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Blogs - 2013 - August

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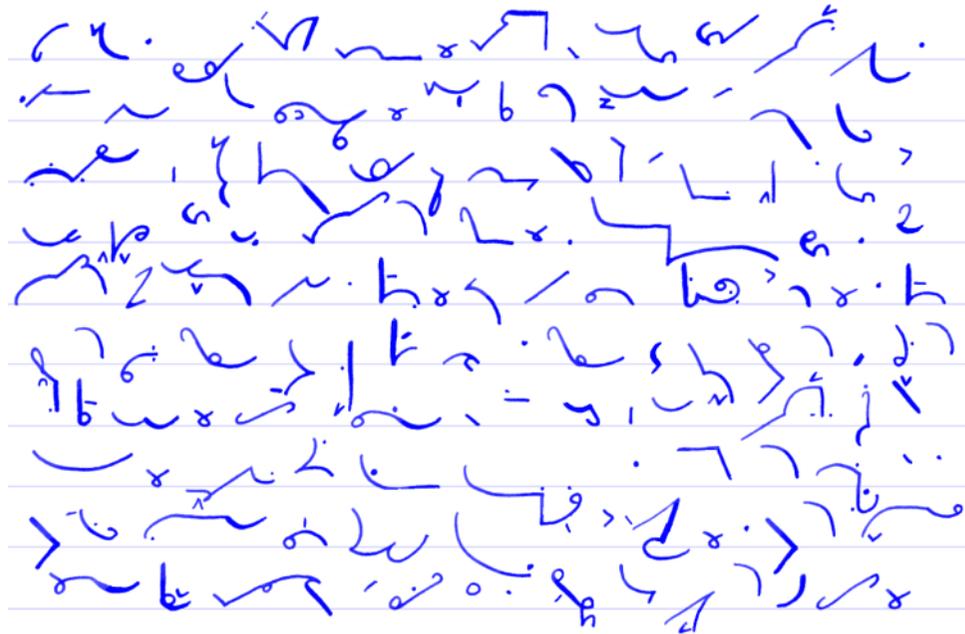
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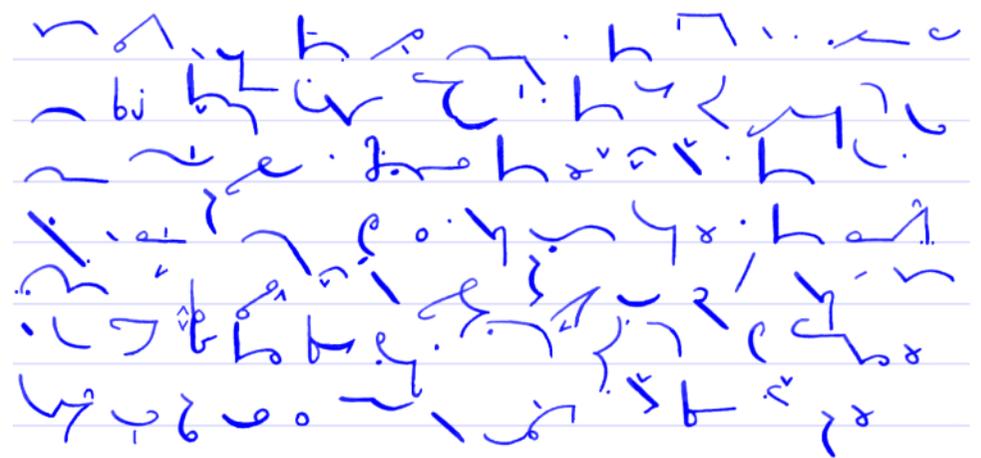
Shorthand For Dummies?

Well, I have a sincere apology to make. I regret to inform you that you are really reading an article written for someone else. I know it is very annoying, and maybe even embarrassing, but I think that it may be necessary to just make the best of it and pick out a few of the new outlines that you need to learn or practise. The fact of the matter* is that you, the shorthand learner/enquirer, are not a dummy. Here are some definitions of the word: A dumb, stupid or silly person, fool, idiot, dolt, mute, a person without the power of speech or who says or does nothing. One seeming to act independently but in reality controlled

by another. Counterfeit, sham, fake, fictitious, a copy or imitation of an object often lacking some essential feature of the original. An object or likeness of something designed to resemble and serve as a substitute* for the real or usual one.

