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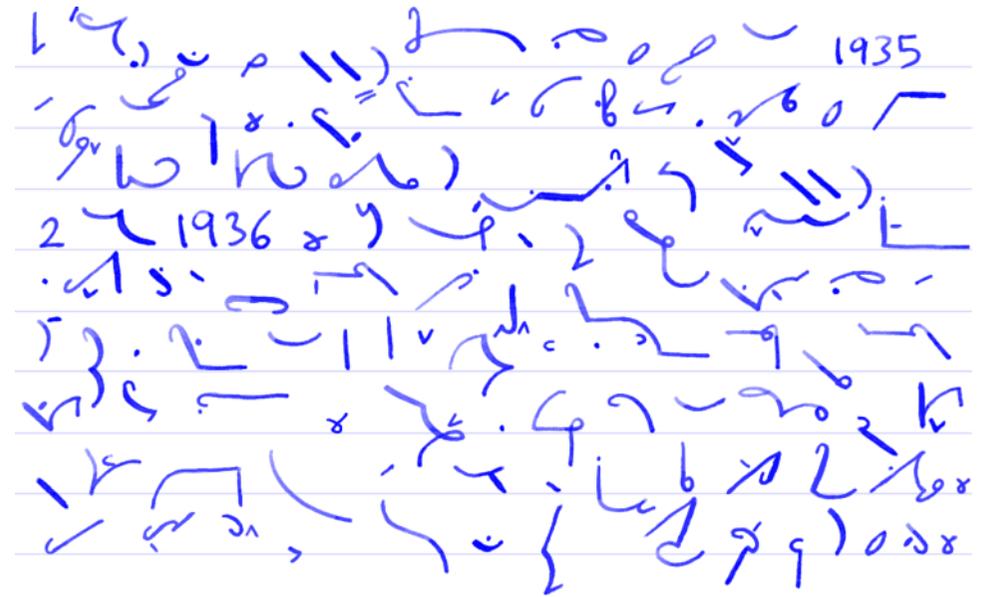


Alexandra Palace

However, on our visit I found the view from the hill somewhat more interesting. After all, one can take only so many photos of bricks, carvings and colonnades. Leaning on the railings with our back to the building, we took in the 180 degree view over London, firstly down the green slopes, over the trees and on to the endless suburbs dotted with trees, and into the distance. The escarpment faces south east, so straight ahead of us we knew must be* Greenwich and we could just make out the faint distinctive shape of the Millennium Dome. To our left was Stratford where we

recognised some of the structures of the Olympic Park. To our right was a very faint and purple-tinged row of tall buildings, the most recognisable being the needle-shaped Shard building next to London Bridge Railway Station. It was very gratifying to know that all the noise, cars, trains, fumes and crowds were a long way off, leaving us to enjoy the fresh air, pleasant breezes and sunshine from our privileged vantage point from our palace on the hill.

* Omission phrase "mus(t) be"



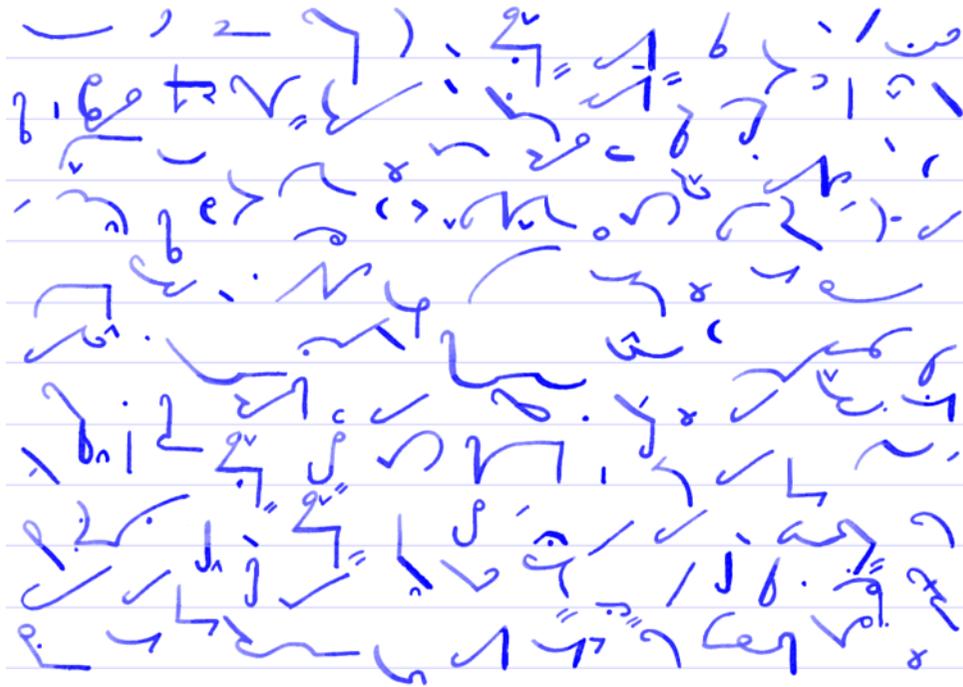
Alexandra Palace

At the north east end is the BBC* transmitter mast, first used in 1935 and still in use today. The blue plaque on the wall states "The world's first regular high definition television service was inaugurated here by the BBC 2 November 1936". I was interested to see the substantial lightning conductor, a wide band of green copper running down the brickwork below the mast, and saw there was a break in it at eye level, with an extra piece of copper bolted over the crack. Obviously the electricity from any storms

would be delighted to be so well* looked after and enabled to continue its urgent journey earthwards! We wandered around to the far end, which was the original frontage when it was first opened.

