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## Blogs - 2015 - August

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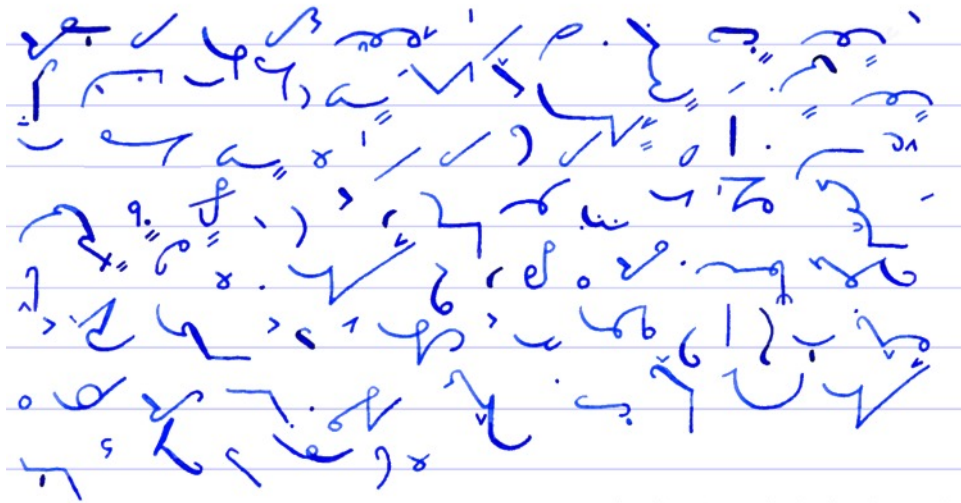
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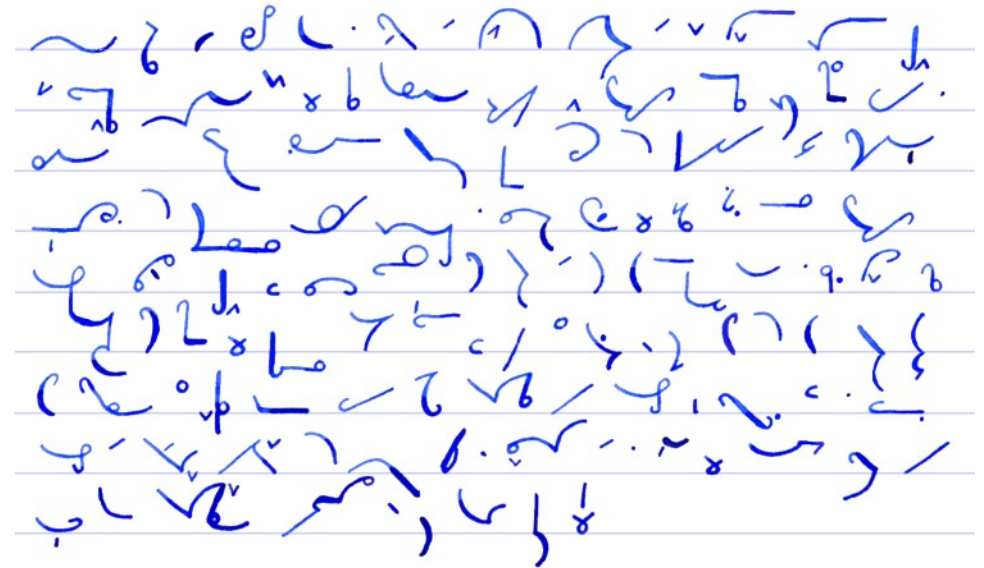


**Museum of Childhood**

Two weeks ago\* we visited one of the museums on our list, the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, located in north east London, operated by the Victoria and Albert Museum in central London. On our way there, we first had a look around Liverpool\* Street Railway Station to see all the old architecture, mostly\* evident in the columns, ironwork and outer walls. The interior of these old stations is always a mixture of preservation of the original fabric of the building and the installation of the new facilities within it, so that no compromise is necessary between keeping the history and providing a clean, bright

and efficient interior to cope with the large number of\* people passing through.

- \* Omission phrase "Two wee(k)s ago"
- \* "Liverpool!" The intervening vowel has to go through the end of the stroke, because if it was at the very end, that would be "ings"
- \* "mostly" Omits the lightly sounded T
- \* "large number of" Compare this with the omission phrase "large part (of)" which omits the "of" so that it does not look similar to this phrase



**Museum of Childhood**

Many of these old stations have an upper and lower level, and I like to look down on the crowds milling about. It is fascinating to watch how everyone gets to their target, whether a certain platform\*, snack bar, ticket machine or doorway, and yet there are no collisions or zigzags\* necessary to maintain a smooth flow. I think it is achieved because everyone instinctively slows down when someone crosses their path, and so they can continue in a straight line towards their target. Difficulties only occur when each has failed to see the other or they both think that the other person

has decided to give way, and then apologies are instant but brief, with an equally instant and polite reply or maybe just a smile and a nod. In fact the\* British are known for apologising regardless of whose fault it was!

- \* "platf(orm)" Contraction
- \* "zigzags" Z sound at the beginning of a word always uses stroke Zee
- \* Omission phrase "in (f)act the"





**Museum of Childhood**

The interior of the museum is a large well-lit vaulted space. In the centre is a lower mezzanine floor containing the tea shop and souvenirs for sale\*, and along both long sides on a higher level are all the display cases. There is also an upper floor along both sides with more displays. You can see everything at once\*, as there are no separate rooms. I had expected\* a variety of small sparsely-lit rooms and corridors but the whole space was well illuminated and easy to get around without missing anything. I like to take photos on museum visits but the results can

sometimes be disappointing due to the gloomy conditions, although low lighting is often necessary to preserve the exhibits. It was however still a challenge to avoid reflections of the ceiling lights and images of myself standing before the cases, so a slightly sideways position was the answer.