* Omission phrase "fact (of the) matter"
See more ways to abbreviate "fact" phrases at www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/phrasing4-omission.htm#OmittingConsonant

* "subs(t)itute" Omits the first T



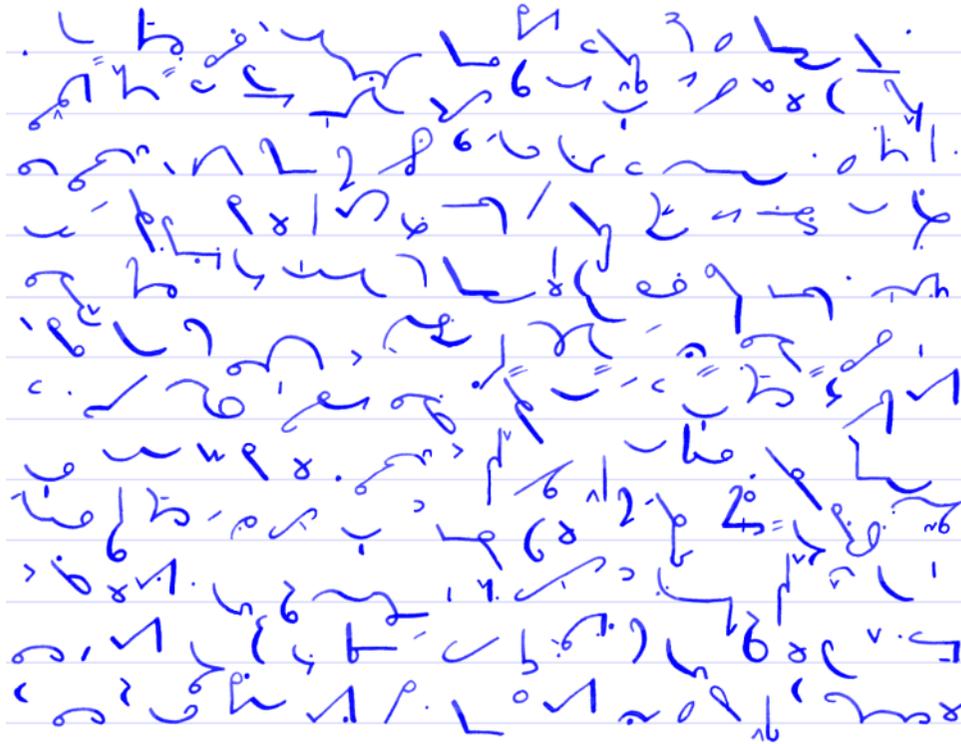
Shorthand For Dummies?

I am happy to undertake dummy runs, make up a dummy copy of an article in order to* improve its content, admire fashionable clothing on a dummy in the shop window or even make my own using a dressmaker's dummy. I might buy a dummy for a baby to suck, although maybe soother is a better name for it. A dummy security alarm on the outside of the house might be useful, although the real thing would be much better, and I am all for crash dummies testing the safety of a car

chassis or other equipment. Fortunately none of these things is going to be insulted* by the description applied to them.

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

* "insulted" It would generally be downward L after N or Ns, as in "insult, insulate, noisily, only" etc, but here needs to be upward in order to join the T stroke

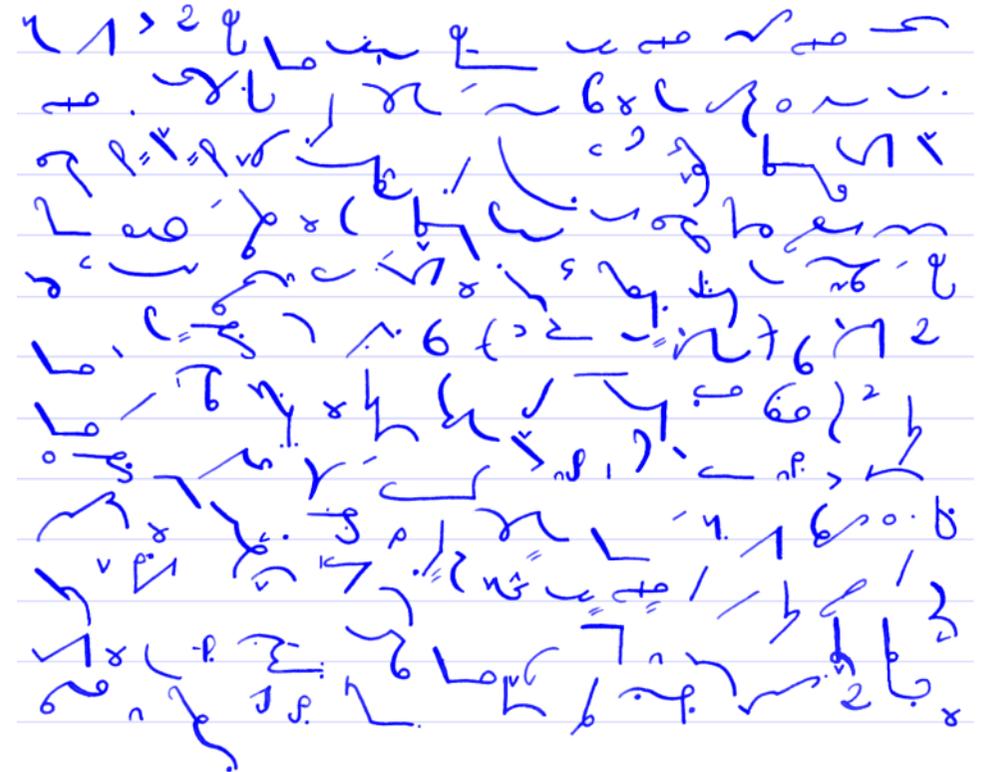


Shorthand For Dummies?

