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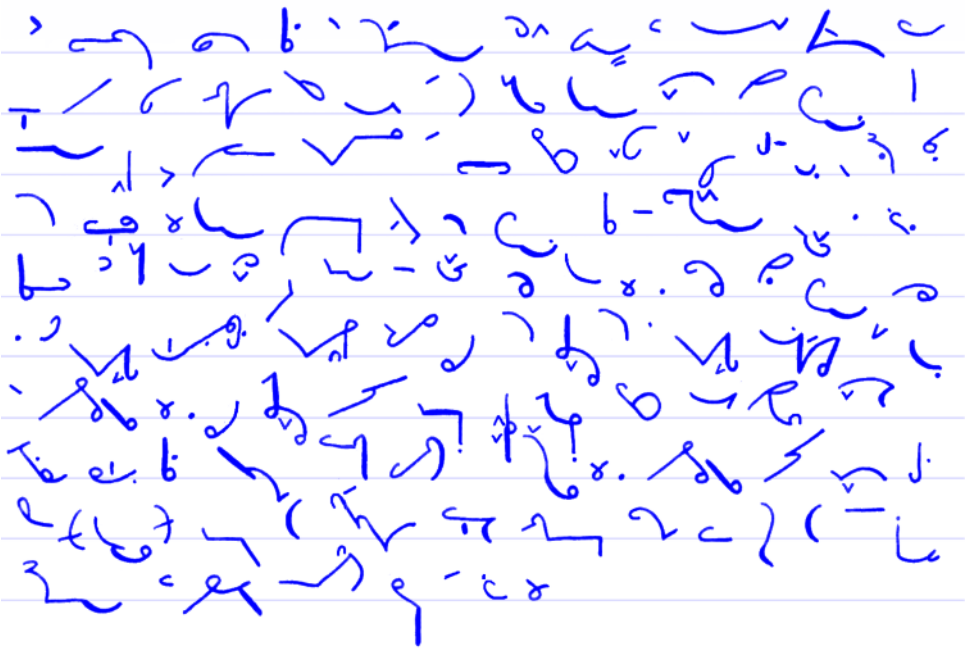
Blogs - 2016 - October

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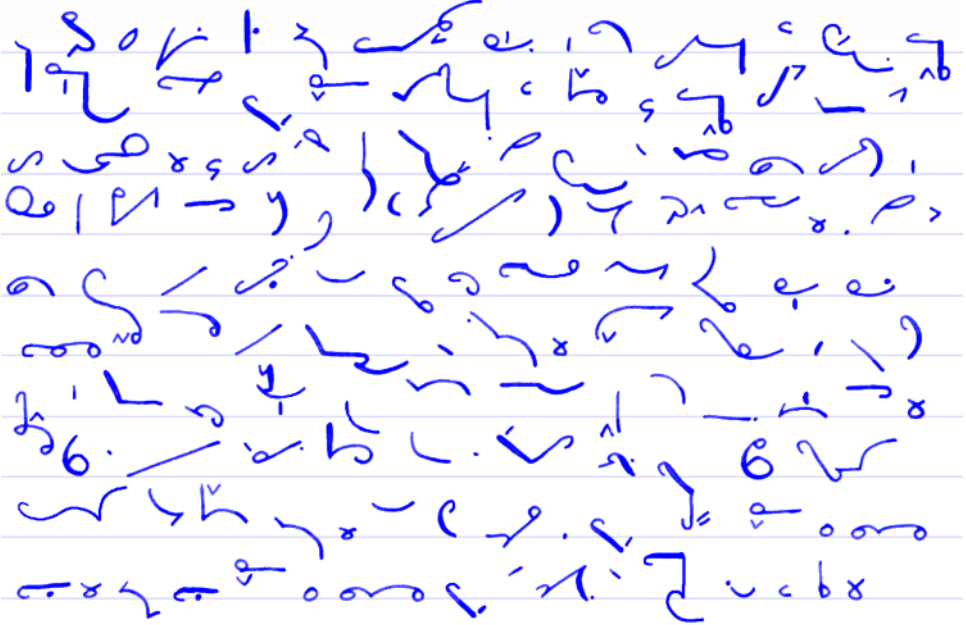
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Last Fling

All the carefree summer days of roaming around London with neither jumper nor coat are well and truly past now and so I have been having my last fling at going out to the local parks and green spaces while I still don't need to wear hat or gloves. Having looked up the word fling, it is quite gratifying to find a complete description of what I had in mind but which I could not quite find the words for. The phrase "last fling" means a short period of unrestrained pursuit of one's wishes or desires or a period of indulgence on the eve of responsibilities*. The wishes and desires refer to getting outside and visiting places in the last few mild and pleasant* sunny* days before the colder weather arrives. The responsibilities* refer to my

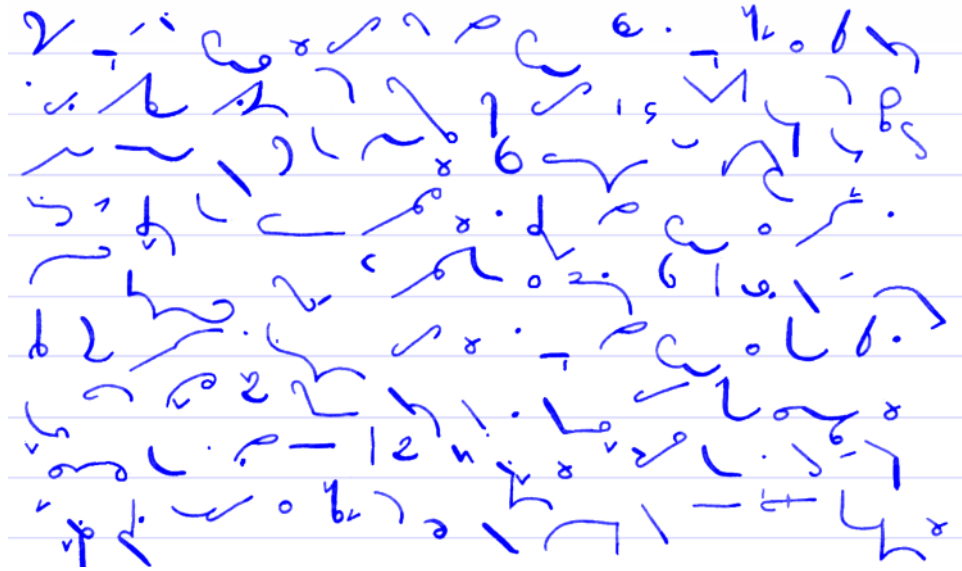
- ten staff (fingers) to keep them properly* clothed and protected from the cold so that they can continue working with reasonable accuracy, speed and comfort.
- * "pleasant" "pleasing" Helpful to insert the first vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning
- * "sunny" and "snowy" Always insert the vowels
- * "responsibilities" The contraction is not used for the plural
- * "properly" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately", as these are similar in outline and meaning



Last Fling

Today has been the first chilly day of the year, gloriously sunny* but very windy with fluffy clouds scudding across the blue sky, alternating with times when the clouds join together and the wind increases. When the wind stopped it was obviously the last fling of almost summer weather but as soon as it started again I was sure that winter was only around the corner. The last of the summer flowers are waving in people's front gardens and in the shops snow* scene Christmas cards are beginning

- to appear. Like the person who put their trousers on back to front, I don't know if I am going out or coming home again. This is a rather sorry admission for a born and bred Briton as this is perfectly normal for the time of year. In other countries the blue sky is sometimes grey. Here the grey sky is sometimes blue and worthy of grateful comment when it is.
- * "sun/snow, sunny/snowy" Always insert the vowels