\* "for sale" downward L in order to make a good join

\* Omission phrase "at (w)uns"

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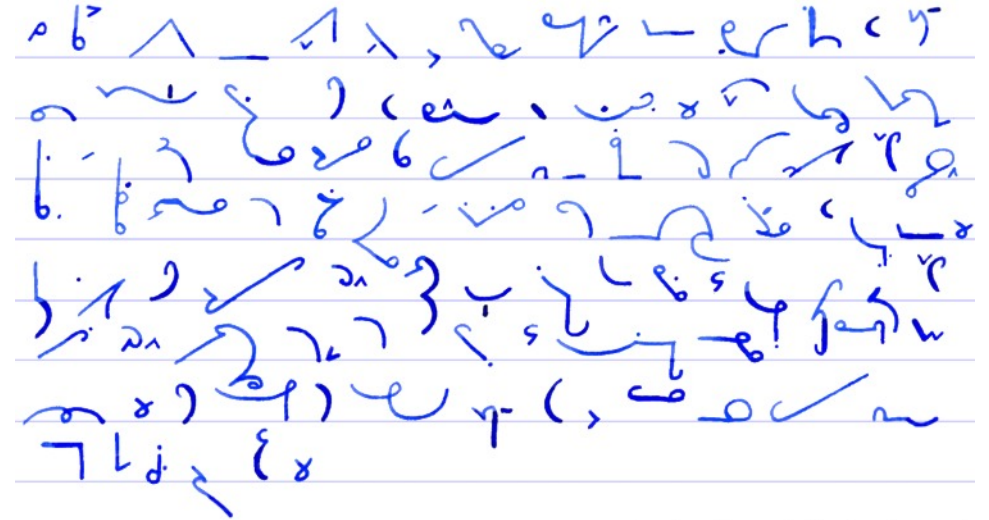
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**Museum of Childhood**

As the toys represented come right up to the present century, I can safely admit that I saw some of my own playthings there, without sounding too ancient. My favourites, apart from the teddies and tea sets, were always those where you could\* construct your own little world, either houses and gardens or endless shapes and patterns from colourful components that fitted together. It was a real pleasure to wander around and there was no competition for

space with the visiting children, who were either running around the refreshments area, or playing with the interactive exhibits scattered about the museum. Their interest was insufficient to draw them to the glass cases where you could not get at the contents to play with them.

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

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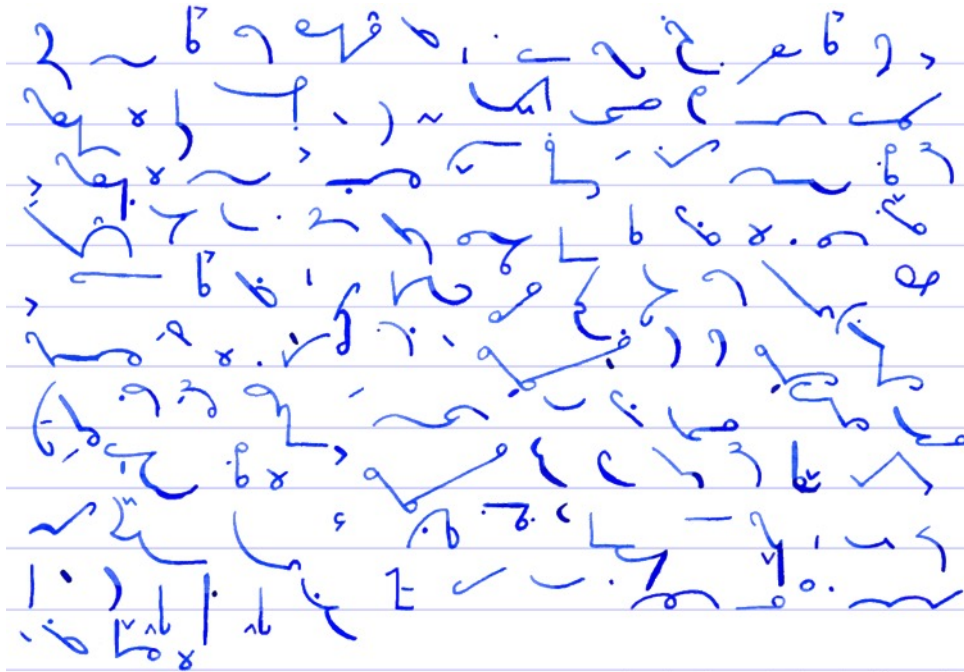
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**Museum of Childhood**

There were\* many toys from centuries past, but an equal number of comparatively recent toys through to the present time. It was interesting to see how the variety increased as they came closer to the present day. Many of the games, like construction and pattern making sets, were popular only for a short time\*, before something else took its place. The same applies to the character toys based on children's television series, which would have fallen from popularity as soon as the programmes stopped. The whole array of superheroes was there, Superman, Batman, Thunderbirds, Star Wars, Star Trek and many more, in play figures, equipment, vehicles and clothing sets. All the

superheroes that have ever appeared were designed to represent the modern scientific future with the latest gadgets that technology can provide, but now here it all was, out of date, out of favour and tucked away in a museum case as a memory of past times\*.

\* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

\* "short time" The halving is doing duty for both T sounds

\* "past times" Not phrased, as that would be read as the noun "pastimes"

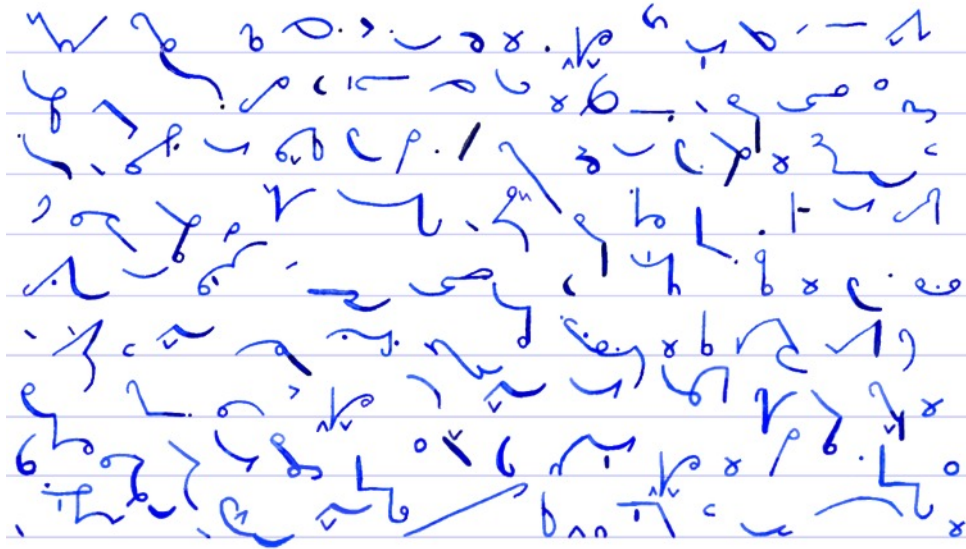


**Museum of Childhood**

Upstairs was an extensive display of dolls houses, mostly from past centuries, and certainly lovingly owned and played with by many children over the years, until the houses were donated or lent\* to the museum. This was a temporary exhibition and will no doubt be replaced by another subject next year. They are a fascinating window into the daily lives and surroundings of the past, and would have been a valuable learning tool for the privileged children whose future was to own

and govern such households. The children could also mimic and play out the events of their daily lives and so have the pleasure of being in control, which is the ultimate goal of any toy. This museum is definitely one to return to and no doubt I shall find many things that I missed the first time around. (1077 words)

\* "lent" and "loaned" Essential to insert the vowel as they have the same outline and meaning



**Short Letters 6**

I hope you are\* persevering towards mastering all the common words. The outlines that you know the best and can write the fastest should be the ones that occur most often. This is the key to speed increase as you cannot afford to hesitate in the slightest over such a large proportion of the\* words in every passage. Working with short simple passages is the ideal introduction to higher speed attempts, dipping the toe in the water, wading in slowly, and gaining increased confidence without undue stress. However a sense of urgency\* when writing must be\* maintained to prevent complacency. It is helpful to read through several times, practising some of the outlines or writing in

the facility drill pages provided. This smooths the path for the subsequent dictations as by then you will know the outlines. Such a dictation is to accustom the hand to flowing writing rather than test how you cope with new matter.