The "For Dummies" series of informational books started when computers were first beginning to become a household item, in order to* overcome the gulf between those in the know and "the rest of us". They provided some humour to help break through the resistance that is often felt when making a first attempt at a new and possibly complicated subject. It also fits the cover much better than saying "Explained in vastly simplified terms for the uninformed or beginner"! They have since spread to cover a multitude of subjects, being very similar to the long-standing "Teach Yourself" and "Made Simple" series, but with a greater emphasis on using the simplest possible language and with no assumption that the reader already knows anything about the subject. The humour of the title rules out in advance the possibility* of taking offence at this

assumption and lets one know what to expect within. They are the opposite of the jargon-filled specialist* manuals of the past. I read a few of these many years ago but I did wonder what effect the title might have on someone who already feels that they fit the description, and whether it would consolidate their view of themselves. However, I concluded that someone of that opinion starting to read such a book has already made the first step out of that frame of mind*.

- * Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "frame (of) mind"
- * "possibility" Optional contraction
- * "specialist" Essential to insert last vowel, to distinguish from "specialised"

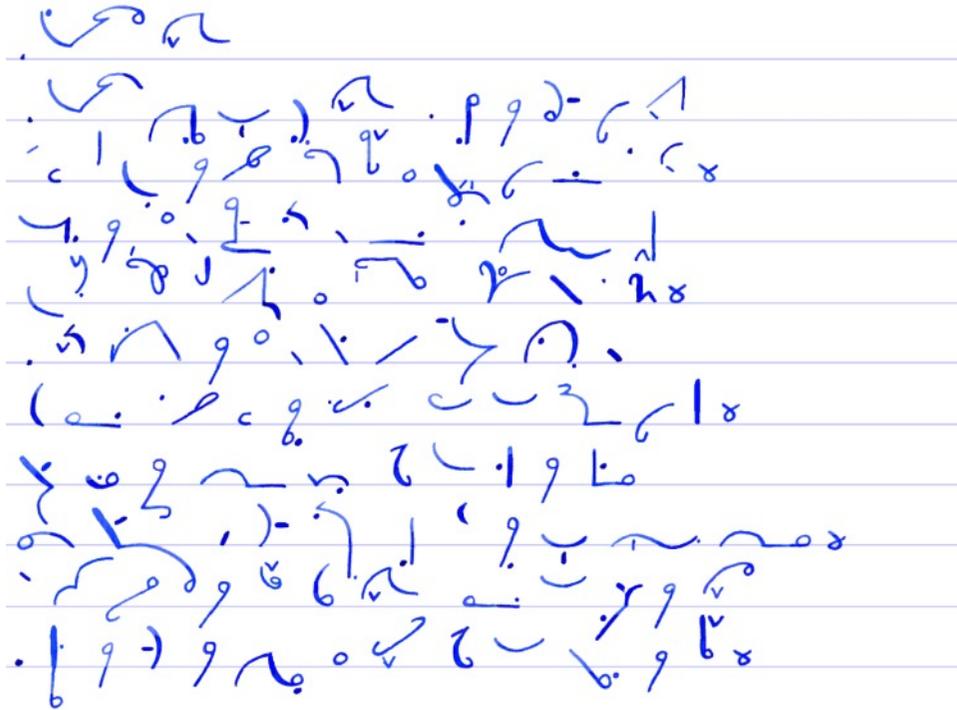


Shorthand For Dummies?

I have read all the shorthand instruction books, including Instructor, New Course, Modern Course, Commercial Course, the Anniversary Edition, Teach Yourself, and many others. Every one of them is written in a simple step-by-step* style, introducing each feature with short and precise descriptions*, followed by practice sentences and passages. They describe everything in the simplest terms using the minimum of words, with neither humour nor apology. Compared with the present-day tendency for manuals and instruction books to over-explain or repeat themselves (what I call hand-holding), these older shorthand books are models of brevity. At the time they would have generally accompanied class lessons, so that what the teacher has explained could be reviewed easily and quickly by the student but they are all equally* suited to the home learner. Obviously, the exception is the Teach Yourself book and I did read this one

as a taster before I started my college year, although I found the New Course, which our teacher used, much easier to read. If studied methodically, any of these books will get you to your desired destination, as long as you persevere and do not stint on practising time, which is the mainstay of learning shorthand.