* "BBC" Initialisms are generally best written with lower-case longhand letters, but this one is clear and well-known

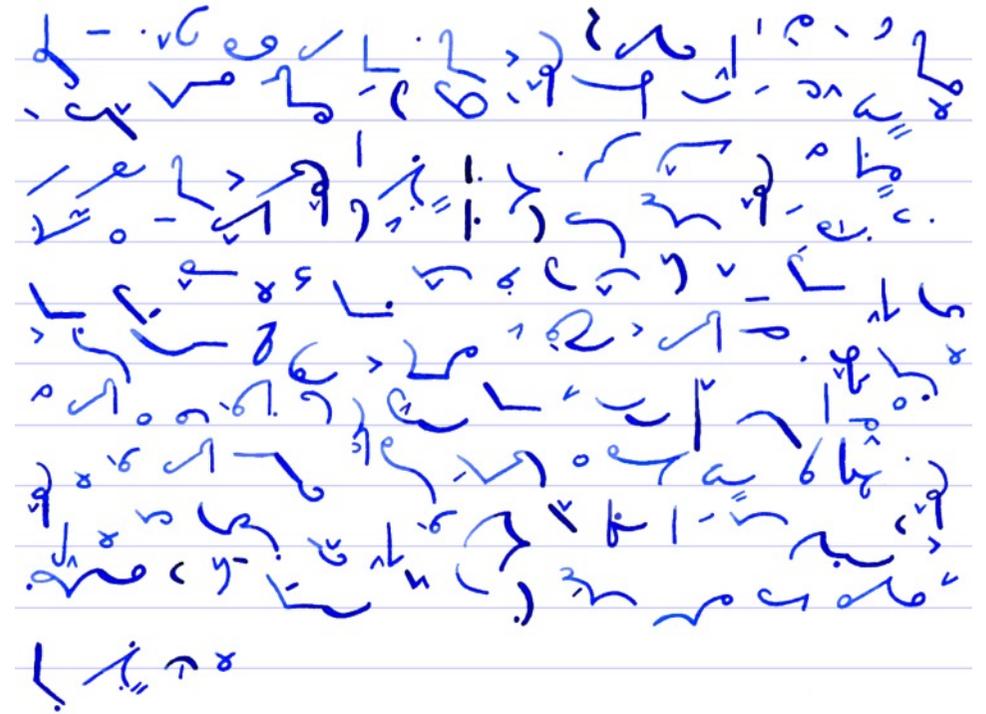
* Omission phrase "so (w)ell"



Alexandra Palace

Another short walk brought us to Highgate Wood which is full of large ancient trees, but as this was at the beginning of April they were all bare and we had to just imagine what it might be like in full leaf. I am always glad to find a woodland of old and mature trees, as that means that all the wildlife is also well established, and so we looked forward to a return visit later in the year. In the centre we found a pink marble drinking fountain that miraculously

still produced a trickle of water when we pressed the button. We finally ended up at Highgate Station, also derelict, but here we took the long and steep escalator down to Highgate tube station and made our way to London Bridge, from where we took the train to our part of north Kent which had been just a misty purple speck in the panoramic view we had enjoyed from Alexandra Palace. (1069 words)



Almost The Seaside

It has been quite a while since we took a trip to the seaside, although we have been out on lots* of short trips to nearby parks and attractions, and other places of interest in and around London. Our recent trip to the riverside at Erith did feel a little like the seaside as the Thames estuary is quite wide there and the day was clear, warm and sunny* with a big blue sky. With the peak of my hat over my eyes, I could block* out the view of the far bank and just listen to the seagulls and the sloshing of the water against the underside of the pier. As the water is somewhat salty, from seawater flowing back on the incoming tide, maybe it counts as seaside. Salt water can

be found as far upriver as central London which is definitely not a seaside town. I am not volunteering to find out the salt level by tasting* it and I am leaving that to the starlings that I saw poking* about for easy worm meals near the surface on the deep Erith mud.

* All these words need one of the vowels written in in order to differentiate: lots/masses, sunny/snowy, block out/black out, tasting/testing, poking/pecking. "Lots" and "masses" have different outlines, but similar enough to be misread when written at speed.