\* Omission phrases "I (h)ope you are" "mus(t) be"

\* "large proportion of the" Not phrased, as it would look too much like "large number of the"

\* "urgency" Optional contraction omitting the stroke N

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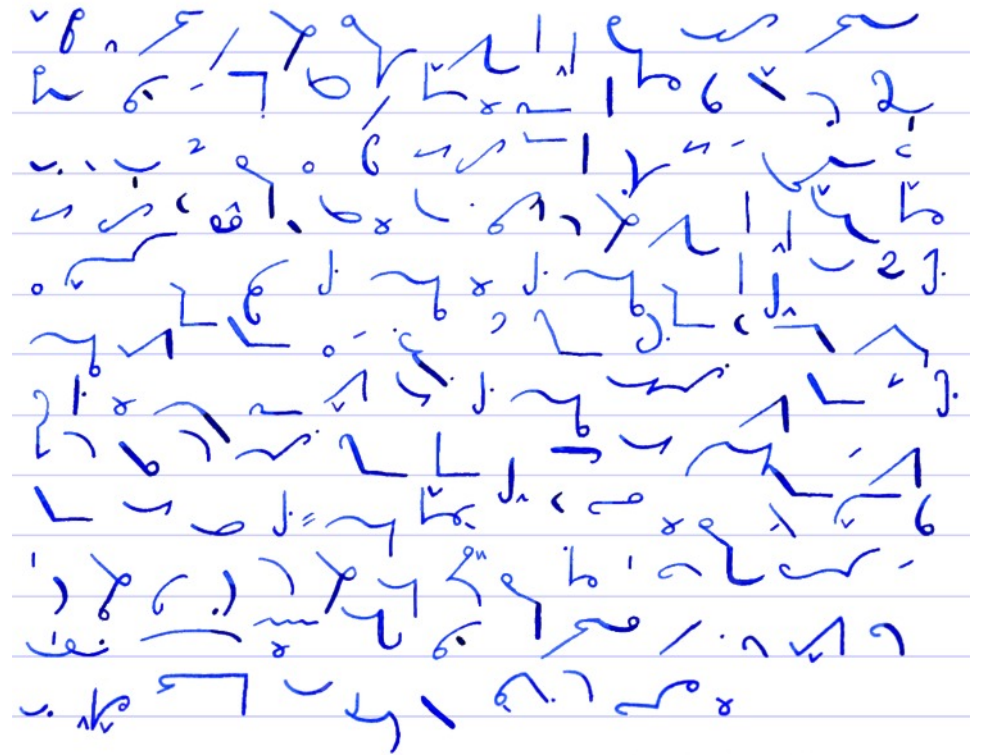
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**Short Letters 6**

I suggest you record each passage separately, reading it out several times in one recording, starting slow and getting faster each time. You can do this by ear, there is no need to know what the speed is, other than "one I can do easily" and finishing with "one that sounds too fast". For a hundred word passage, reading it out five times is likely to take less than\* ten\* minutes. Ten minutes to take it down in shorthand and ten minutes to read back is a comfortably\* short practice session that can be repeated throughout the day. Maybe you can write for the ten minutes in the morning, read back on the train or bus or morning break, take down again in the lunch break and read back in the next ten-

minute time slot that occurs. Speeding up like this on easy passages will "ease your passage" into higher speed attempts on more normal and unseen matter. In addition slow recordings are an opportunity to write very neat outlines and correct any tendency to be sloppy or careless. (336 words)

\* "less than" Downward L in this phrase for ease of joining

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

\* "comfortably" Insert the final dot, as "comfortable" would also make sense here

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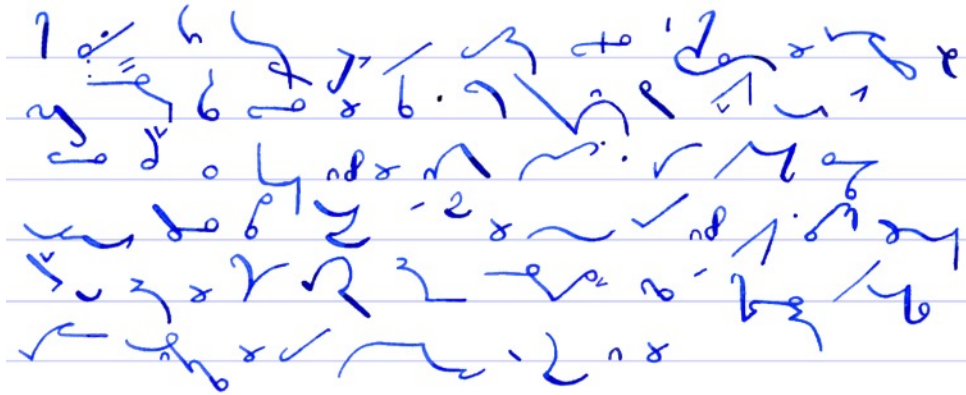
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Each paragraph is 100 words, so writing one in 60 seconds will be 100 wpm



Short Letters 6

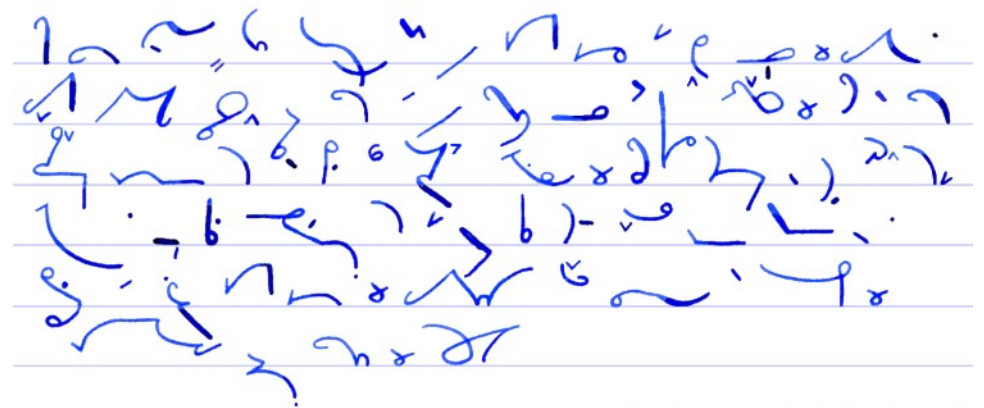
Dear Sarah, Thank you for your application to join our one-year course on Journalism\*. I am pleased to say that\* you have been accepted on this course. It is a very popular subject right now and the class size is twenty students. You will be learning a whole range of skills, including the basics such as English language and shorthand. Many of our students reach a hundred words a minute\* by the end of the year. There will also be work experience opportunities and during the course of the

year recommendations to local newspapers. We look forward\* to seeing you. (100 words)

\* "Journalism" Note the circle S is inside the N stroke. You could also write the optional contraction "jour(nal)ism, leaving out the hooked N stroke.