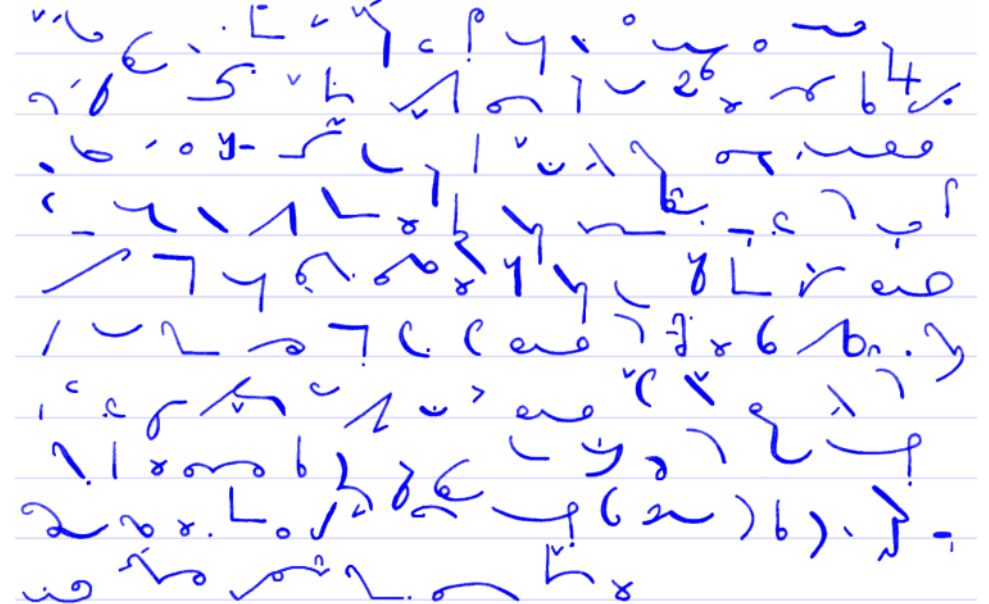
Last Fling

There are good and bad flings. One particular last fling that is not a good idea is just before a weight reducing regime or perhaps during one but when the party food or sweets are not* going to be there for long. This is clearly not helpful for the plan of action and the desire for quick results. A desperate last fling is really a lack of determination, proof that resolve is weaker than it needs to be and maybe the decision was not really a firm one. A good last fling is doing just a few more lines of shorthand practice before putting the books

away and doing something else. I sometimes have a last go at shorthand about bedtime. I always have a pen and pad on the bedside table anyway, as ideas or words to be looked up can occur at any time.

* "are not" Full outlines in this case, not halving and N hook, to achieve a clearer outline

* "weaker" Derived from "weak" therefore keeps the basic outline, compare "wicker" which is not a derivative so uses Way and



Last Fling

I often listen to a talk on the Ipod* when settling into bed, as nothing else is going on to take attention from it and just occasionally I attempt to write some of it in shorthand. Mostly* it is way too fast and as I don't actually have to do it, I end up producing scribbled nonsense that could never be read back. It would be better to make a good effort or none at all rather than get into sloppy habits*. I do better if I just take whole sentences which in practice means getting every other sentence or utterance. This reduces the pressure but with effort still required in order to* reach the end of the sentence either by speeding up or remembering it. Sometimes it is easier to just listen for unusual* words or interesting phrasing opportunities. The talk

is generally more interesting than shorthand writing* so it is easy to abandon the good intentions and promise to resume the practising some other* time.

* "Ipod" Insert the vowel in this and "Ipad"

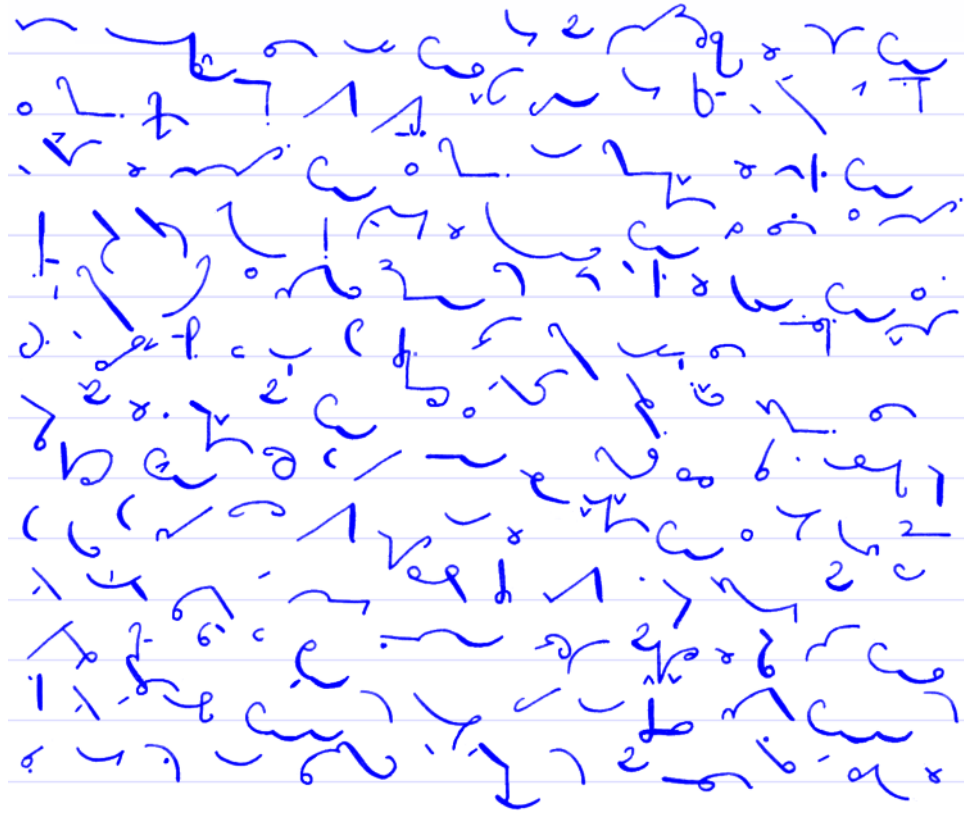
* "mostly" Omits the T

* "habits" "hobbies" Always insert the second vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

* Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "short(hand) writing"

* "unusual" Helpful to insert the first vowel, as it could look like "English"

* "some other" Doubling for "other"



Last Fling

I am introducing some new flings for the shorthand learner's consideration. Early fling is practising during the morning getting-ready routine, while waiting for the toaster to pop and the kettle to boil. Mid-morning fling is practising in break time. Midday fling ditto, both before and after eating lunch. Afternoon fling is the same as morning but probably shorter as you will have been working very hard all day. Evening fling is a session of serious study with no other distractions and will probably include some "extra mile" pages of shorthand. The bedtime shorthand fling is optional, possibly confined to practising

some delicious flowing phrases that are going to save precious seconds, which is an incentive to do them, even though you are more than ready to turn in. Night-time fling is only if you wake up unable to sleep and make the sensible decision to read a page of printed shorthand in order to* replace the troublesome thoughts with soothing, calming and friendly shorthand outlines. All these little flings add up and instead of flinging your pencil away in disgust, you will be flinging your hat in the air in celebration of obtaining your shorthand exam pass and certificate. (828 words)

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"



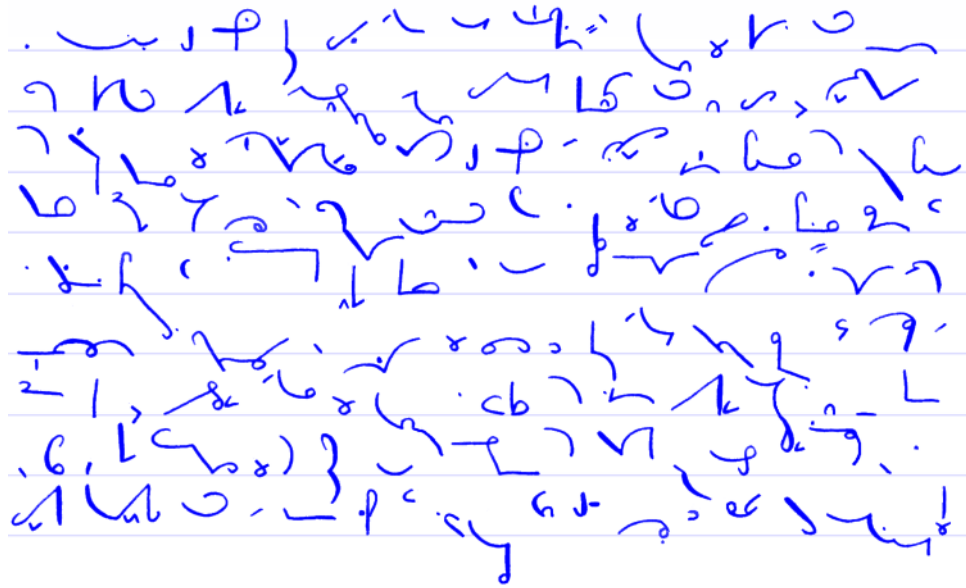
Cut-Price Shorthand

When I learned shorthand in 1972, there was a price to pay. The cost of the year's secretarial course was £50, a goodly amount at the time but not excessive considering the value of a year's practical education that would lead to employment. Clearly this was a token amount with the true costs being subsidised by the education authorities*. Unlike my fellow students, I had to pay for the course because I had already had two years of further education studying for A Levels, so I was not entitled to any more free education. We had to buy our pads and