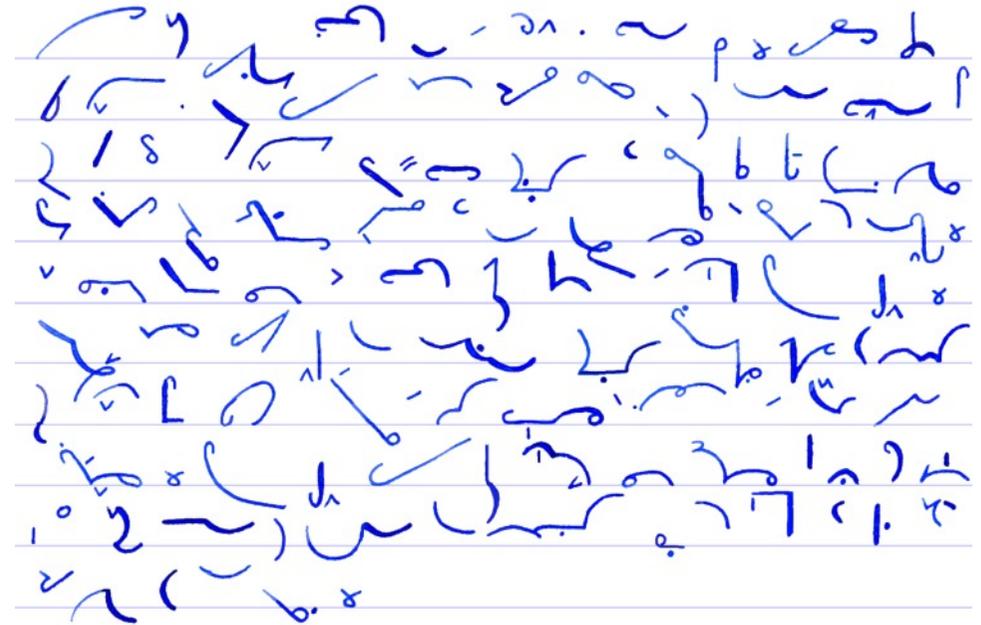


Almost The Seaside

Last weekend* all thoughts of the seaside were absent and I was working in the garden. The weather was too hot to go out and about anywhere and I wanted to stay close to the mango juice supply lurking in the bottom of the fridge. I decided to clear up the corners of the garden where things accumulate. I had some bags of pebbles that needed washing of mud before they could be used elsewhere*. I spread them out on a large tarpaulin on the lawn and attacked them with the jet spray on the hose. To get them into a heap, I lifted the corner of the tarpaulin. As I lifted it, the stones all moved together, making that

familiar rushing and scraping noise, when the waves drag down the stones as the water draws back into the sea. The pebbles were glistening wet and I had three more corners to go. But the big question* was, was the tide coming in or going out? I don't think I will ever find out.

- * Omission phrase "last (w)eeekend"
- * "elsewhere" Downward L to make a good join with the next stroke
- * "question" Optional contraction

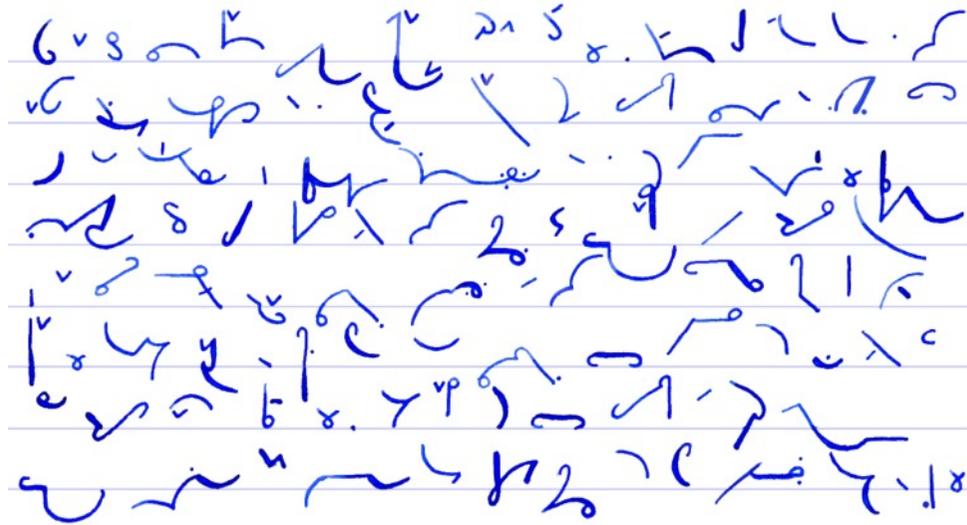


Almost The Seaside

Later on I was weeding the gravel under and around a garden seat. Once again*, it seemed just like a beach where I am always surprised to see anything growing at all, especially large plants like the blue-green sea kale that spreads its tough thick leaves over the barren pebbles and broken rocks with no visible means of support or nutrition. I scraped back some of the gravel and it was damp and muddy further down. Obviously, I must watch out for invading sea kale plantlets and deal with them

immediately, so that my delicate welsh poppies and little alyssum and violet* clumps are not compromised. Further down where it was muddier, some worms had made their home, but as I was not going sea fishing for mackerel, skate or cod that day, I thought I would leave them in peace.

- * Omission phrase "wu(n)s again"
- * "violet" Keep the L short, as "viola" (Latin name for this plant) is similar

