sound effects and poetic narration, to celebrate the fiftieth\* anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission to land men on the moon. I wondered whether this attempt to tell a story might detract from the beauty of the fireworks themselves, but that was not the case. It was very well\* choreographed indeed, with the fireworks matching closely the character and timing of the songs and music, and with an array of laser beams swinging about, illuminating the passing clouds with white misty spots of light. The poetic narration was very imaginative and artistic, reflecting the momentous nature of

the moon landing and all that it meant for science and human\* achievement. All this was greatly heightened by the extremely powerful sound amplification system. There was no struggling to hear what was being said and sung, even above the hubbub of the huge crowd, and the words seemed to fill the night sky.

\* "fiftieth" Not using halving to represent the T, as that would make it too similar to "fifth"

\* Omission phrase "very (w)ell"

\* "human" Above the line following its second vowel, to distinguish it from "human" which is written on the line



**Moon Landing Fireworks**

The highlight of the 22-minute show was about six and a half\* minutes in, with the soundtrack from the mission control countdown and the sudden and loud ignition of the Saturn Five rocket, a huge illuminated outline of the rocket which sprung into flame, with sparkler effect at the base, slowly rising into the sky, pulled up by a giant crane. When viewing film of the real event, one is struck by how slowly the rocket rises, and this firework representation did the same thing, until it was suspended high over the trees,

continuing to burn to the end of the display. The evening was quite mild but chills went down the spine at the countdown and ignition. A little later we had the soundtrack of Neil Armstrong's "Giant Leap" statement. This was a truly wonderful show, where the fireworks added to the story, rather than being the only attraction.

\* "six and a half" A short line above a numeral signifies "half", also omitting the words "of the"

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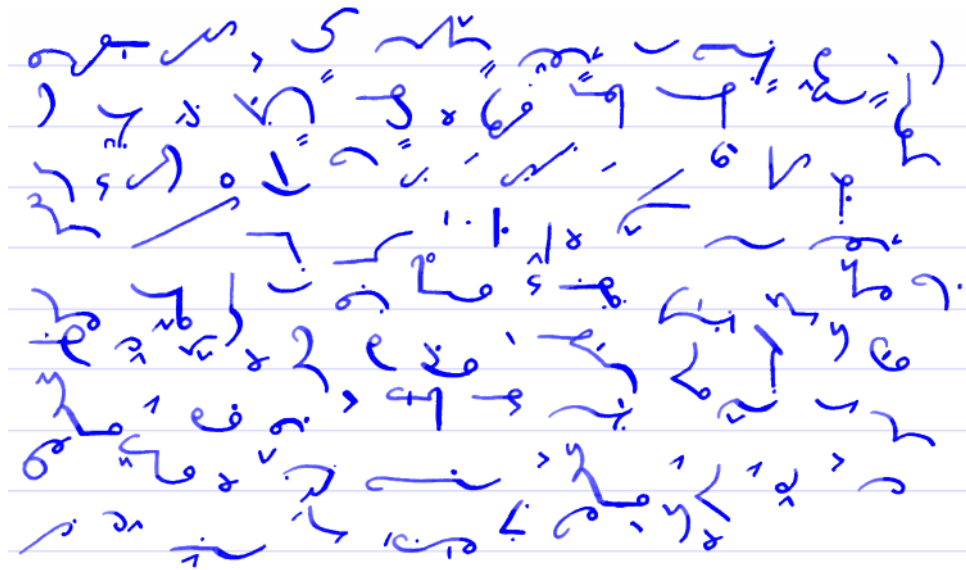


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**Polar Exhibition**

Some weeks ago\* we went to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, south London, to see their newly opened Polar Exhibition. This was of extra interest at this time of year, when the weather is becoming more wet and wintry, and our thoughts turn to staying\* warm rather than keeping cool on a day out. Like many museum rooms nowadays, it was in semi-darkness with the exhibits illuminated, to protect the items from an excessive amount of light. There\* were several paintings of explorer ships battling ice floes and icebergs, and the scenes seemed all

the colder because of the "moonlit" lighting in the room, as well as the quietness. I imagined the creaking of the icebergs and the ship, and the shouts of the men running around, echoing off the enormous jagged walls of ice.