pencils, which I got as cheaply as I could, mostly* from the newsagents shop, although they were available from the college shop as well. The New Course book was given to us, no doubt the cost being covered by the fee. Quite soon I began to obtain a few other books, firstly* a small pocket shorthand dictionary, then phrasing and revision books, and later on the big red shorthand dictionary.

* "authorities" You can intersect stroke Ith for this, but here it would not be so clear

* "mostly" "firstly" Omit the T sound



Cut-Price Shorthand

The internet did not exist, it was way off in the undreamt-of future. Daily information came from television, radio and newspapers, and if you wanted educational* information, you went to the library or bought books. Mobile phones also did not exist, and landline home telephones or public telephone boxes were the only means of verbal communication over a distance. Offices used the Telex system with a basic teleprinter that clacked out the text all in capital letters, an early and very cumbersome precursor to email. Someone would tear off the paper strip with the message and walk it to the recipient's office. If you were* a CB* or ham radio

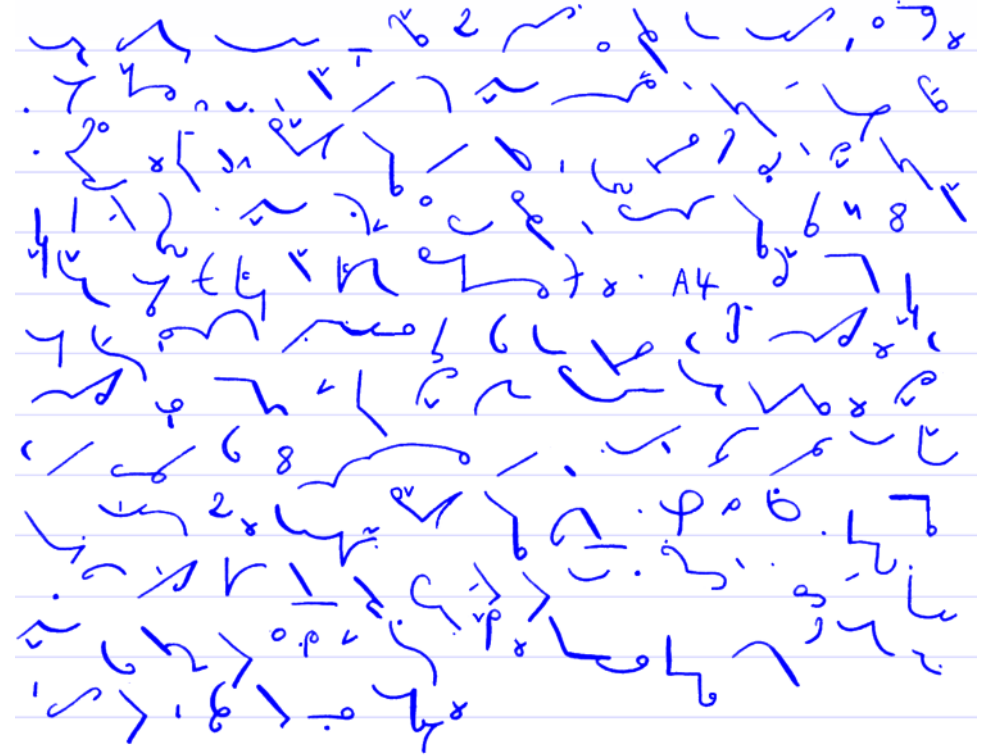
enthusiast, you could talk to others who had the equipment. So there was no expectation* or ability to have instant access to a wide variety of information and I can state with complete confidence that you don't miss what has not yet been invented!

* "educational" Normally the U diphthong goes outside the Shun Hook, but here it has to go inside, as there is nowhere else for it

* Omission phase "if you (w)ere"

* CB = Citizen's Band

* "expectation" Optional contraction



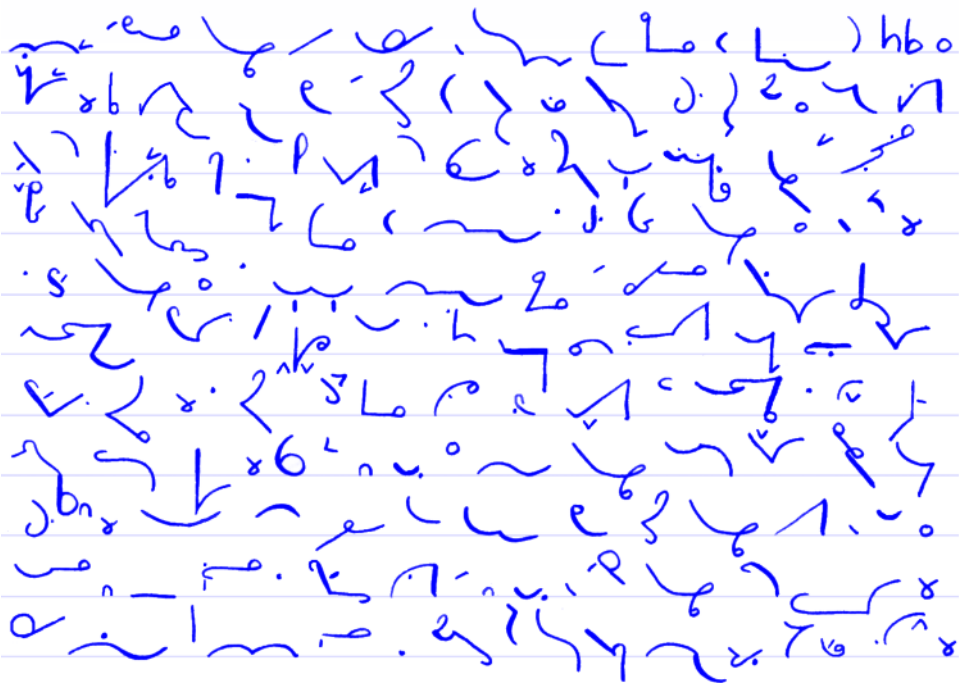
Cut-Price Shorthand

Now that we have the internet, "cut-price" shorthand learning is possible for anyone who has access. The only items you need to buy are your writing materials of paper and pencil, plus a sharpener. Top bound spiral pads are best, but if you have to use larger sheets of lined paper, divide it up so that you have a writing area as near as possible to normal pads, which is about 8 by 5 inches (20 by 12 centimetres). An A4* size can be divided into four smaller rectangles, which would then have to be used without drawn margins. Without margins, notes can be made on the top line, left blank for that purpose. Lines that are closer than 8 millimetres are too narrow

and will result in tiny, pinched, unclear shorthand. Eventually, spiral pads will become a necessity, as the faster the dictation gets, the more urgent it will become to be able to flip up the page in a fraction of a second, and continue writing even before the page has settled on the far side. Beginners' dictations may be short enough to fit on one page, but this will not* be the case indefinitely.