\* Omission phrases "to s(ay) that" "words (a) minute" "look fo(r)ward"

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Short Letters 6

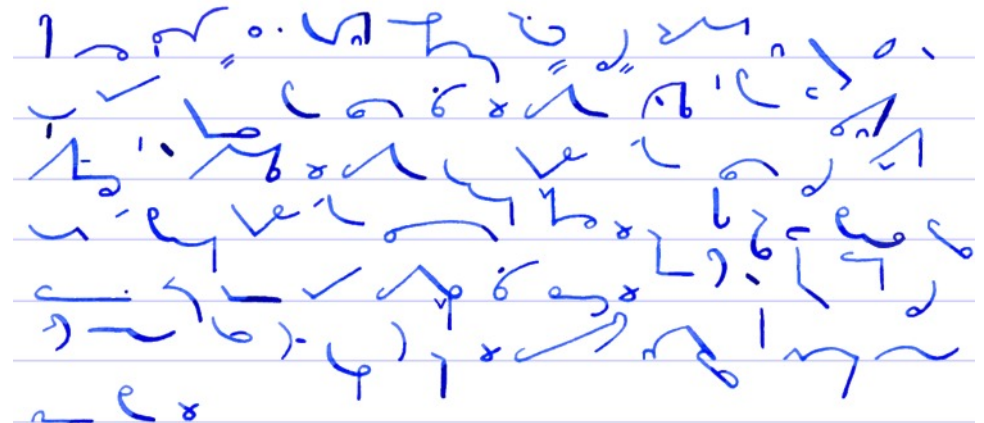
Dear Mr Long, Thank you for your enquiry about our holiday homes on the south coast. We have a wide range of houses to choose from and our brochure gives all the details and prices. They are all very high quality, to make your stay with us enjoyable and pleasant\*. There is so much\* to see around the area and after a good day's exploring or on the beach, it is so nice to come back to a spacious and

comfortable holiday home. We hope you will\* find something of interest. I look forward\* to hearing from you. Yours sincerely (100 words)

\* "pleasant" It is helpful to insert the vowel, to ensure it is not misread as "pleasing"

\* "so much" M stroke included in order to join the phrase

\* Omission phrases "we (h)ope you will" "I look fo(r)ward" "Yours (sin)cerely"



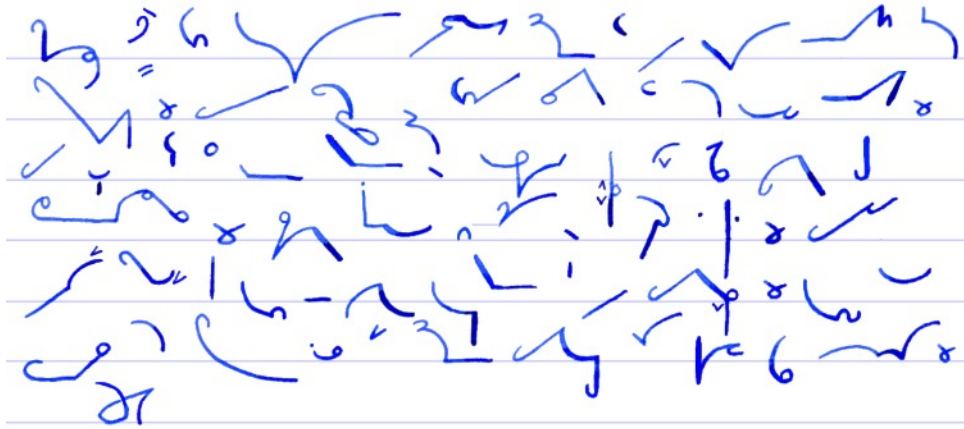
Short Letters 6

Dear Miss Small, As a valued customer of Fashion Shoes I wanted you to be the first to know of our biggest ever summer sale. We have loads on offer with huge reductions on all ranges. We have 50 per cent off summer shoes right now and 70 per cent off some other items. To take advantage of these great savings please

click here to go to our website sale section. They are all top quality shoes and they are going fast, so visit us today. We are sure you will be pleased at how much\* money you can save. (100 words)

\* "how much" M stroke included in order to join the phrase





**Short Letters 6**

Dear Mrs Short\*, Thank you for your letter regarding the work that our builder carried out\* on your property. We are very pleased to hear that you are happy with your new garage. We note\* that he has to come back to install the outside light and this will be done as quickly as possible\*. He will be contacting you shortly to arrange a date. We would really appreciate it if you could\* leave feedback on our website. If you have any queries or further comments on the

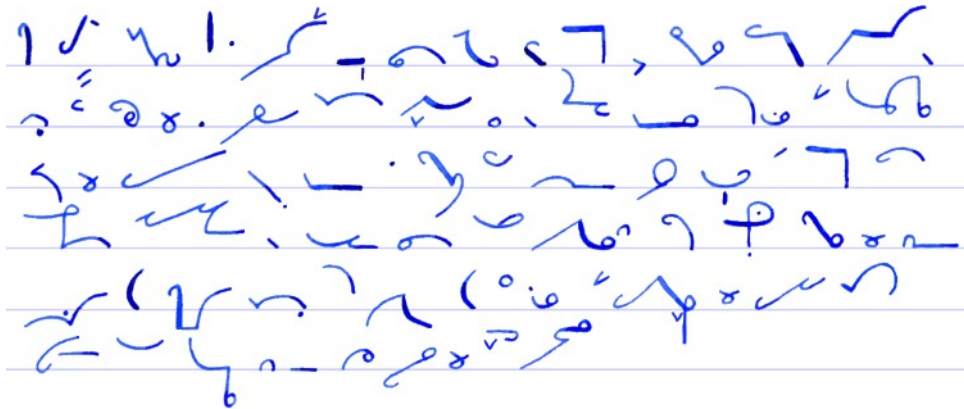
work we have done, I will deal with these immediately. Yours sincerely (100 words)

\* "Mrs Short" The surnames Short, Gold and Child use vocalised short forms, others are in full

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

\* "we note" It is best not to phrase "note", so that it is not misread as "know"

\* Omission phrases "as quickly as poss(ible) "Yours (sin)cerely"