\* Omission phrases "some wee(k)s ago" "there (w)erre"

\* "staying" Always put the vowels in "sit, seat, stay" and derivatives, as they are similar in outline and meaning

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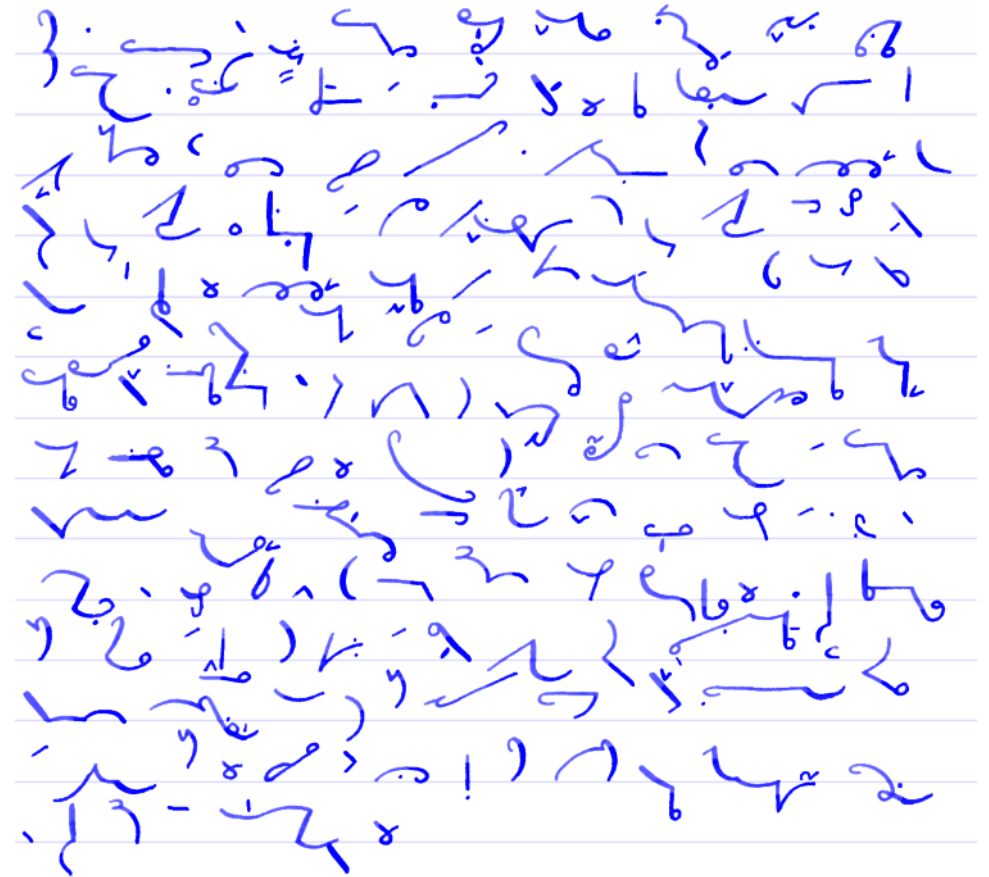
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**Polar Exhibition**

There was a collection of Inuit equipment, snowshoes, knives, harpoons, lightweight sledges, clothing, a narwhal tusk and carved bone. It is fascinating to look at real items that someone used, rather than a replica, although some museums have both, if the original is decayed and less recognizable, or if the original cannot stand up to being\* on display. Museums nowadays are much more\* informative than in the past, with sceneries projected onto the walls and floors, sound effects and video narratives by actors, all of which help us to imagine the situations and environments in which the exhibits were used. Further on was more clothing and equipment belonging to various explorers, again drawing my close inspection, and an effort of imagination, to understand just

how they kept warm in such severe conditions. The detailed descriptions\* of their journeys and outcomes was chilly and sober reading, especially horrendous when ships became imprisoned in sea ice and were crushed by the cracking and shifting ice. Stories of the men eating their leather boots and eventually freezing\* to death were quite unimaginable.