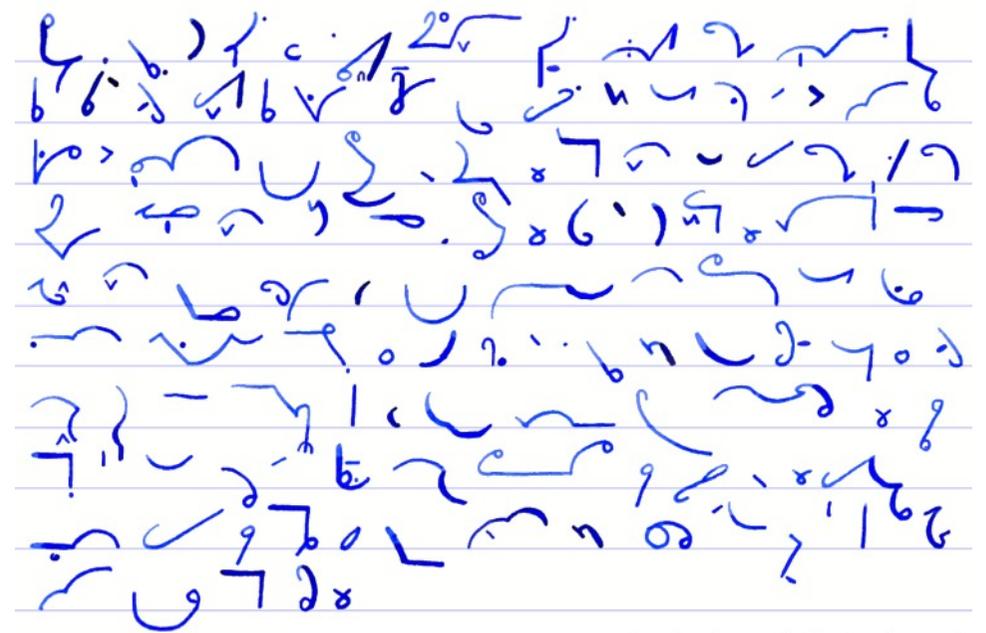


Almost The Seaside

Then I spent some time weeding and tidying around the pond. The pump had been off for a little while, pending the installation of an overflow pipe, so the water smelt of algae more than usual, not unpleasant but distinctly reminiscent of a seaside rock pool. Disturbing marginal plants generally turns up little shrimps that the goldfish are always after, but I half

expected to find sleeping limpets and little crabs trapped at low tide. Fortunately I did not have to tread over any slippery green rocks or end up with sand between my toes. The only sight was green water and orange and pink goldfish milling about looking for the dislodged shrimps or other wriggles for them to eat.

Blank lined area for notes or additional text.



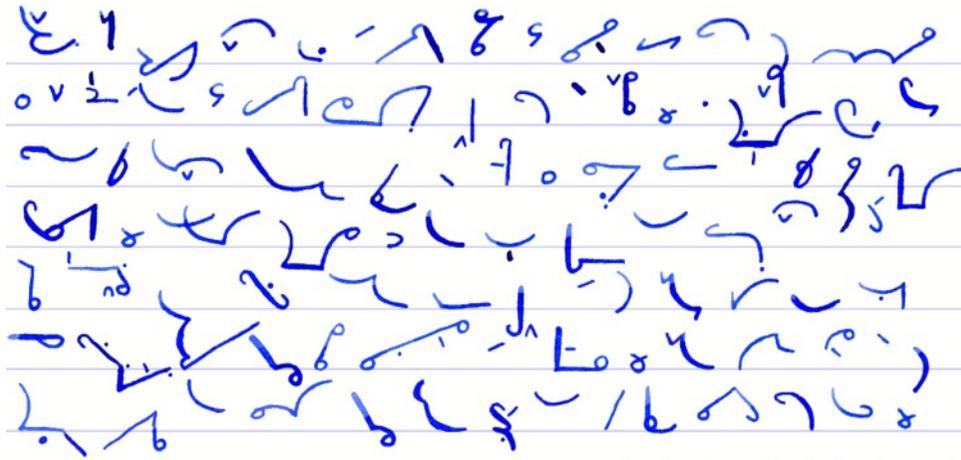
Almost The Seaside

Suddenly the peace was shattered when a huge shark-like shadow emerged from the murky depths, its jaws open wide, its pale dorsal fin waving about in the air, and all the little tails of the smaller fish splashing to escape. I got my hand away from the edge very sharply, and closed my eyes against the splashes. Then all was quiet. I looked again and found my biggest friendly old fish looking me square in the face, calm and patient, expecting his usual treat of a piece of bread being thrown into his open

mouth, so that he can capture it without having to make further manoeuvres. He is getting on in years and doesn't* move as quickly as he used to. We have this game where he gets the first big lump of bread, swims off to chew on it, and then the little fishes get theirs.

* "doesn't" Apostrophied versions always have the vowels inserted. Without it this would be "does not".

Blank lined area for notes or additional text.



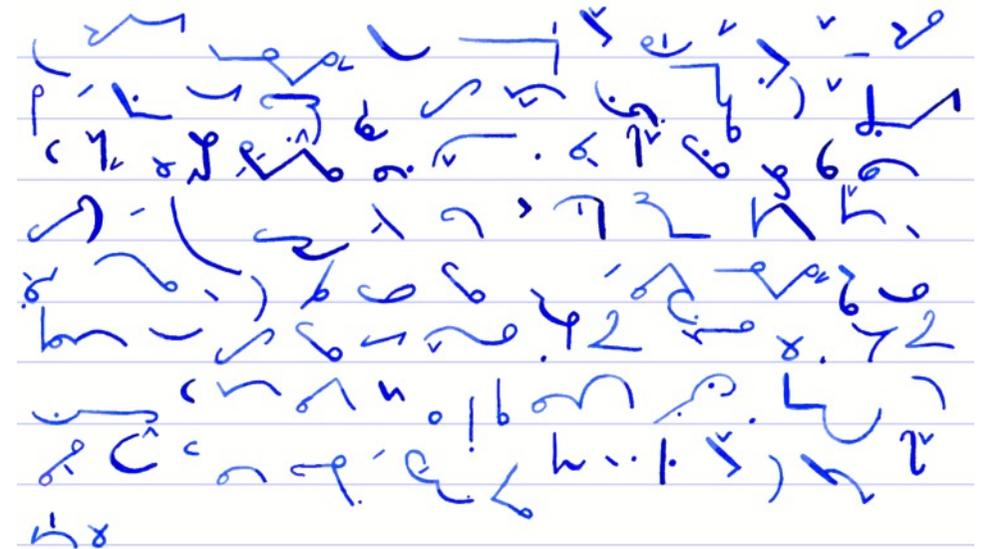
Almost The Seaside

Finally I had to wash my feet and rubber sandals with the hose - more seaside memories as I walked off with the water squelching out from all sides. A seagull flew over the garden just for my benefit, choosing to utter his screeching call just as he was directly overhead. Unfortunately* seagulls would have no difficulty in clearing my pond of its occupants if they were brave enough to come down and so I have the whole thing netted against predatory birds,

such as herons and ducks. I have left lots* of easy escape routes for small birds that have blundered in, which does not happen very often.