* "A4" Letters of the alphabet are generally written in lower case, but here capital A seems clearer for this well-known term

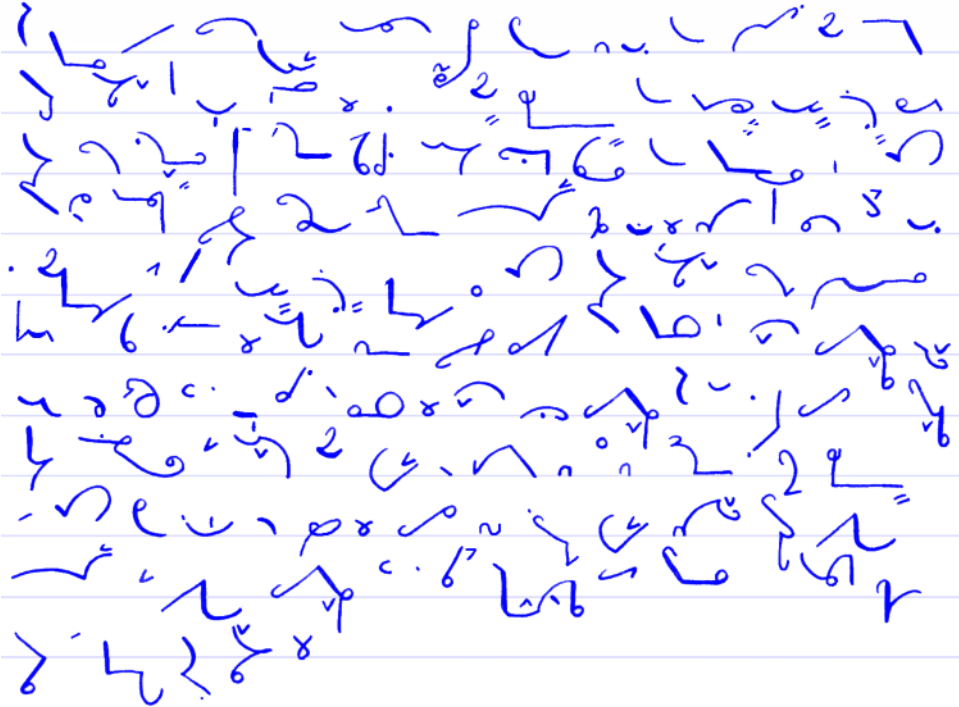
* "this will not" Downward L in order to form a convenient phrase



Cut-Price Shorthand

Medium softness pencils are necessary to form the thick strokes without digging, so HB is ideal. It is helpful to have several and sharpen them both ends before the session, so that the shorthand is never held up or deteriorates during a study period or lesson. There should be no indentations visible on the reverse side of the paper, and if you cannot get the thicks without making a dent, then the pencil is too hard. A blunt pencil is a no-no, making hooks and circles barely discernible, and encouraging overly large outlines in an attempt to get some

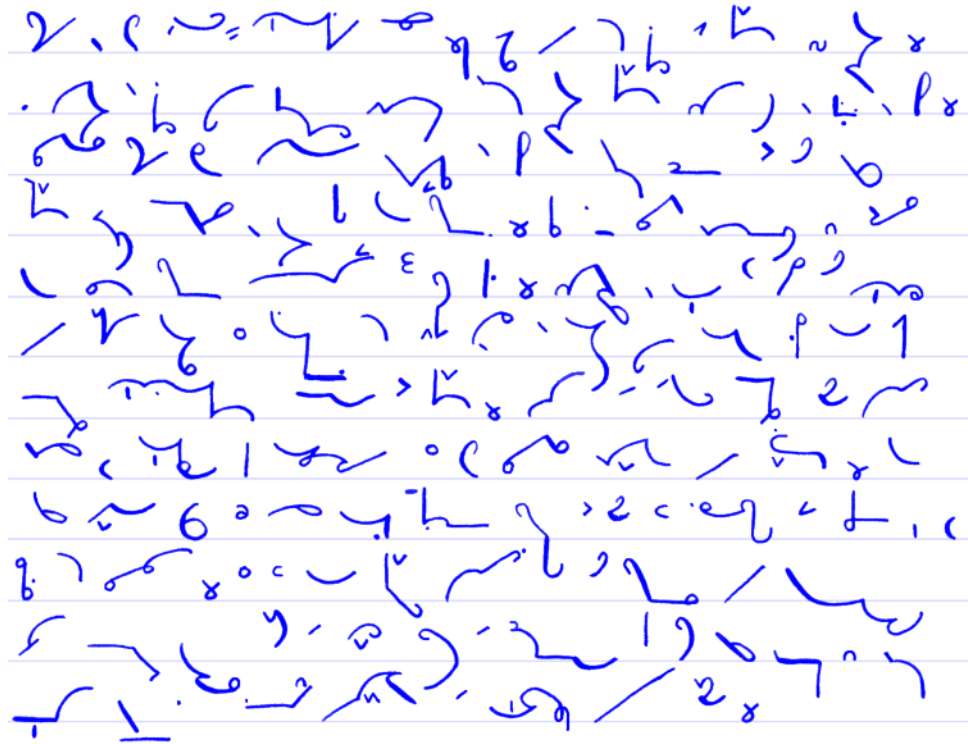
clarity into the grey blurry shapes. A sharp point takes less effort to write with, encourages a light touch and produces clear detail. This is why you need as many pencils in your pile as possible for each session. Another important reason for having several sharpened pencils ready to hand is in case you come across a broken lead and you need to swap pencils very quickly. As we are aiming at minimum cost, the shorthand pen although far better may have to wait until funds allow.



Cut-Price Shorthand

Although books are more convenient in some situations, everything you need for learning shorthand can be obtained online at no cost. The Shorthand Instructor for Pitman's New Era is now available from archive dot org and this contains not only graded lessons for beginners but also lots of extra useful phrasing and practice material towards the end. You will at some point need a shorthand dictionary and the large New Era Dictionary is also available online from the links at the end of this article. In addition, you can use the search

boxes on my websites to find individual words and phrases, with a good chance of success. My main website, although not a teaching one, provides additional explanations on the entire shorthand theory, to help you as you work through the Instructor, and also several common word lists. Once you have completed the theory, you will find plenty of reading material on the reading website with a choice of downloads: blogs, facility drill pages and dictation ZIP files.ZIP files.



Cut-Price Shorthand

There are two other non-monetary costs to consider and these are your commitment and the time you have available. The level of commitment will determine how much of your available time you will wish to dedicate to study. As long as there are several longer periods of study per week, all the short pieces of time here and there* can be used to full advantage for practising. It is a good habit* to make sure you always have some practice material with you throughout the day. You will be pleased to know that such short moments are ideal for this, as fatigue or loss of enthusiasm will never set in and it keeps the momentum going all the time. Little and often gets the shorthand learned

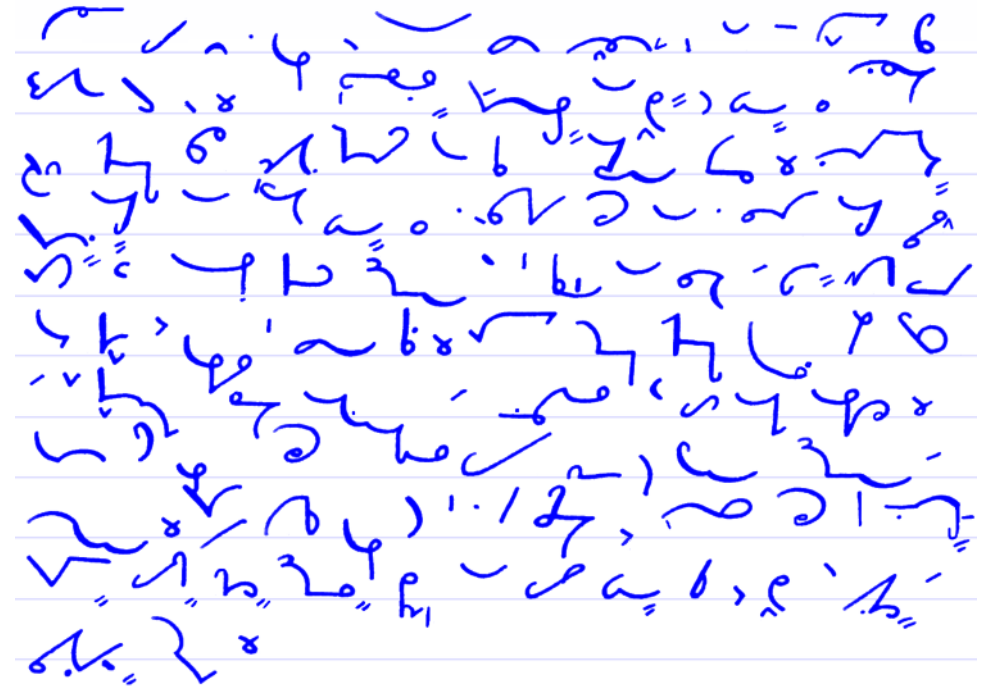
almost without noticing it, in the same way as other habits* of life are acquired. For fast writing this is what is most needed, automatic production of the shorthand, with concentration on the task but without stress or hassle. As with any type of learning, short breaks are beneficial, and will keep the fingers, eyes and mind fresh and working at their best to get you to your goal, to become an accurate, reliable and unflustered writer of shorthand. (1082 words)