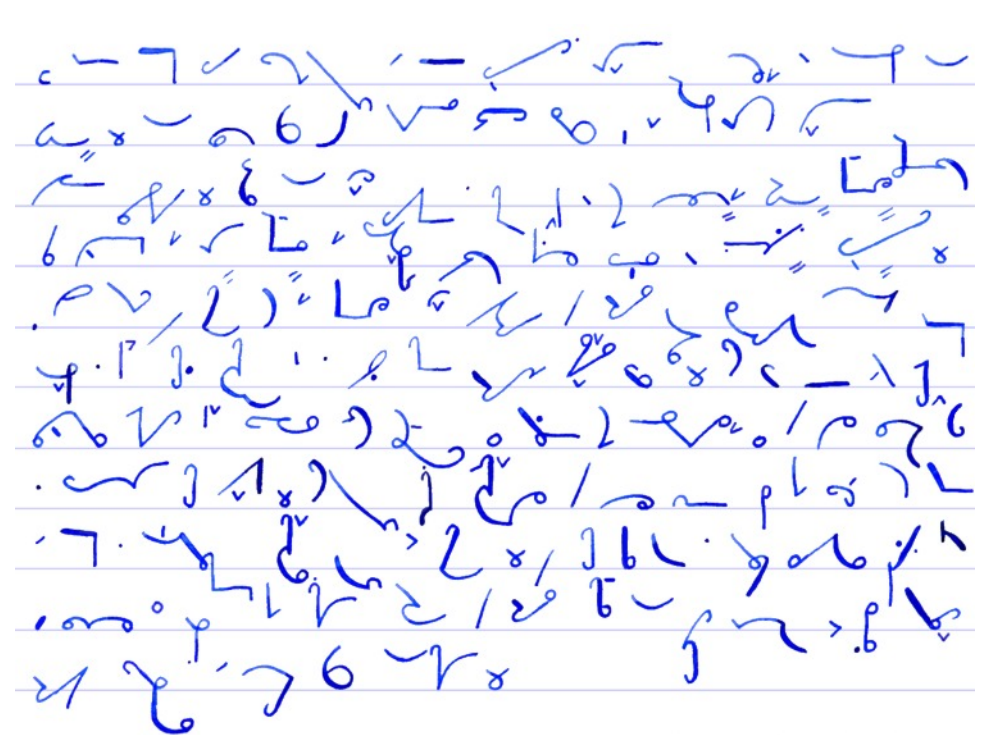


**Short Letters 6**

Dear John, I hope you have\* had a really good summer and have been able to get to the Sports Club regularly to meet with friends. The reason I am writing is to ask you to give us your comments on the facilities here. We are putting together a brochure in order to\* make ourselves known and get more custom, and we would

like to include some honest reviews from existing members. You can email them directly to me or leave them as comments on the website. We would also welcome any photos you could let us use. Kind regards (100 words) (Total 836 words)

\* Omission phrases "I (h)ope you have" "in ord(er to)"



**Docklands Museum**

When I can get away from the computer and go wandering, I like to visit areas of interest in London\*. In summer this is usually parks and green spaces, but I also like to discover local history. With this in mind, we took a trip out to see the Museum of London Docklands which is located on the Isle of Dogs on the north side of the River Thames, close to Canary Wharf. The last part of our journey was on the Docklands Light Railway which always feels as if we have managed to get inside a toy train, travelling on a raised track between the high rise buildings. They are able to go up and down slopes and turn tight corners and their suspension is basic, so the

experience is much less smooth than a normal train ride. They are computer controlled and driverless, which means you can sit at the front or back and get an unobstructed "driver's" view of the journey. Each train does have a Passenger Service Agent on board, who sometimes has to sit at the control panel, which always draws any children to move to the seats behind to watch proceedings and imagine themselves in control.

\* "London" Downward L to make a convenient and unique outline for a well-known place name





**Docklands Museum**

We alighted at West India Quay Station and made our way down the criss-crossing steps underneath the station. Looking back it no longer\* seemed like a toy, but more like a science fiction film of the past, when they dreamed of vehicles travelling at high level through cities of gleaming buildings, with people in shiny grey futuristic\* clothes walking about. This is all normal to us now, but the special clothing is now smart black or grey suits and crisp shirts, the uniform of the city boys and men. On the quayside we passed a long row of food tents, where the owners were preparing and cooking

their fare for when the workers escape the offices for their dose of fresh air but always ready to respond to the bleep or buzz of their iPhones alerting them to the arrival of an urgent message that is more important than the next bite of sandwich.

\* "longer" has downward L only in phrases where convenient, similarly "any longer" "in longer"

\* "futuristic" Note that "future" uses doubling

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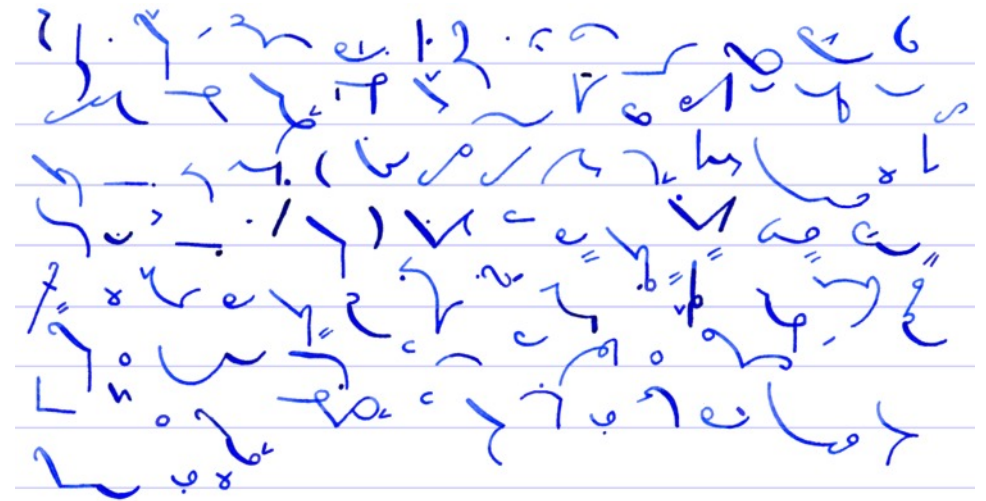
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**Docklands Museum**

Although it was a bright and warm sunny day, there were a lot more cool breezes blowing than we would have expected, obviously caused by the many tall buildings, as we had not noticed any wind before coming here, and indeed they vanished once we left the area at the end of the afternoon. At the far end of the quay a large boat was berthed, called St Peter's Barge, London's Floating Church. I felt St Peter would have heartily\* approved and if he decided to visit, I am sure he would

have brought his fishing gear with him, in order to\* illustrate his sermon and talk about his previous experiences with both empty nets and, very soon afterwards, full breaking nets.

\* "heartily" See [www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm) "hardly heartily"

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

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Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on a lined background, including the year 1809.