* "Unfortunately" Optional contraction

* "lots" "masses" Always insert the vowel, as these two are similar in outline and meaning



Almost The Seaside

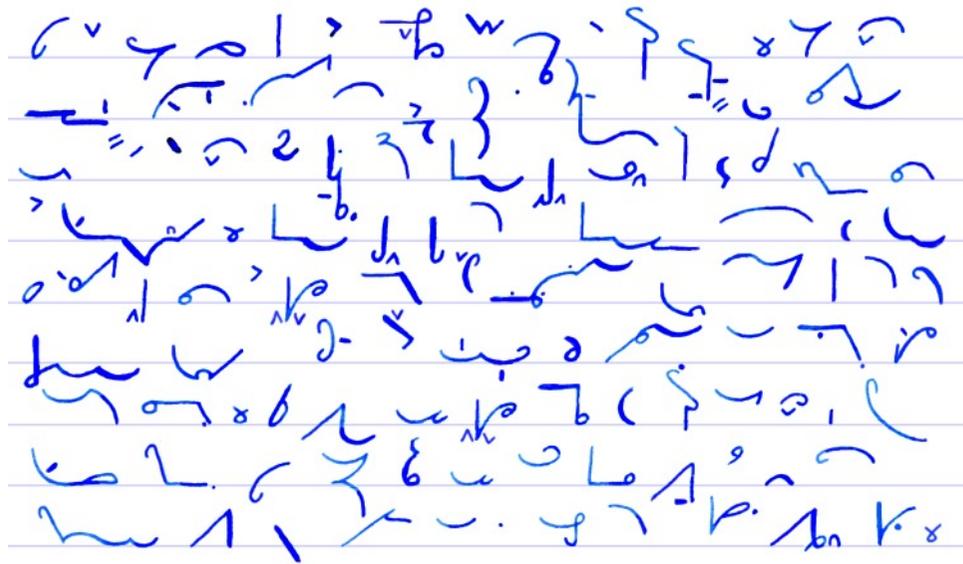
If I wanted to experience being cooked by the sun on the beach, I could always sit and bake in the greenhouse, but that is not one of my favourite* activities, so I discarded that idea. All of a sudden* the suburbs seemed like a hot dry place to spend this summer weather and, after cleaning up from all the muddy work, it will be time to consult the maps to see which is the nearest place to visit and hopefully experience all these things at the same time* in one place, minus the shark of course. The only shark encounter that I am

happy about is eating its smaller relation, the dogfish or huss, along with some crispy and fluffy chips, at the end of a day by the sea before the drive home. (1012 words)

* "favourite" Compare "favoured" which has normal Vr stroke

* Omission phrase "all (of a) sudden"

* "at the same time" Halving to represent the T of "time"



Pluto Flyby

Well, I nearly missed it, all the excitement about the images of planet Pluto. Only my Google logo alerted me to the fact that* there was an astronomy event happening now, and all my shorthand devotees were taking down the news of it without the chance to practise some of the vocabulary. Taking down difficult or technical matter without having first sorted out some of the outlines can be either exhilarating if you manage it, or very disheartening if you are thrown by the unknown words, resulting in gaping holes in your script. Just reading new outlines gets them planted in the mind, but further focussed* practising will ensure that this new information takes root and is made more permanent*, ready to be

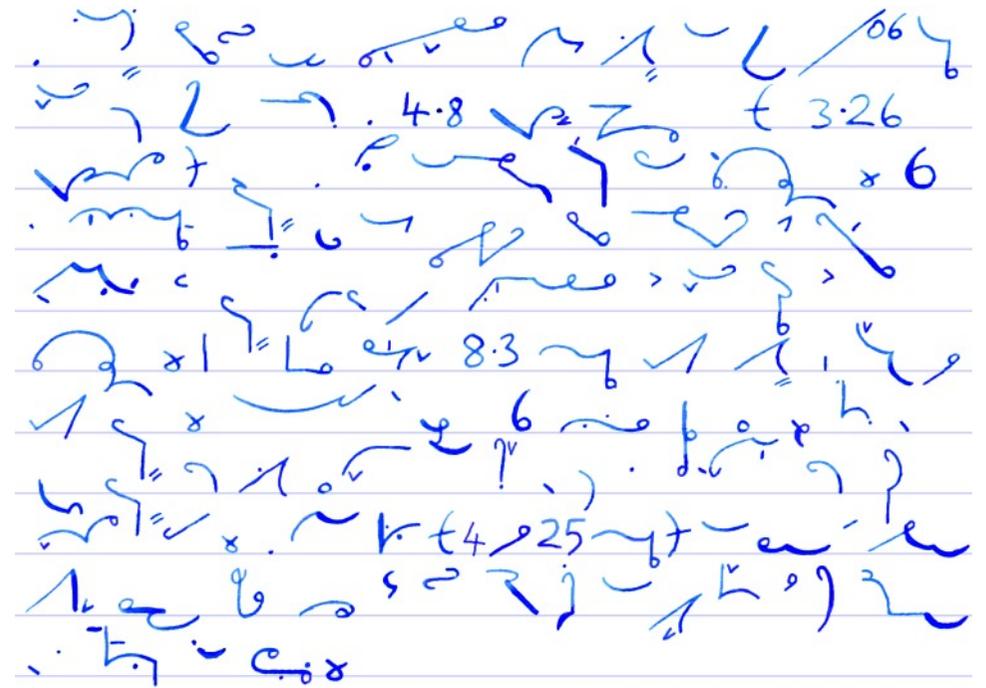
recalled in an instant, or at least* reduce the delay.