- * "Step-by-step" can also be written as an omission phrase, see www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/phrasing5-omission.htm
- * "descriptions" The singular "description" is a contraction, but the plural has to be full outline, so it doesn't look like "discourse" which is similar in meaning
- * "equally" The short form does not have a dot for the ending, but you could insert one if necessary



Eeze Alphabet

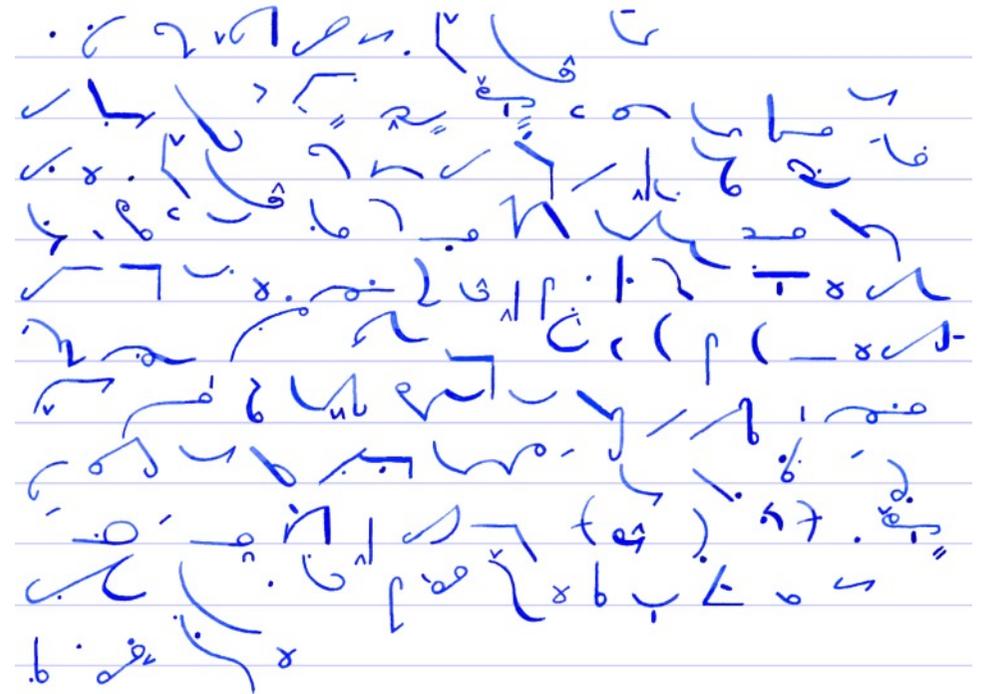
THE FARMER'S* LIFE
 The farmer leads no E Z life,
 The C D sows will rot,
 And when at E V rests from strife,
 His bosom will A K lot.
 In D D has to struggle hard
 To E K living out,
 If I C frosts do not retard
 His crops, there'll* be a drought.
 The hired L P has to pay
 Are awful A Z too;
 They C K rest when he's away,
 Nor any work will do.
 Both N Z cannot make to meet,
 And then for A D takes,
 Some boarders, who so R T eat,
 That E no money makes.

Of little U C finds this life,
 Sick in old A G lies,
 The debts he O Z leaves his wife,
 And then in P C dies.

* "farmer" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "former farmer"

* "there'll" Insert the intervening circle vowel, otherwise it would read as "there will", see www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/phrasing7-misc.htm#contractedapostrophe

THE FARMER'S LIFE The farmer leads no EASY life, the SEED HE sows will rot, and when at EVE HE rests from strife, his bosom will ACHE A lot. INDEED HE has to struggle hard to EKE A living out, if ICY frosts do not retard his crops, there'll be a drought. The hired HELP HE has to pay are awful LAZY too; they SEEK A rest when he's away, nor any work will do. Both ENDS HE cannot make to meet, and then for AID HE takes, some boarders, who so HEARTY eat, that HE no money makes. Of little USE HE finds this life, sick in old AGE HE lies, the debts he OWES HE leaves his wife, and then in PEACE HE dies.