* Omission phrase "here (and) there"

* "habit" "hobby" Always insert the second vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

<https://archive.org/details/pitmansshorthand00pitm>
New Era Shorthand Instructor for graded lessons

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.449114>
The large New Era Dictionary (100,000 entries)



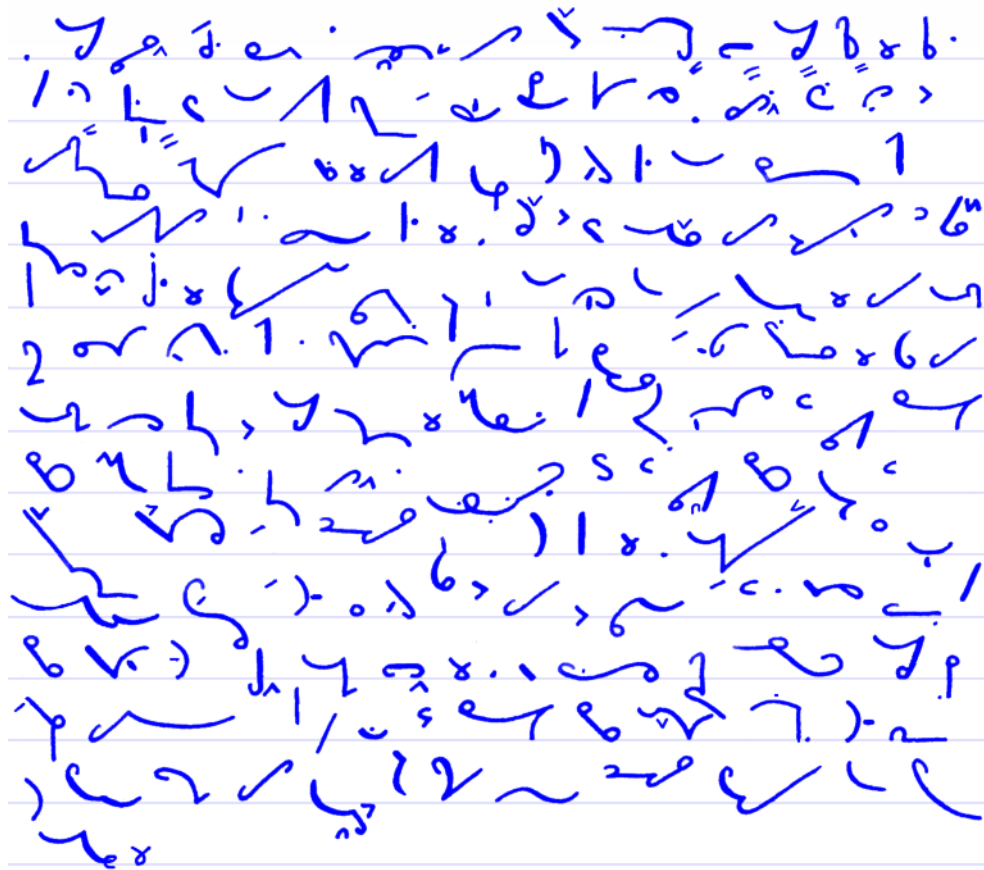
Kempton Steam Museum

Last week* we made a visit to another steam museum but not quite like the others that we have been to. Crossness Pumping Station in south-east London is amazingly* beautiful and decorative, as well as worthy of admiration for its engineering elegance. Markfield Beam Engine in north London is a solitary machine in a small engine house, also with interesting decoration, working all on its own in smooth and well-oiled glory for the delight of the visitors on steaming days. I like the architecture and decorative features of such places and I admire the

skill, inventiveness and excellence that went into the installations. For me they are understandable machines, where you can see everything working and moving. Our latest visit was on a much larger scale, to the monster machines at Kempton Park Water Treatment Works, situated in west London, just to the south of Richmond and Heathrow Airport.

* Omission phrase "las(t w)eek"

* "amazingly" and "amusingly" Always insert the vowels in these and derivatives

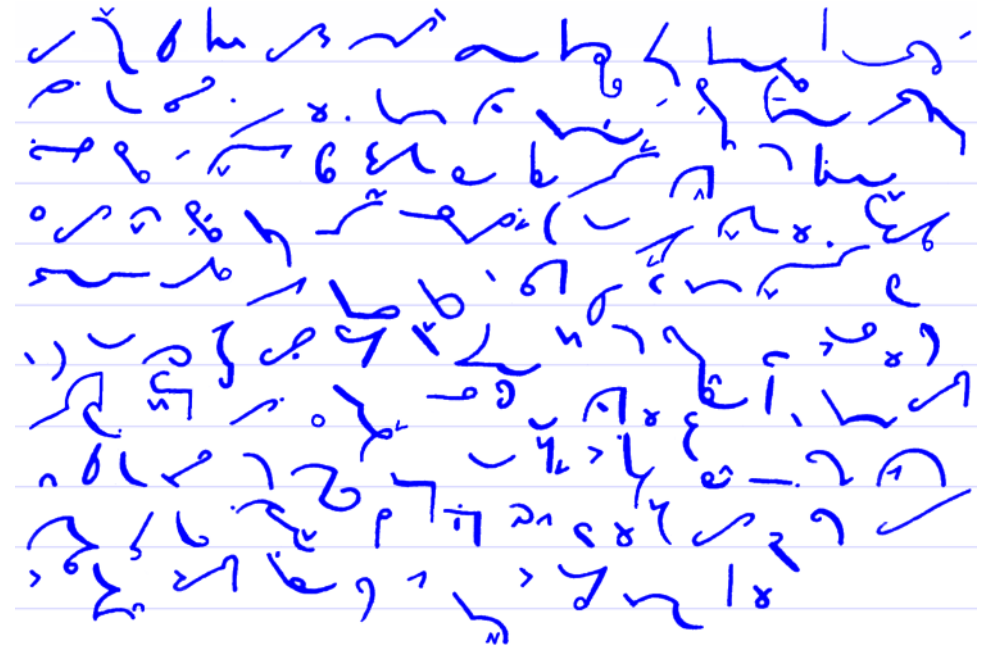


Kempton Steam Museum

The engine house and contents is now a museum run by the Kempton Great Engines Trust. It is a large Art Deco building in red brick and stone, standing tall amidst the surrounding flat land of the water works and filter beds. We had visited on their open day in September and had determined to return on a steaming day. The size of the building invites one to wonder what giants it might contain. They were not sleeping today but in motion for our benefit. We entered through the small lobby, and had a preliminary look at the souvenirs and wall plaques. Then we entered the main door to the engine room. I have seen large shopping malls with huge

central spaces, and I have taken a tour round an incineration plant with huge spaces filled with pipework, boilers and walkways, but this was different. The interior has no intervening floors and so is open all the way to the ceiling and with an almost equally large space below us down into the ground. The two enormous triple expansion engines sit opposite one another* at each end, with the central space entirely empty, so you can see everything from the one viewpoint, although there are many walkways everywhere for further investigation.