* Omission phrase "to the (f)act that"

* "focussed" "fixed" Always insert the first vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning

* permanent" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "prominent permanent pre-eminent"

* "at least" "at last" Always insert the vowel



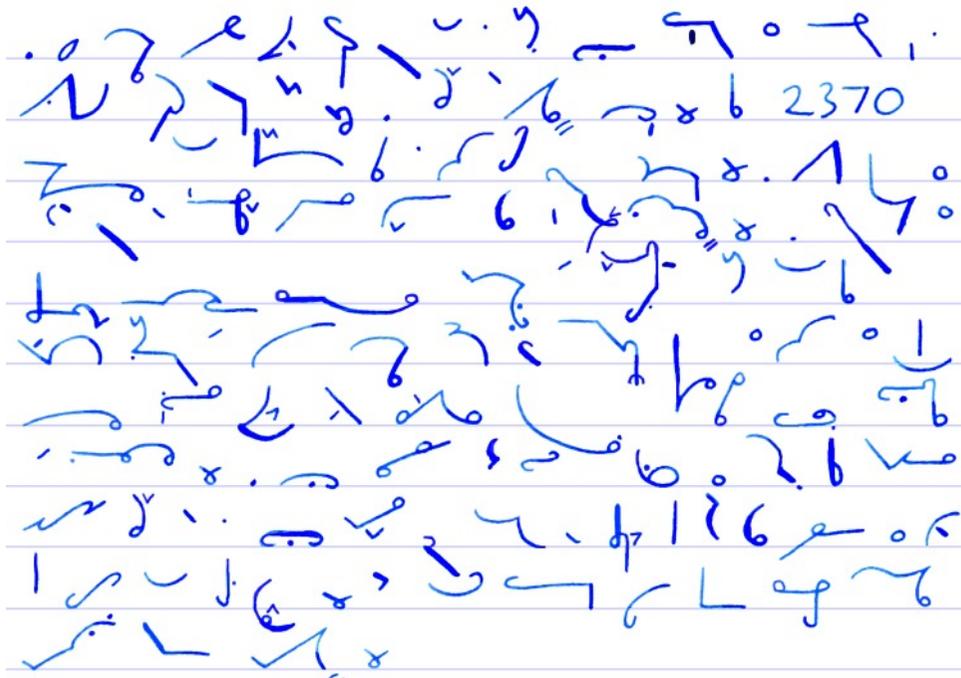
Pluto Flyby

The NASA spacecraft New Horizons left the Earth in January 2006* for its 9 year journey covering the 4.8 billion kilometres (3.26 billion miles) to Pluto, the last unexplored body in our solar system. This is a momentous key event in the history of space exploration and the probe's rendezvous with Pluto will complete our reconnaissance of the 9 planets of the solar system. It takes sunlight 8.3 minutes to reach Earth but 5 hours to reach Pluto. Another way of understanding this immense distance is to say that* attempting to view Pluto from Earth is like trying to see a

walnut from 30 miles away. The long delay (4 hours 25 minutes) in sending and receiving radio signal instructions means that the craft cannot be controlled in real time and is therefore working to an automated command sequence.

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

* Omission phrase "to s(ay) that"

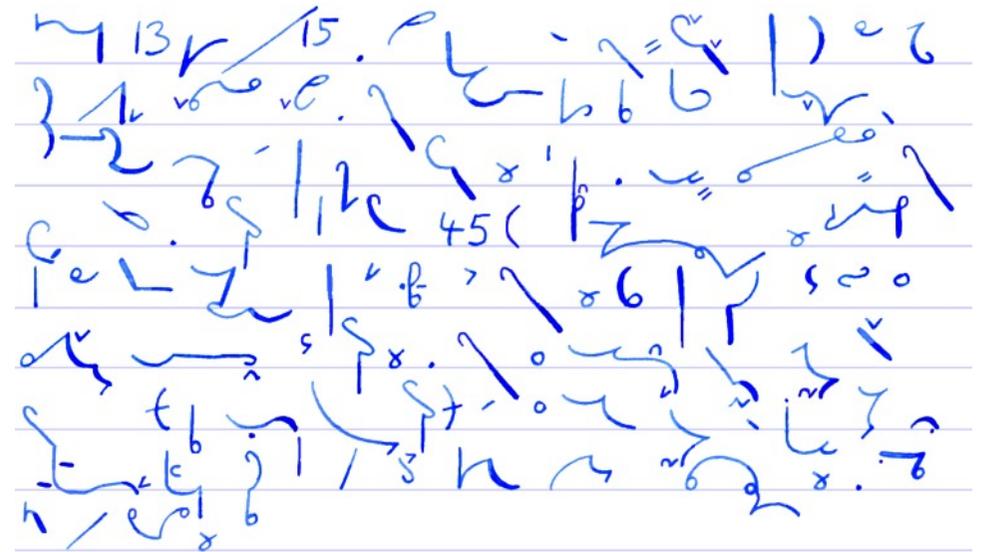


Pluto Flyby

The first images received show the planet to be not an icy grey globe as expected but a reddish orange body about two-thirds the size of Earth's moon. It is 2,370 kilometres in diameter which is a little larger than previously estimated. The red tinge is thought to be of oxidised rocks like those on Mars. The probe has discovered the chemical signatures of methane and nitrogen ice in its polar ice cap and later images were able to capture details as little

as 100 metres across, showing up surface features such as cliffs, craters and chasms. The main hazard that the craft faces is orbiting dust particles and one the size of a grain of rice would be enough to destroy it, although this risk is low at one in ten* thousand. All the information collected will take 16 months to relay back to earth.