**Docklands Museum**

Outside the museum is a statue of Robert Milligan, the Deputy Chairman of the West India Dock Company who helped create this part of the Docklands area. Unfortunately\* this achievement is tainted by his ownership of hundreds of slaves on his family's sugar plantation in Jamaica. Milligan died in 1809, two years after the

success of the first parliamentary anti-slave trade legislation, chiefly brought about by the much better known William Wilberforce, after whom the lecture theatre on the top floor is named.

\* "Unfortunately" Optional contraction

Multiple horizontal lines for taking notes or writing.

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on a lined background.

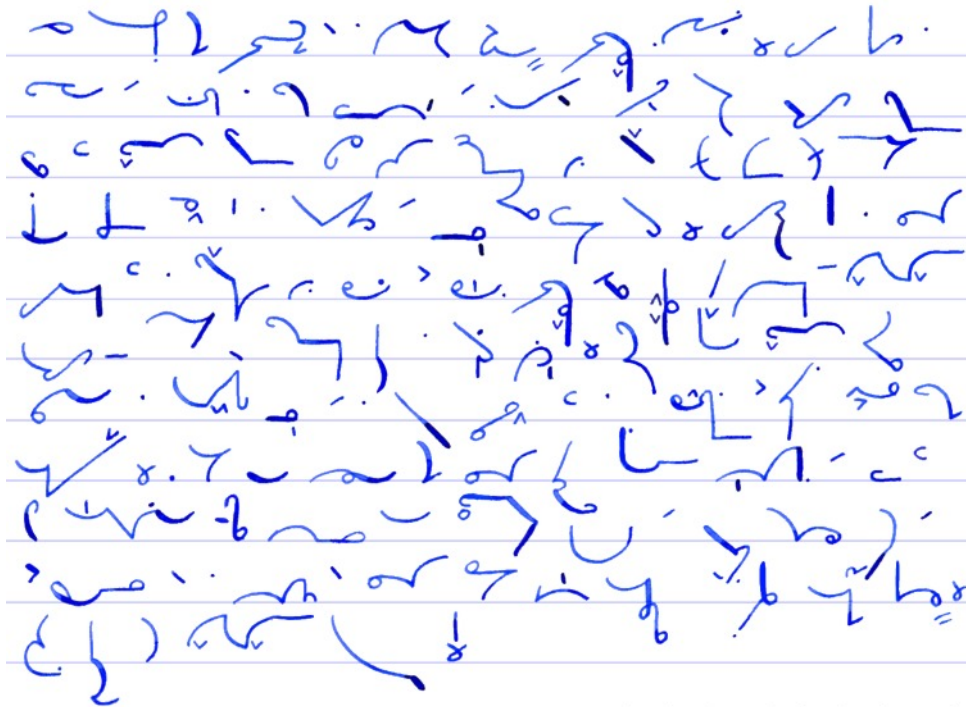
**Docklands Museum**

The museum is housed in one of the old giant warehouses and is\* spread over five floors, some of which are used for study rooms and classrooms for visiting school groups. It contains the Port and River collection of the main Museum of London which is located in central London. We started on the top floor where we followed the detailed history of the River Thames at this location, from its form in prehistory all the way through the different ages and settlements. We saw models of the type of houses, boats and river fronts that have

come and gone throughout the centuries, including a large model of London Bridge and all the houses that were built on it in the middle ages. The exhibits concentrated on the trading activities of the settlement, town and later on city. There were Roman fish-hooks and pieces of pottery and other wares pulled from the mud of the Thames or found in riverside excavations.

\* "and is" not phrased here, because "and has" could also make sense in this sentence

Multiple horizontal lines for taking notes or writing.

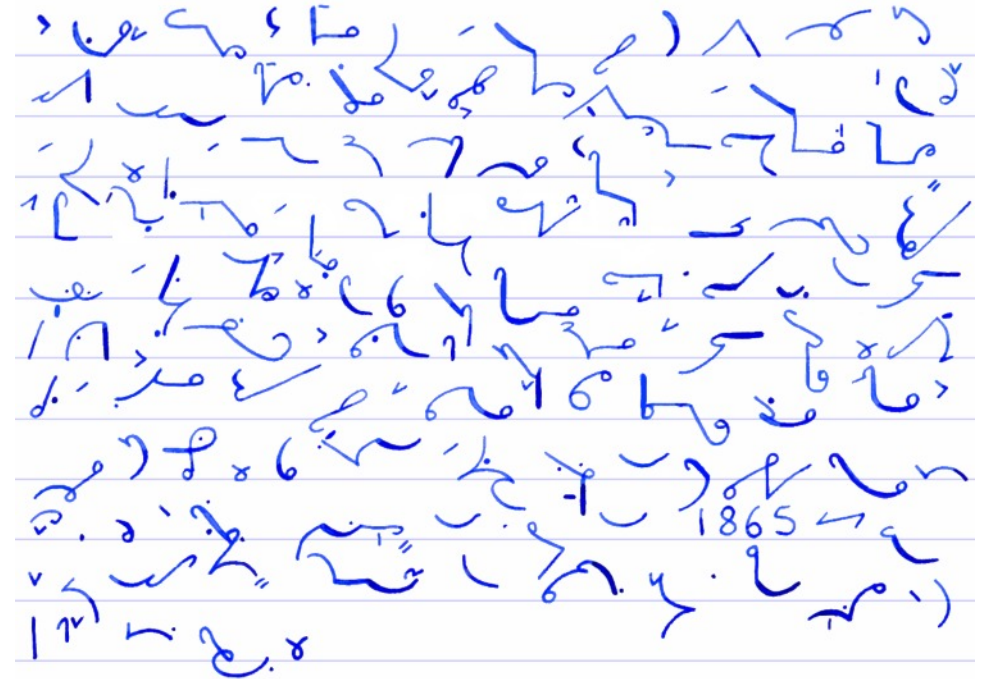


**Docklands Museum**

Most interesting was the re-creation\* of a length of London riverside alleyway. We turned a corner and entered a very gloomy and narrow rough path between brick buildings, with grimy black walls, little workshops lit by (electric) candle containing desk, accounts on a parchment and goose quill pen. One of them had a small window with a brightly lit scene of the sunny riverside and buildings outside, which looked quite lifelike if one could manage to forget it was a painted illusion. There were tiny grimy shops selling a variety of goods, and a public house with a

soundtrack of the chatter and noise from the interior. The only thing missing was the smell which would have been dank, mouldy and cold, with other unappealing odours mixed in, garbage, fish and butchery remains, sewage and all the stinks of a multitude of small scale home industries discharging into the Thames. Thankfully it was not so lifelike after all!