Eeze Alphabet

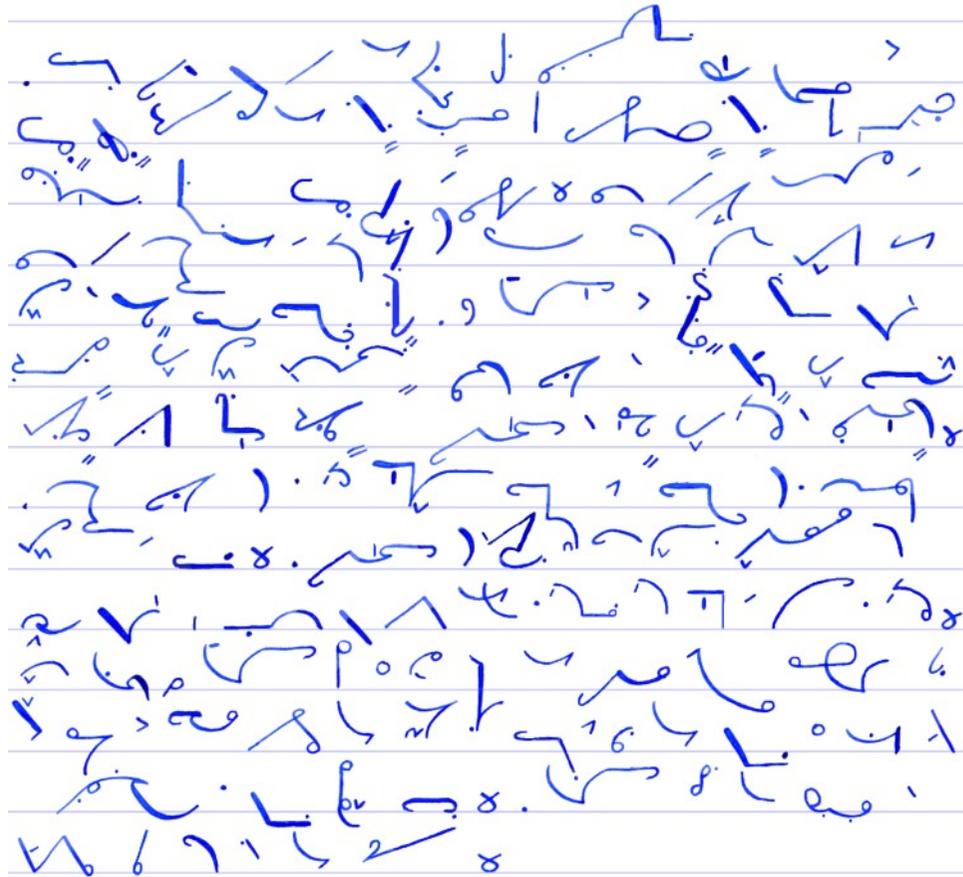
A WAIL FROM THE WILD WEST – THE TYPE PHOUNDER'S PHAULT
 We begin the publication of the Rocay Mountain Cyclone with some phew diphphiculties in the way. The type phounders phrom whom we bought our outphit phor this printing ophphice phailed to supply us with any ephs or cays, and it will be phour or phive* weex bephore we can get any*. The mistaque was not phound out till a day or two ago. We have ordered the missing letters, and will have to get along without them till they come. We don't lique the loox ov this variety ov spelling any better than our readers, but

mistax will happen in the best regulated phamilies, and iph the ph's and c's and x's and q's hold out we shall ceep (sound the c hard) the Cyclone whirling aphter a phashion till the sorts arrive. It is no joque to us – it's a serious aphphair. (692 words)

* Omission phrase "four (or) five"

* "any" This short form is also "in" and as the context here does not help, it is best to insert the final vowel sign for clarity

A WAIL FROM THE WILD WEST - THE TYPE FOUNDER'S FAULT
 We begin the publication of the Rocky Mountain Cyclone with some few difficulties in the way. The type founders from whom we bought our outfit for this printing office failed to supply us with any f's or k's, and it will be four or five weeks before we can get any. The mistake was not found out till a day or two ago. We have ordered the missing letters, and will have to get along without them till they come. We don't like the looks of this variety of spelling any better than our readers, but mistakes will happen in the best regulated families, and if the p-h's and c's and x's and q's hold out we shall keep (sound the c hard) the Cyclone whirling after a fashion till the sorts arrive. It is no joke to us – it's a serious affair.