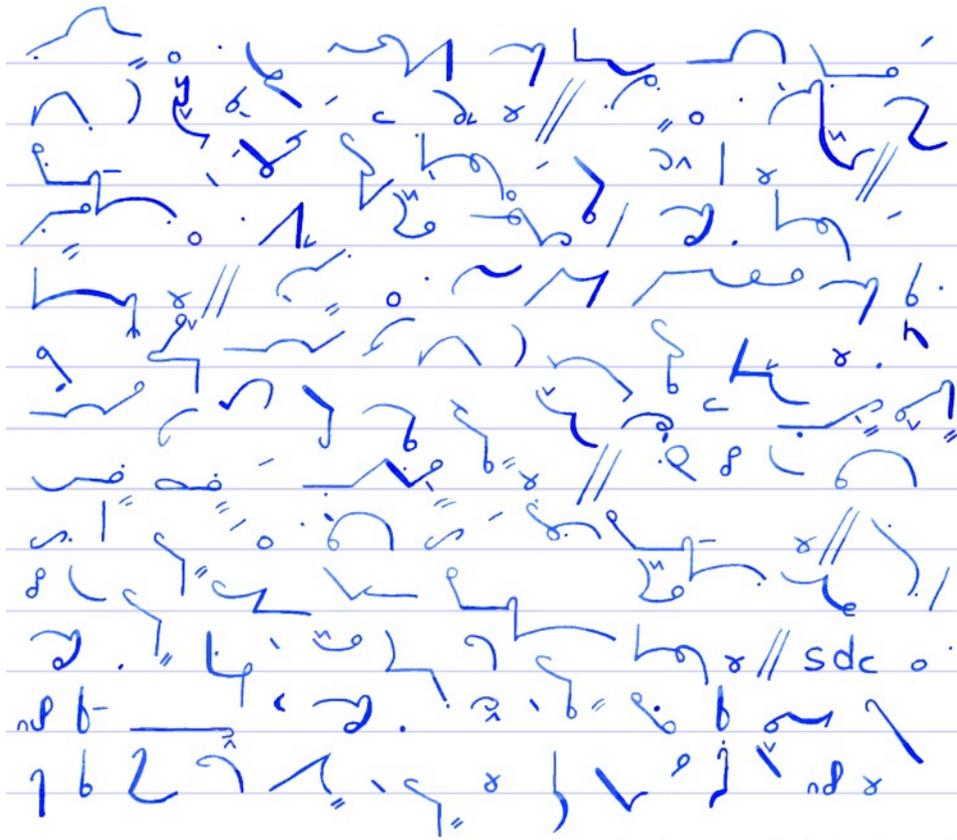
* "ten" Always insert the vowels if you use an outline for "ten" or "eighteen"



Pluto Flyby

On Monday 13 July 2015 the last downlink of pre-flyby data was sent and then there was radio silence, whilst the probe turned its attention entirely to gathering images and data during the flyby. On Tuesday the New Horizons probe flew past the planet at over 45,000 kilometres per hour. On Wednesday it sent back engineering data on the status of the probe. This data showed

that the craft has survived the encounter with the planet. The probe is nuclear powered and fuelled by plutonium (itself named after the planet) and has enough fuel to continue until the mid 2030's, at which point it will have left the solar system. The gadgets on board are as follows.



Pluto Flyby

Ralph is a visible and infrared imager, taking colour pictures and helping us identify the hot and cold areas.

Alice is an ultraviolet imaging spectrometer to observe the planetary atmosphere and objects around it.

REX is a radio science experiment which measures the atmosphere and temperature.

LORRI is a long range reconnaissance imager, which is a super high-quality camera and will help us to map the planet's geography. The on-board cameras will also

obtain images of Pluto's five moons called Charon, Hydra, Nix, Styx and Kerberos.

SWAP stands for solar wind at Pluto and is a solar wind and plasma spectrometer.

PEPSSI stands for Pluto energetic particle spectrometer science investigation, which measures the density of ions escaping from Pluto's atmosphere.

SDC is a student dust counter that measures the amount of space dust hitting the probe during its journey from Earth to Pluto. It was built and is controlled by students.



Pluto Flyby

Pluto was discovered in 1930 by the American astronomer Clyde Tombaugh at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona and named by an English schoolgirl in a competition. Seven* months into the craft's journey Pluto was downgraded to dwarf planet, in response to revised definitions of various space bodies. Now that the scientists have discovered it is slightly larger than first thought, they are considering upgrading it to its former status. This is just as well, as it may be that our scientists are about to find out what Pluto itself thinks about this humiliating demotion and removal of full planet status all those years ago. It may decide to fling a single particle of high

velocity rice-sized dust at the New Horizons probe in displeasure and retribution, although I think that by that time the craft will be safely out in the far reaches of the solar system and on its way towards interstellar space, all the while quietly downlinking all of its store of data to its masters at the US Space Agency, thus feeding the insatiable appetite of our scientists and astronomers for information on this last and furthest outpost of our solar system. (881 words)

* "seven" Keep the hook very clear, so that it does not look like "several" which would also make sense