* Omission phrase "wu(n) another"



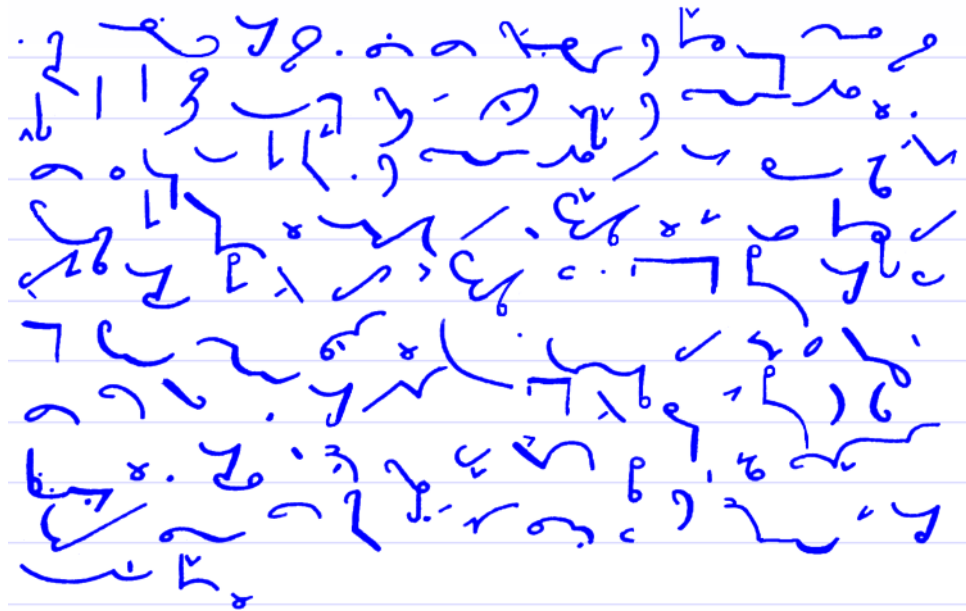
Kempton Steam Museum

We arrived just at the end of one of the morning's steaming demonstrations, which were taking place at intervals* and lasting for half an hour. The familiar low booming and subdued thumping reverberated across the space and, like the others that we have seen, it is not really loud or deafening, as one might suppose before actually experiencing them in real life. The flywheels and crankshafts are the biggest pieces of solid steel that I am likely ever to see in motion and they do not waste energy by shaking about or producing great noise. Their relatively quiet running is obviously because they are not under load. When they had to pump the water, you just

have to use your imagination to get any idea of the additional sound coming from the lower levels which would have been amplified as it echoed around the building. I think one would be very aware of the volume of water passing through and the power of the engines to move it.

* "intervals" It is the V that goes through the line, being the first up or downstroke, so it does not matter where the doubled N sits

* "flywheels" Separate WH and L strokes, as the WHL stroke cannot be joined satisfactorily



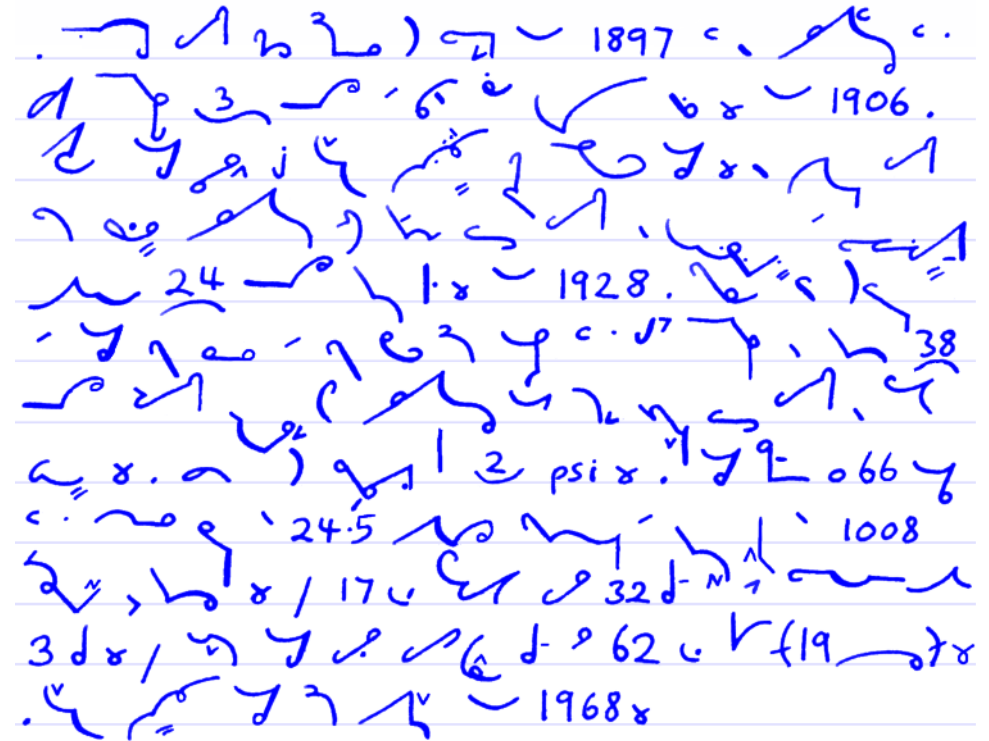
Kempton Steam Museum

A triple expansion engine uses the same steam progressively three times, to get maximum use out of it, at high pressure*, intermediate pressure and low pressure*, to drive three crankshafts. The steam is fed in at the top, the three crankshafts are in the centre, and these operate the plungers at the bottom. In between them* are two flywheels. On the next demonstration, we watched the engineer start up one of the flywheels with a cogged starter engine, in order to* get everything moving slowly. After a few minutes we heard the first burst

of steam from above,* the engine rapidly got up speed and the starter was then disengaged. The engineers all wore pristine white boiler suits, but I think it is more likely they wear something more drab and oil smeared when they are working on the engines in their own time.

* Omission phrases "high (pre)ssure" "low (pre)ssure" "in betwee(n) them"

* "above, the" Don't use tick the, and leave a small space, to help with reading back

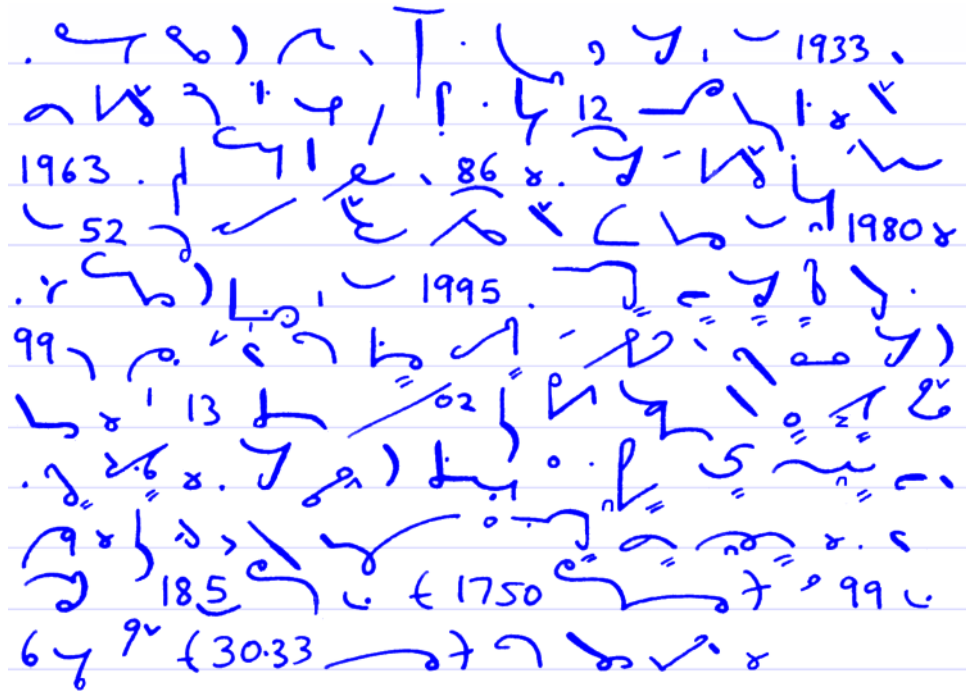


Kempton Steam Museum

The Kempton Water Treatment Works was created in 1897, with two reservoirs with a storage capacity of 300 million gallons and slow sand filter beds. In 1906 the original engine house contained five Lilleshall* triple expansion engines. Two lifted water from Staines reservoir and three pumped the clean water to Finsbury and Cricklewood, shifting 24 million gallons per day. In 1928 the present building was completed and engines No.6 and No.7 were installed, with a joint capacity to pump 38 million gallons of water to various other

reservoirs in the area to provide clean water to north London. The steam was superheated at 200 psi. The engines' stroke is 66 inches, with a maximum speed of 24.5 revolutions per minute and power output of 1,008 horsepower to the pumps. Each 17-foot flywheel weighs 32 tons and the crankshaft 3 tons. Each entire engine weighs 1,000 tons and is 62 feet tall (19 metres). The five Lilleshall engines were retired in 1968.