\* "re-creation" Note that the non-hyphenated "recreation" meaning playing or amusement, has a short E sound, and so written on the line



**Docklands Museum**

All the various equipment that the dockers, shipwrights and boatmen used was represented, mostly iron and wood, including trolleys, baskets, hoists, rope work and boathooks of every size and shape. Tea and coffee were major imports that contributed to the growth of Docklands, and the delicate ornate cups and teapots from the 18th century gave the impression that these were innocent and genteel enjoyments. However, these bitter drinks created a greater need for sugar, which led to the expansion\* of the slave trade to provide workers on the sugar plantations. We saw the chains and shackles that were used on the slaves, as well as descriptions\*, paintings and drawings of the miseries of their existence. This appalling\* and shameful episode in British history brings to my mind the words of Abraham Lincoln in a speech in 1865, "Whenever I hear anyone

arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally."

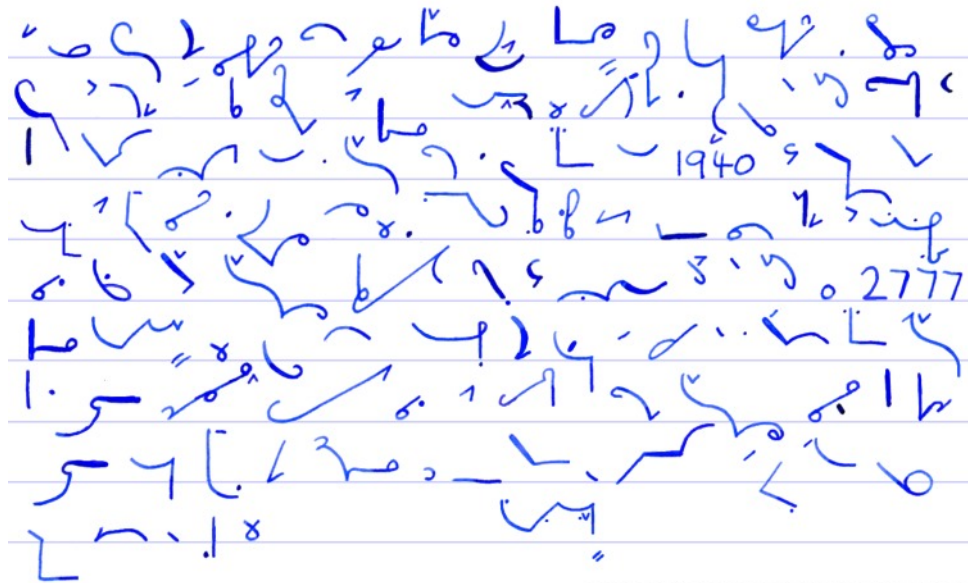
\* "18th" Always insert the first vowel in this and in "tenth", as otherwise the outlines are the same

\* "expansion" and "extension" Insert the second vowel and also keep the P stroke at a low angle

\* "descriptions" This plural does not use the contraction, as it would look too much like "discourse" which has a similar meaning

\* "appalling" and "appealing" Always insert the second vowel, as they have the same outline and opposite meanings





**Docklands Museum**

On the next floor was the history of more recent times, showing Docklands throughout the twentieth century, the subsequent development\* of the area and its transport, and the difficulties encountered. We saw a piece of iron girder that had partly melted in a fire from a Blitz attack in 1940, with the bottom part intact and the top half a shapeless mass. The caption states "To give some idea of the intensity of the heat faced by the firemen, it is worth remembering that the melting point of iron is 2,777 degrees Fahrenheit\*." Even more interesting was the photo and

story of a bomb attack and fire at a sugar warehouse, where the heat and the water from the firemen's hose had turned the sugar into toffee, which the workers would come back to regularly and chip off pieces to take home to eat.

\* "development" Optional contraction

\* "Fahrenheit" This outline omits the H sound of "-heit". To indicate the H sound, use the outline example given on the last line

Handwriting practice lines for the text on the left page.



**Docklands Museum**

Once back outside, we realised we had forgotten what a pleasant\* sunny day it was, especially as museum exhibits are generally kept in low light. All the food tents and stalls were now thronging with people, consuming their well-earned midday meal after working hard at keeping the trade of the city going all morning from their computer screens. I am sure all the freshly prepared food was much more appealing\* than the bland offerings from the office snack vending machines and well

worth the effort of descending from the heights of the towering offices, to sit on the quayside, surrounded by wicker tables, large parasols and planters full of box hedging, petunias and begonias.

\* "pleasant" and "pleasing" Helpful to insert the first vowel in these, as they have similar outlines and meanings

\* "appealing" "appalling" Always insert the vowel

Handwriting practice lines for the text on the right page.

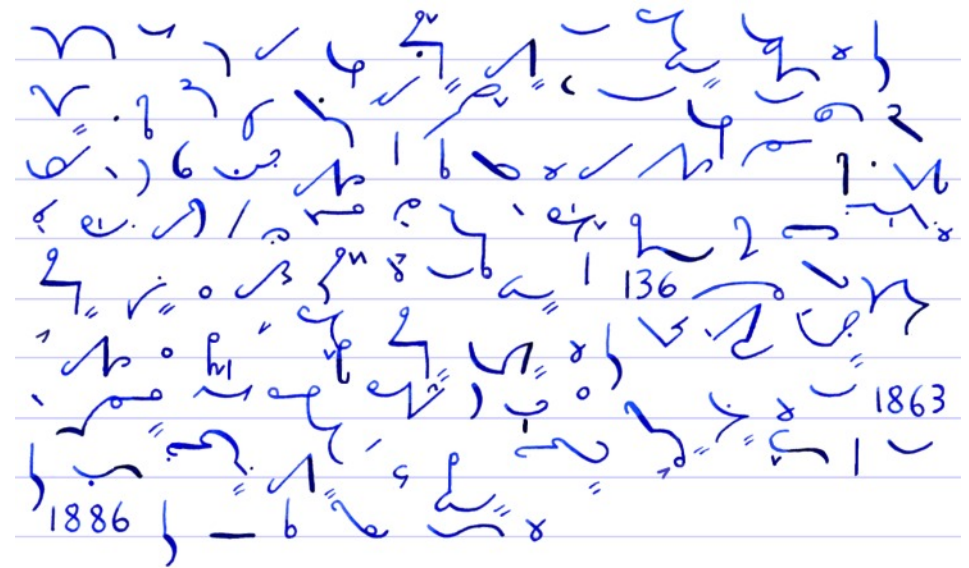


**Docklands Museum**

The changing light from the sky, as the clouds came and went, was reflected in all the glass faces of the buildings and in the stretches of water, much more lively and agreeable than the cold concrete or marble squares which one so often finds in the city

between the buildings. The prosperity, orderliness and quiet calm of the area was the opposite of the bustling scenes of the trading activities of the past that we had seen in the museum. (1377 words)

Blank lined area for notes.