Each paragraph is 100 words, so writing one in 60 seconds will be 100 wpm

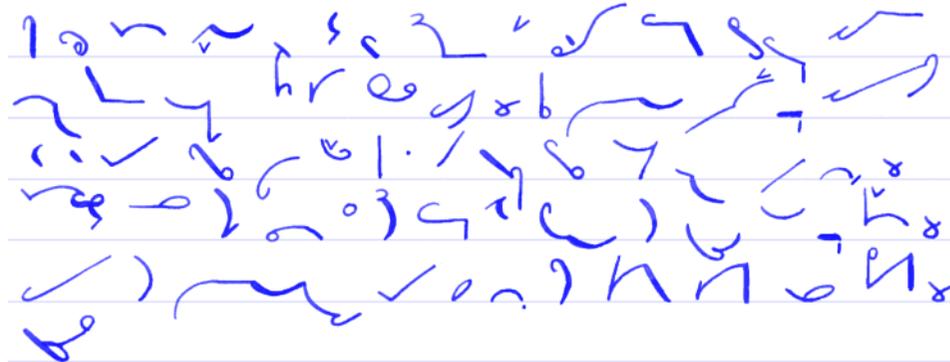


Short Letters 5

Dear Mr Robertson, Thank you for replying to our advertisement for our new range of items for the garden. We are very pleased to enclose our latest booklet giving details of everything that we can provide to make your time in the garden an even greater pleasure. Many people have written to us

and said how pleased they are with the products. We are especially delighted with the new series of digging tools that will help you with this task that many of us often find rather difficult. I think you will find many new items of interest. Yours sincerely* (100 words)

* Omission phrase "Yours (sin)cerely"



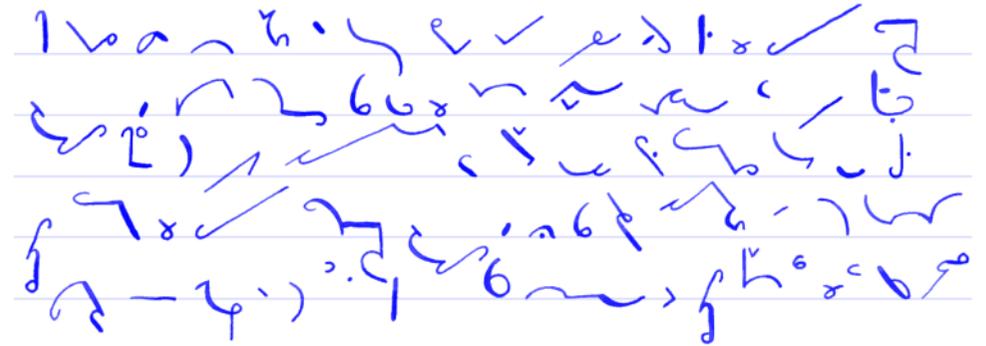
Short Letters 5

Dear Friends, I am writing to tell you that the building work on the Social Club has been completed and we can move back into the hall as soon as we wish*. It is looking really good and we are sure that all of our members will find it a much better place in which to have our meetings. I am glad to say that the* cost was the same as what was quoted and that everything was

finished in good time. We are so looking forward to our first meeting there which will be held next Saturday. Best wishes (100 words)

* Omission phrase "I am glad (to) s(ay) that the" "looking fo(r)ward"

* "Best wishes" Upward Ish in order to join



Short Letters 5

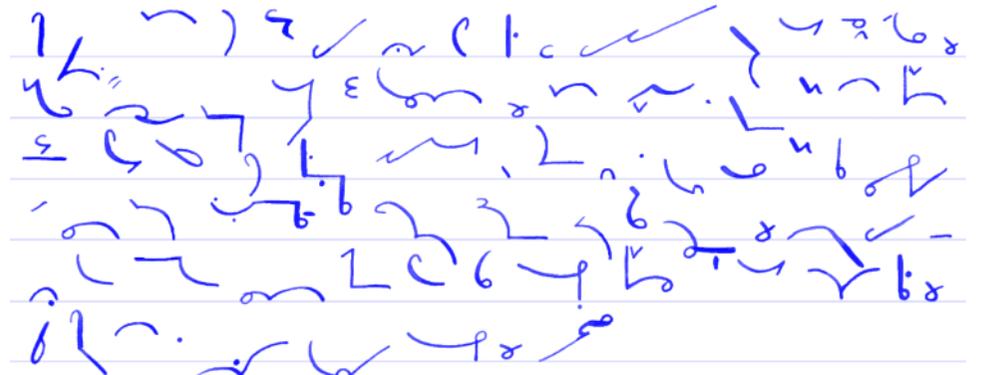
Dear Parents, First of all* may I thank you all for your support of our recent Open Day. We are grateful to everyone who helped organise this event. I am writing to let you know* that our donation target was reached and we are now able to buy the new play equipment for the Under Ten* Children's Club. We are very grateful to everyone who made this possible and we hope that you* and your family will be able to come and visit to see what a difference

this is making to the children's time with us. With best regards (100 words)

* Omission phrases "First (of) all" "we (h)ope that you"

* "let you know" The short form "you" is written upright after upward L, e.g. "will you", but here is turned on its side in order to allow the N to join

* "ten" "eighteen" Always insert the vowel



Short Letters 5

Dear Jim, I am so glad that we met the other day when we were both in the accounts office. I have been meaning to get in touch with you for some time*. I am writing a book about my time with the company over the past three decades and wanted to ask you a few things about its history and some of your anecdotes from your work here all those years ago. Maybe we could meet for coffee sometime* and

talk over those interesting times in the early days. Just drop me an email* if you are interested. Regards (100 words)

* "for some time" Halving for the T of "time"

* "sometime" This is an adverb, so written as one word, i.e. not a phrase

* "email" and "mail" Always insert the first vowel