\* "to being" Based on the short form phrase "to be"

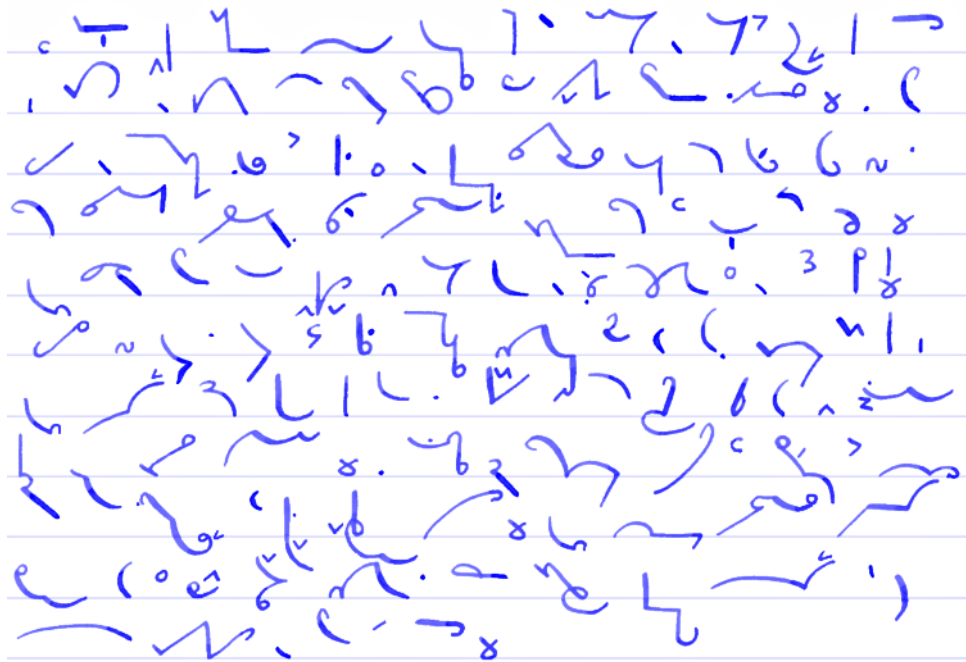
\* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"

\* "descriptions" The plural does not use the contraction, as that would be too similar to "discourse"

\* "freezing" "frozen" Always insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning







**Diary Day 5 - Midlands**

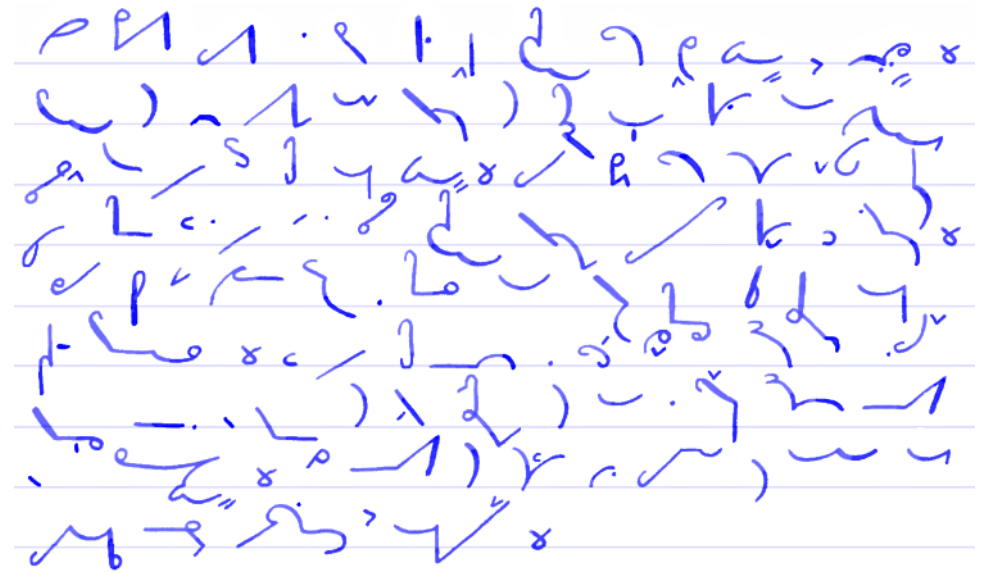
When I go out, I take many photos of it all, not only to enjoy seeing it again but also to help me remember the places in order\* to write the blog articles. The other way to capture the events of the day is to dictate the happenings into your phone, then you have a very handy reasonably\* slow recording to practise from, with no hard words. If you stumble over any outline, you only have to consult yourself as to what you said! Once you have filled a page with the day's activities, you will have done the shorthand without thinking too much\* about it, but if you really were doing it for a diary or journal, just think how annoying it would be to have to use longhand. The

entries would be very much\* shorter, with spur of the moment abbreviations that defy deciphering later on. If you make the recordings regularly, saving them as sound files, you will have a stock of personal dictation material on easy matter to return to over and again.

\* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

\* "reasonable" Insert the final dot, as "reasonable" would also make sense

\* "too much" "very much" Including the M stroke enables the phrase to be made



**Diary Day 5 - Midlands**

Last Saturday we had a special day out travelling from south London to the Midlands. Everything was made ready the night before, so there would be no delay in leaving the house for our planned train into London. We set out\* very early while it was still dark, with an hour and half's travelling before the winter daylight would appear. As we stood on the local platform, the tracks in both directions just disappeared into total blackness. When our train came, the front lights were shining beacons, coming to pick us up and transport us in a bright warm carriage to central London. As the

carriage was so well\* lit, we could not\* see anything in the windows except the reflection of the interior.

\* "set out" Halving for the T of "out"

\* Omission phrase "so (w)ell"

\* "we could not" Generally the short form "could" is best not phrased, as in most cases in could be misread for "can", but here it is safe to phrase it because of the following "not", which is entirely different from the short form "cannot".

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper, corresponding to the text on the right.

**Diary Day 5 - Midlands**

Then we took an underground train to the main station at Kings Cross, for our intercity train that would take us northwards. We were very early for our planned train, so we were able to get on the one before, saving us a half hour wait. It was still dark, but the traffic of passengers was starting to increase. People with wheeled suitcases were marching purposefully everywhere, or standing looking at the big departures board on high.

Stations like this have an air of excitement, as people are making bigger journeys than just flitting around the town. When someone is hurrying to a platform gate, I find myself rooting for them, hoping they don't miss their train. I prefer to have large margins of time between connections, rather than arrive in a stressed rush with only minutes to spare. As it was, our early arrival added half an hour to our day with friends, which was very satisfying.

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper, corresponding to the text on the right.

**Diary Day 5 - Midlands**

About fifteen minutes into the journey, the sky changed from black to grey, then to light grey. By the time we could faintly see the scenery, we were out of the north London suburbs and getting into open countryside. The land is much flatter here than where we live, and we passed flooded fields, water channels, streams and rivers.

I was taking pictures of them, with difficulty due to the low light and the speed of the train, and at one point I saw the white streak of a large lake. I managed to get a photo on my phone, which on inspection turned out to be several fields of solar panels reflecting the grey dawn sky, and not a lake at all.