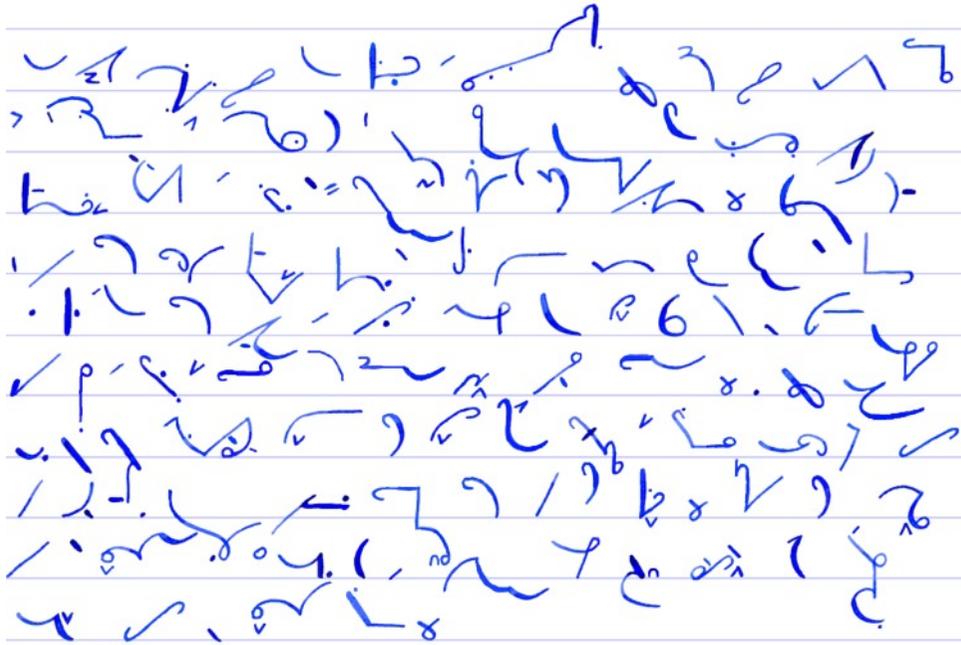


Queen's Beasts

The clipped yew bushes are in the shape of the ten* heraldic stone figures of the Queen's Beasts that were in the Abbey Annexe at Westminster Abbey at the coronation ceremony, depicting the Queen's genealogy and history. Some are real animals and some are mythical and here they are in order* from left to right: Lion of England, Golden Griffin of Edward* The Third, Falcon of the Plantagenets, Black Bull of Clarence, White Lion of Mortimer, Silver Yale of Beaufort, White Greyhound of Richmond, Red Dragon of Wales*, Unicorn of Scotland, White Horse of Hanover. The mythical yale was a horned goat-like creature and the griffin was a mixture of lion and eagle. The unicorn was originally more like a rhinoceros or mountain bull but came to be represented in the form of* an oryx or goat, and later on a horse. My favourite is the falcon, as it has lots* of detail in the wings and feathers, successfully achieved by the skill of the gardeners responsible for the annual clipping, and the slit for the beak has

ended up resembling a big satisfied grin. The falcon stands for swiftness of purpose, which is very apt for the shorthand writer*.

- * "ten" and "eighteen" Always insert the vowels
- * "in order" R Hook and doubling to represent "order"
- * "Edward" A halved way is generally used for "-ward", thus omitting the R
- * "Wales" Distinguishing outline, see www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "Wells Wales"
- * Omission phrases "in the form (of)" "short(hand) writer"
- * "lots" and "masses" Always insert the vowel as they are similar in shape and meaning



Queen's Beasts

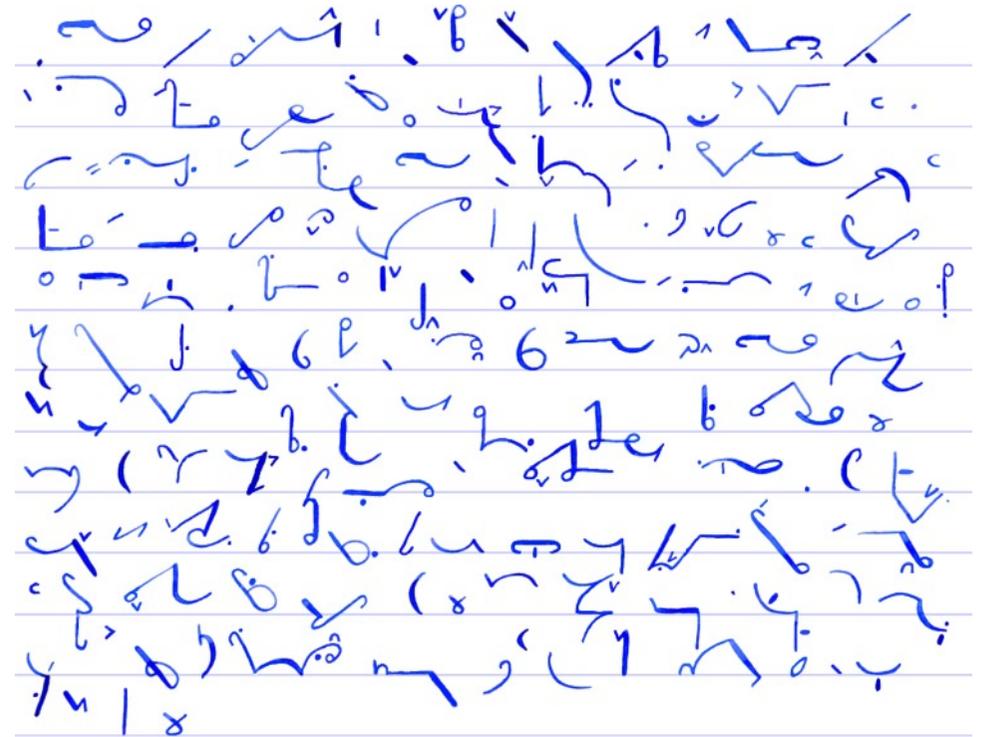
In royal imagery used for decoration and heraldry*, beasts were used to represent qualities of the monarchy and the emphasis was on power, strength, victory over enemies, rulership, dominion, authority and complete all-pervading control of their realm. This may be so, but our very friendly topiary team of ten* look to me as if they have all taken a day off from ruling and reigning, and instead have lined themselves up to welcome visitors who are sitting and playing on the grass or walking round the rose garden. The beasts no longer need to be brutal and ferocious like their line drawing portraits on the plaques

in front of each one, which show the fiercely regal creatures from which they are derived. On the contrary*, their mouths are all smiling, as indeed they should, living in such beautiful surroundings, and they positively invite one to smile back.