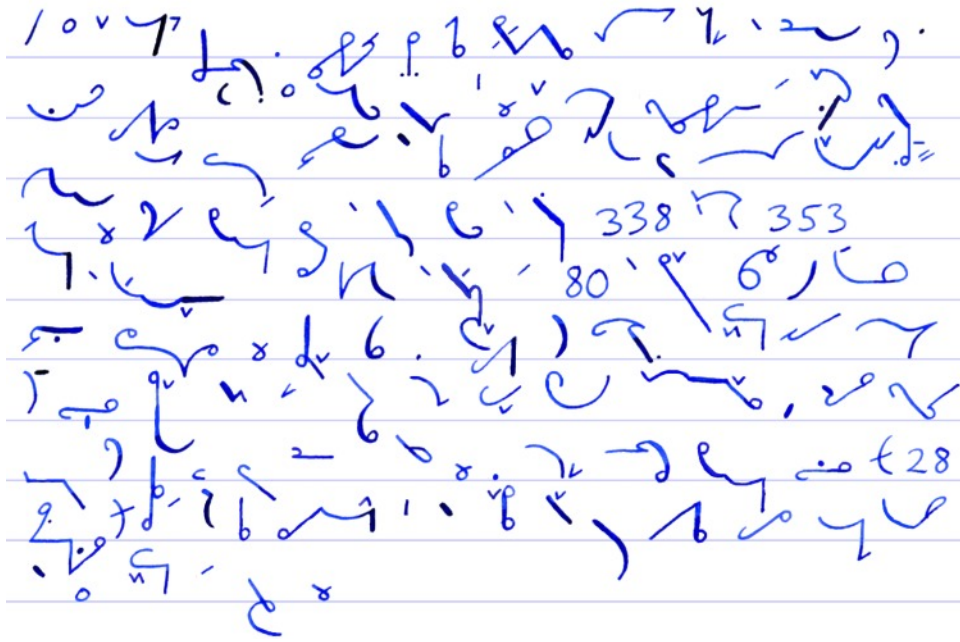
**Highgate Wood**

Earlier in the year we visited Highgate Wood in North London for the first time\*. It was April, the trees were still bare and we realised that another visit in summer would be necessary to see this ancient woodland at its best. We returned last week\*, during a period of hot sunny\* weather, which meant, of course, lots\* of photos of sunlight streaming through the green canopy. Highgate Hill is one of the highest points in London at 136 metres above sea level and the woodland is situated on the north side of Highgate Village. It was part of the original Forest of Middlesex and in the 16th century was known as "Brewer's

Fell." In 1863 it was named Gravelpit Wood and when the City of London Corporation acquired it in 1886 it was given its present name.

- \* Omission phrases "for (the) first time" "las(t w)eek"
- \* "sun/sunny" and "snow/snowy" should always be vocalised, but here it is obvious which it is
- \* "lots" "masses" Always insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

Blank lined area for notes.



**Highgate Wood**

Much as I enjoy discovering the history of the city and its suburbs, I like the idea of walking through an ancient woodland that has never been built on. I imagine the prehistoric and Iron Age Britons living in the clearings and using all its resources for building material, firewood and food. There are 70 species of bird, seven of bat, 338 of moth, 353 of fungi, 12 of butterfly and 80 of spider, as well as the usual foxes and

grey squirrels. Despite this the wood was remarkably quiet and we mainly saw crows striding about on the paths or the white flash of magpies, who always prefer to keep their distance when people walk past. The area covers 70 acres (28 hectares) and although it is surrounded on all sides by busy roads, once into the forest all is quiet and peaceful.



**Highgate Wood**

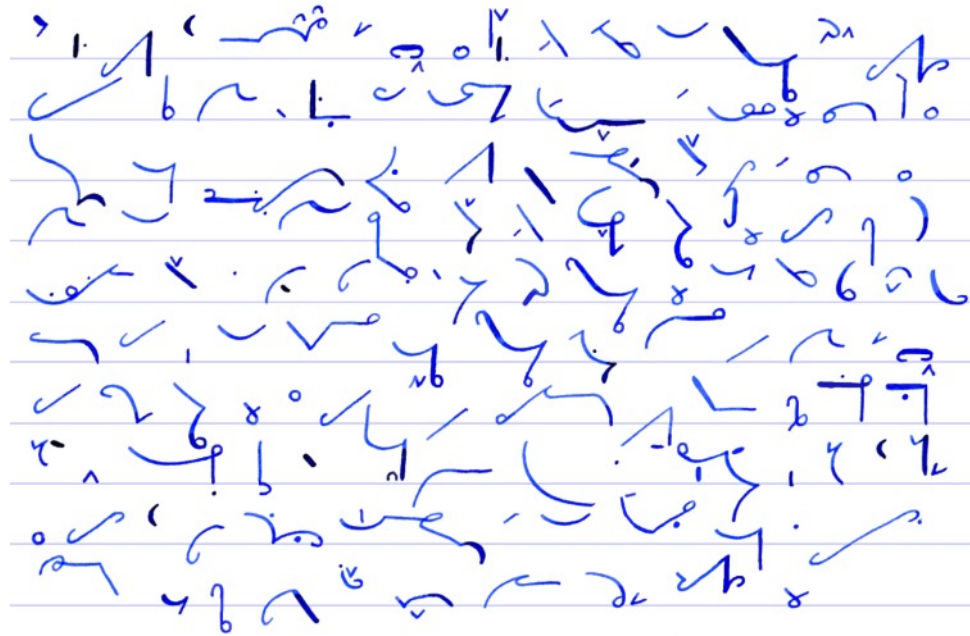
In the middle is a large clear area of grass used for sports, with the Pavilion Cafe in one corner and seats under the trees for families to have their picnics and snacks. There is also a very informative wildlife information centre in a long wooden cabin. It is filled with photos and identification\* charts of the animal and plant life, and posters showing the prehistory and geology of the area, as well as many children's drawings and paintings. After perusing all this, it was time for our sandwiches and we settled on a circular tree seat nearby. Here we had a close encounter with our least favourite item of wildlife, two wasps who

became interested in our food. They had obviously read the information in the cabin and assumed that we humans\* wanted to feed, preserve and admire them at close quarters. We knew that waving our hands about would only inflame them into more aggressive behaviour, so we had to just stroll away, finishing the last bites on the move.

\* "identifi(ca)tion" Contraction omitting a syllable

\* "humans" Written above the line, to differentiate it from "humane"





**Highgate Wood**

All the dead wood that accumulates on the ground is tidied up and placed in bundles around the woodland, where it is left to decay, in order to\* encourage the fungi and insects. Some of it is formed into wigwam shapes, ready to be explored by the children, and some is left in long strips piled up alongside the paths. One tree was encircled by a low wall of neatly arranged branches. In the past this might have been cleared away but in parks nowadays

branches and felled logs are left on the ground, away from the paths. As we continued our circular route back towards the exit gate, I thought how interesting it would all look after a snowfall, but I think that idea is one that will remain unexplored, and any forays into a winter landscape under the trees will be confined to my local areas of woodland. (604 words)

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