**Diary Day 5 - Midlands**

After our train journey, we took a local bus to the desired part of town, not too far\* away. Not knowing the roads\*, I would have to watch the route\* carefully as the bus went round the back streets, and take a guess at where to get off. I glanced up at the bus window but could only see, as I thought, a dirty brown wall. It would be OK when we got moving, I thought. Then I realised it was the glass covered in mud splashes, and, looking round, all the windows were in the same state. Only the driver could see out! We had to follow the

route on our phone maps instead, watching our progress as the blue circle moved over the map. It was actually easier that way, because all the road names were there in front of me. I am giving the bus company the benefit of the doubt and assuming that the bus wash facility was out of order.

\* "too far" On its own, "far" has full strokes

\* "roads" "route" Insert the vowels, as they are similar in outline and meaning

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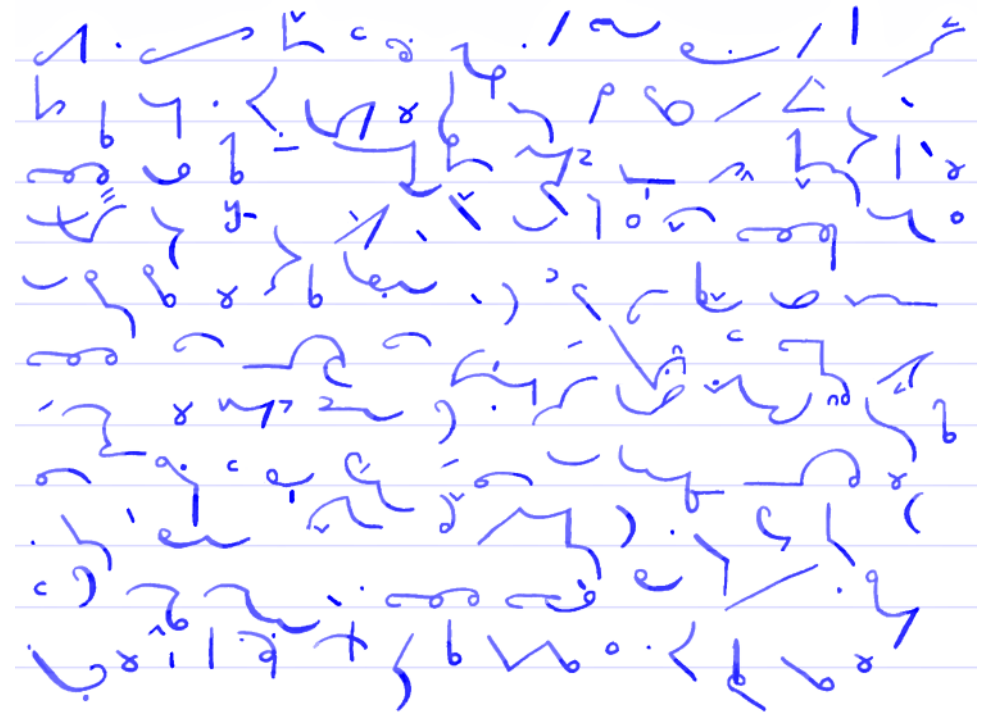
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**Diary Day 5 - Midlands**

We had a wonderful time with friends and visited a large garden centre, which had really turned itself into a shopping village. At this time of year such places are chock full of Christmas things and it is quite entertaining and enjoyable to go round and admire it all. Unfortunately for them, I don't feel the urge to buy any of it, as my Christmas tree never has any spare space. It is fascinating to see what people will design next to make Christmas more colourful, more illuminated and populated with creatures real and mythical. I enjoyed

walking through a little forest of artificial fir trees, some sprayed\* with snow fluff, and some in fantastic colours. The pair of singing life-size reindeer was a bit over the top though, with their mouths moving to a Christmas crooner's song, rather a strange combination. But it arrested my attention, which was its purpose as a shop display piece.

\* "sprayed" Insert the vowel, as "spread" would also make sense

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