* "Lilleshall" pronounced "Lil-ez Hall"



Kempton Steam Museum

The central space was left to accommodate a future third engine, but in 1933 two steam turbines were added instead, each delivering an additional 12 million gallons per day. By 1963 the total quantity had risen to 86 million. The engines and turbines continued operating for 52 years and were finally replaced by electric pumps in 1980. The old equipment was decommissioned but in 1995 the Kempton Great Engines Trust obtained a 99-year lease on the building from Thames Water and restoration of No.6 engine was begun. On 13 December 2002* it was started for the first time* by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales*. The engine house was designated as a Statutory National Monument*, Grade 2 listed. It was opened

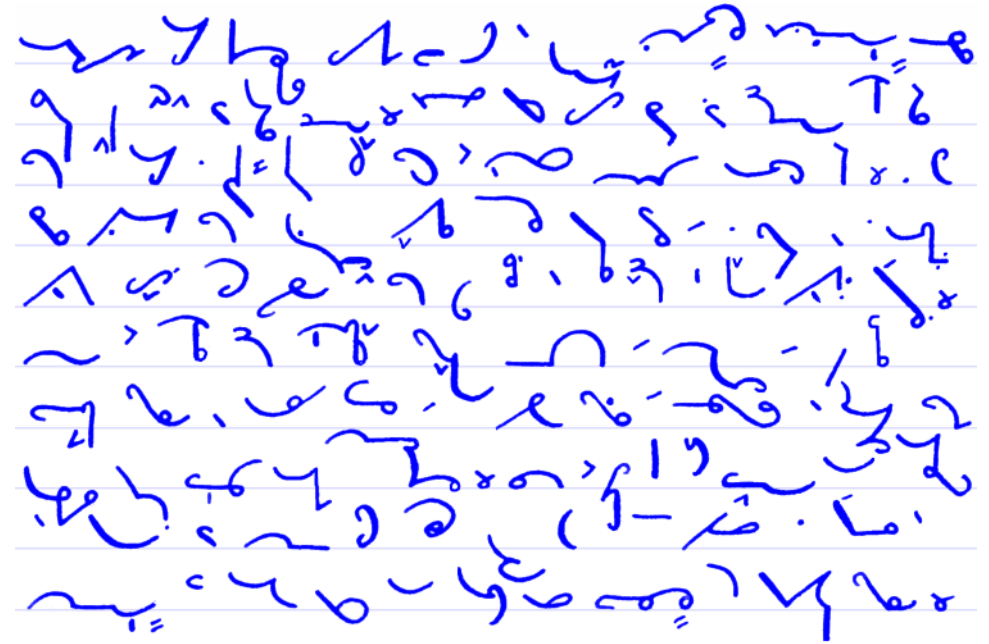
to the public two years later as Kempton Steam Museum. The building measures 18,500 square feet (1,750 square metres) and is 99 feet 6 inches high (30.33 metres) from basement to roof.

* "2002" Long slash for current century, arbitrary sign with no phonetic value

* Omission phrase "for (the) first time"

* "Wales" special outline, to distinguish it from "Wells" which uses the Wel stroke

* "Monument" As the -nt stroke represents "ment", the diphthong sign has to remain with the preceding full N stroke



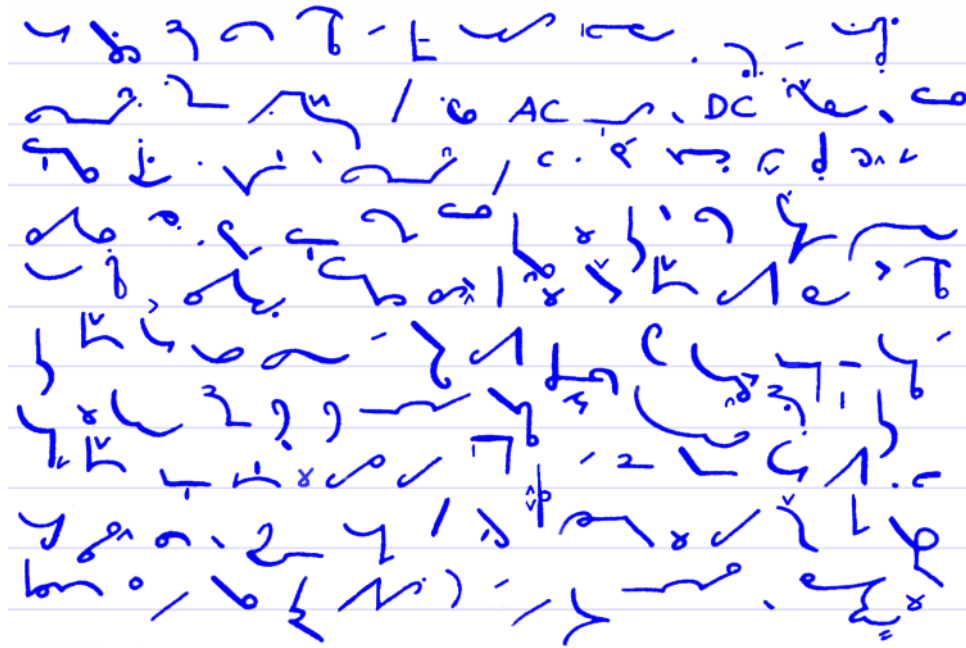
Kempton Steam Museum

In between the engine demonstrations, we had the great pleasure of viewing the Marvels of Meccano exhibits spread out around the building for this weekend. Of course the best one has to be the complete working model of this very engine, a table-top sized version of the monster immediately in front of it. The other subjects ranged from fairground rides, cars, boats, planes and a bridge, to an intricate rope winding machine, using very thin strands of wire on tiny rotating bobbins. Many of the models were motorised, providing colour and movement, and each with its creator present to answer questions*, and receive praise and expressions of astonishment* from the

visitors peering closely into the mechanisms. Some of the children had eyes glowing in anticipation of being able to make their own machines, if only they can request a box of Meccano with enough pieces in for their next Christmas or birthday present.

* "questions" Optional contraction

* "astonishment" There is an optional contraction for this, using only the first two strokes = ast-on, but this is very similar to the outline for "astound" which has a similar meaning and which would need its diphthong written in.