* "heraldry" Three upstrokes (or downstrokes) is generally avoided but necessary here

* "ten" and "eighteen" Always insert the vowels

* Omission phrases "on (the) contrary"



Queen's Beasts

The gardens are surrounded on two sides by busy roads and the background roar of cars and trucks whizzing past is unavoidable* at the far end of the park, but with a well-maintained and extensive garden to admire, and a sparkling river with ducks and geese, one's mind filters it out after a short while. When everyone has gone home, the traffic has died down, all is quiet and calm, and the sun is setting, I think that perhaps the ten* beasts then start to amuse* themselves, walking around the gardens, lounging about under the park trees, paddling in the stream, and discussing the day's happenings. I am sure they particularly enjoy the children's games of hide and seek* amongst the other topiary nearby, originally chess pieces which have now grown into

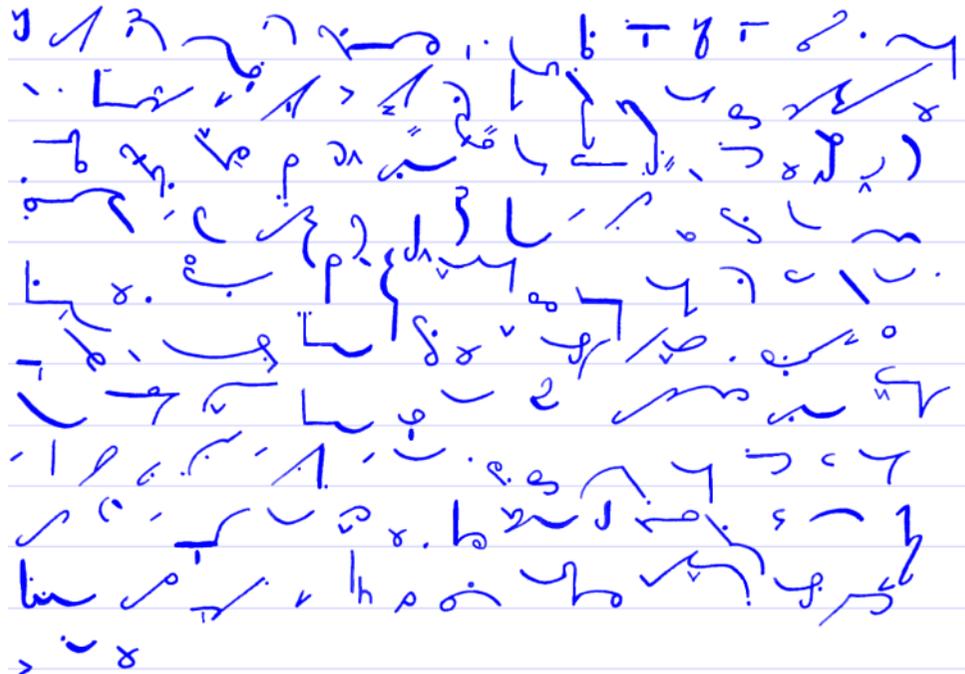
geometric blobs and cubes, with plenty of hiding places between them. I am unlikely to get a photo or movie footage of the beasts on their perambulations, but you can be sure that if I do, you will be the first to know about it. (727 words)

* "unavoidable" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "unavoidable inevitable"

* "ten" and "eighteen" Always insert the vowels

* "amuse" and "amaze" Always insert the vowel in these and derivatives

* Omission phrase "hide (and) seek"



Scramble!

I do not watch war movies or programmes but a few days ago I just caught half a minute of a documentary on the role of the Royal Air Force at the Battle of Britain in the Second World War. The actors portrayed pilots sitting around waiting for the call to action. All of a sudden the* shout was "Scramble!" and every one of them threw down what he was doing and ran to his plane for immediate take-off*. The narrator said that they had 90 seconds to get into the air, in order to* be in a good position to intercept the attacking planes. I instantly recognised the scenario as being exactly like taking notes in shorthand, one moment waiting quietly and at rest, yet alert and ready, and in a split second

leaping into action with only one thought and goal in mind. The demands of shorthand writing* do not of course compare with the importance and danger of defending one's country, but the attitude is the same in terms of requiring instant reaction to the command.

* Omission phrases "all (of a) sudden the" "in ord(er to)" As the "to" is part of this phrase, you do not need to write the B stroke through the line for "to be". "short(hand) writing"

* "take-off" the noun is written in full, but the phrase "take off" uses the hook



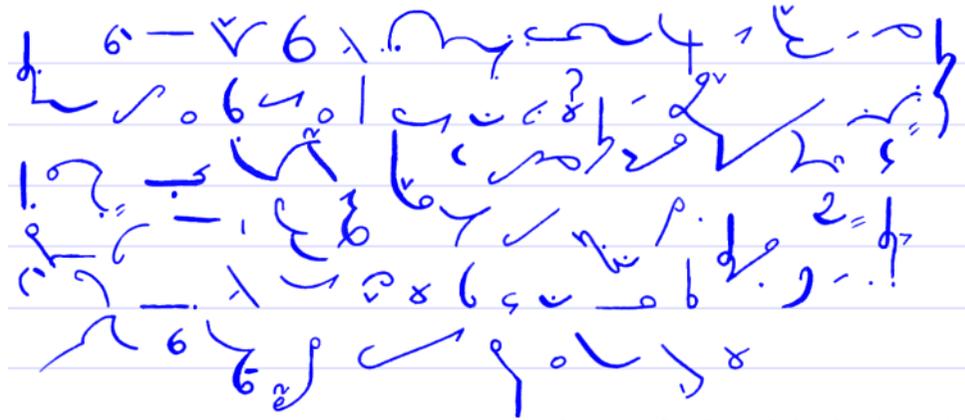
Scramble!

In my college class, gaining a knowledge of the shorthand system was really the easiest part. The skill of controlling the mind and attention from their wanderings had to be acquired. Once the teacher said the words "Ready, begin" before starting the passage, then all our attention was focused* on turning sounds in ears into marks on paper. Everything else was screened out, not only surroundings, extraneous noises, and the sighs and grunts* from discomfited fellow students, but also the constant naggings that accompany every wrong outline or hesitation. The necessity to shut these distractions out is something we all learned from raw experience as we went along,

rather than being told about it. It did not take very long for us to realise that writing shorthand was utterly impossible if the mind was on anything other than producing the outlines. This applies whenever writing speed exceeds one's comfort level and is an obvious reason for aiming high and not being satisfied with the bare minimum that the employer may require.

* "focused" and "fixed" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "grunts" Keep the stroke clearly halved, so it does not look like "groans"



Scramble!

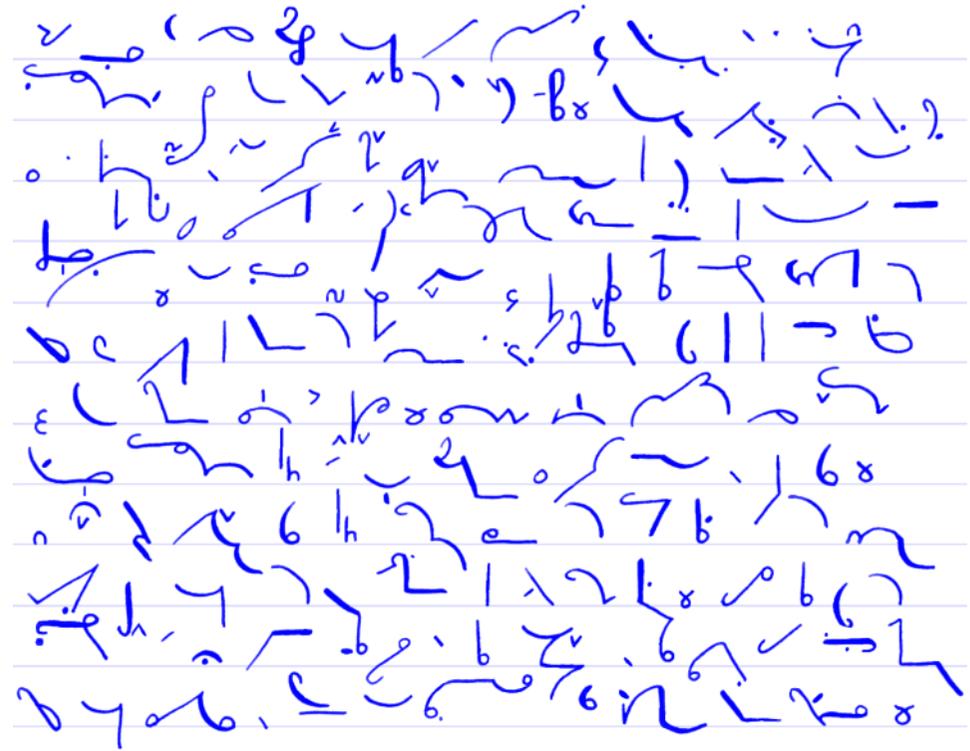
Distracting thoughts can pile themselves up alarmingly, clamouring for attention, and the final and most dangerous* one is this: is it near the end yet? Teacher and high speed writer Emily D Smith gave the valuable advice that one must always assume that the speaker will go on forever and that this is the only way to prevent such a disastrous*shorthand-destroying thought from coming up in the mind. Then

when the end comes it is a pleasure and a relief, that is, for those situations where the speed is being pushed.

* "dangerous" Has a full stroke S so that it does not look like "dangers"

* "disastrous" Note that the outline for "disaster" uses a circle S + doubled S stroke

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



Scramble!

I would guess that most shorthand students nowadays are learning without the benefit of a communal classroom situation, for part or all of their studies. Being able to replay the MP3 is a temptation to not really try the first time, making it easy to give up in disgust at the first hurdle, and assuage yourself that you can give it another go later. In class you have to start writing when the teacher decides, and it is expected that you will do your best effort, read it back or make a complete transcript, then do it again faster when you have practised some of the outlines. Somehow the home learner must acquire the

focused* classroom attitude and no shorthand book is really going to teach this. You might be able to revive this attitude from your school or college days, or you may have to reach down into your boots and drag it up from the depths. Once it is within your grasp and made regular use of, it is unlikely to slip away again and it can be pressed into service to overcome any slackness that is holding back progress.

* "focused" and "fixed" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