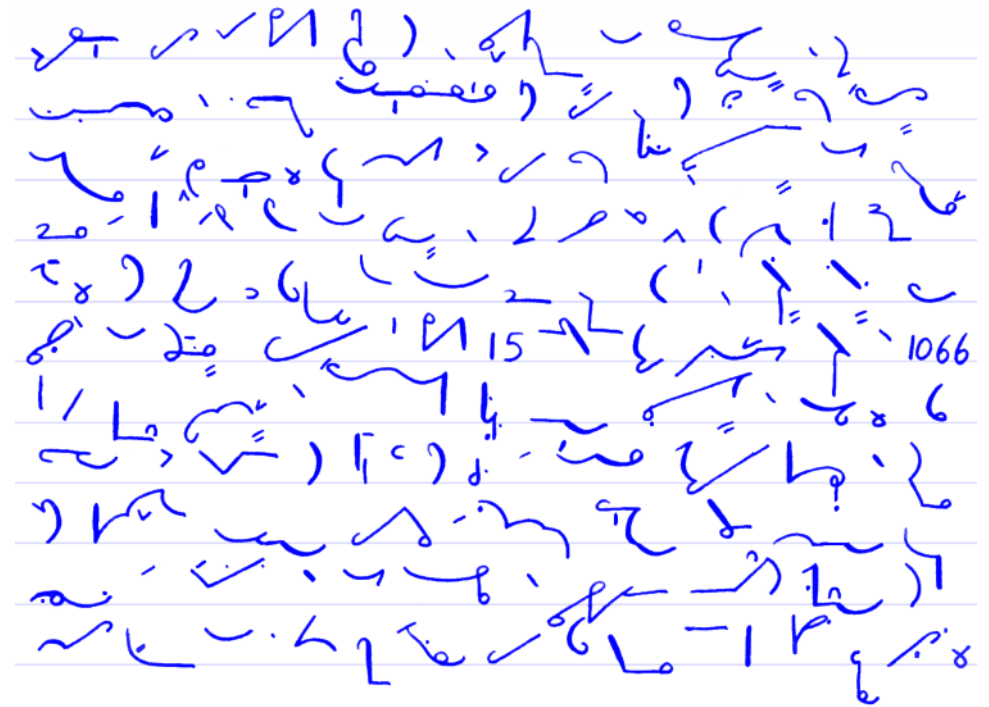


Kempton Steam Museum

In the basement were more models and, tucked in one corner, the eerie and entrancing mercury arc rectifier, which converts AC current to DC, comprising two glass globes containing a pool of mercury, each with a spot of green light dancing around on the surface, amidst the blue glow from the glass tubes. It was all very fragile looking in contrast to the heavyweight equipment surrounding it. By the time we had seen all the models, it was time for the next steaming and by then we had discovered other viewpoints to get

good photos and video. Having worked through three camera batteries, and with the afternoon wearing on, it was time to go home. Once we got outside and walked back along the road, the great engine house seemed to shrink into the large open landscape. We arrived at the bus stop at the same time* as our bus, which would be returning us and our full cameras to Central London. (1302 words)

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



Battle Of Hastings

Two weeks ago*, one of our Saturday travels was to Hyde Park in Central London to see the encampment of a group of Anglo-Saxons, on their way to defend their land from Norman invaders on the south coast. They had marched all the way from York in the previous weeks, and had stopped over in London to show the rest of us how they lived, ate, worked and fought. Their journey would then continue for another week to take them on to Battle Abbey near Hastings in Sussex, where on Saturday 15 October they would re-enact the battle of 1066 at which Duke William of Normandy defeated King Harold of England. This corner of the park was dotted with their tents and awnings, and they were

demonstrating* all aspects of their daily life, including weapons and armour, clothing, basket making, food, medicine and pottery, all in the interests of historical accuracy and educating us modern folk in a much more* direct and pleasant* way than books can do, at least* when it is not raining.

* Omission phrase "two wee(k)s ago" "much m(ore)"

* "demonstrating" this and its derivatives omit the R, in order to include the N hook

* "pleasant" Always insert the vowel in this and "pleasing" to prevent misreading



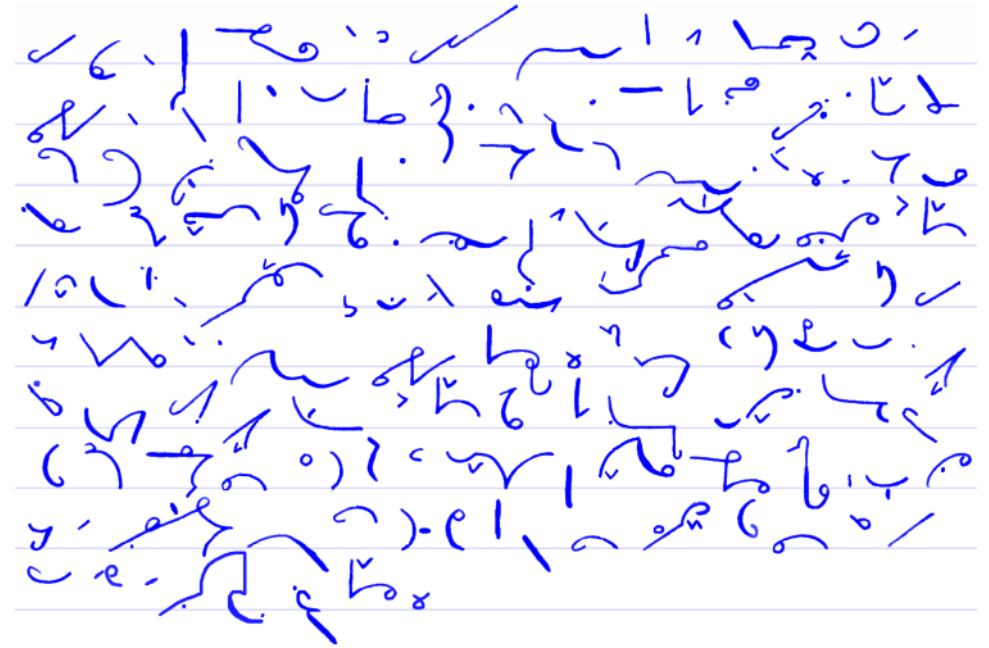
Battle Of Hastings

As might be expected, the most popular items were the weapons and armour, with youngsters crowding around, eager to try on costumes, helmets and swords. I don't think they were likely to be focussing* their minds on the carnage that battles produce, the death and destruction, or the horror of finding your peaceful village being overrun by spear and axe wielding invaders intent on wiping you out. The medical table and the description of wounds and their

treatment may have helped to persuade the younger ones that those battles were not a fun game that one could walk away from unharmed* at the end of the day.

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

* "unharmed" Essential to always insert the Dot Hay, so it does not read as "unarmed"

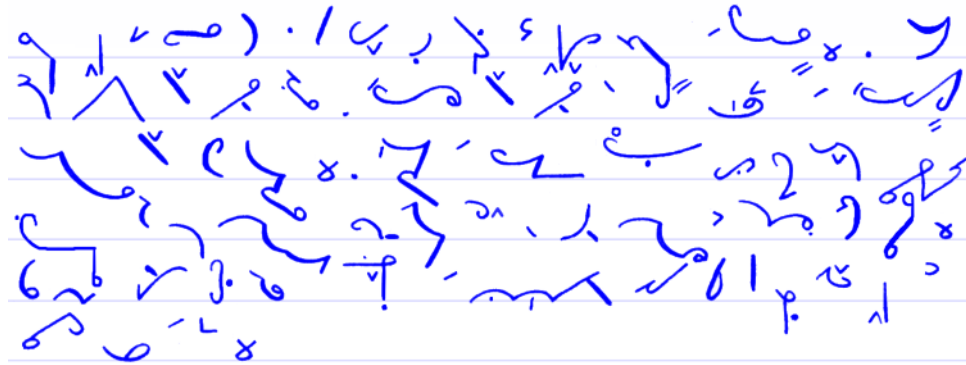


Battle Of Hastings

We listened to detailed explanations of what we were looking at and the background information and history to put it all in context*, and there was an opportunity to have a go at the crafts, weaving a tiny basket from fresh willow branches, dipping a candle or making a pot. The only things absent were the grime on their clothes, the missing teeth and the pungent and unpleasant smells of the time, which might have added to realism but would end up sending the onlookers hurrying on their way, not the purpose of a living history demonstration. I tried to imagine that I was

standing in a real past village, watching real folk of the time, and this had the effect of underlining the fact that* people then were exactly the same as us, although with entirely different lives, customs and traditions, but no less intelligent and resourceful, maybe more so as they had to be more self-reliant than some of us are in our soft and relatively comfortable times.

* "context" Always insert the Con Dot, not using proximity, to prevent misreading as "text" which is also likely to make sense most of the time

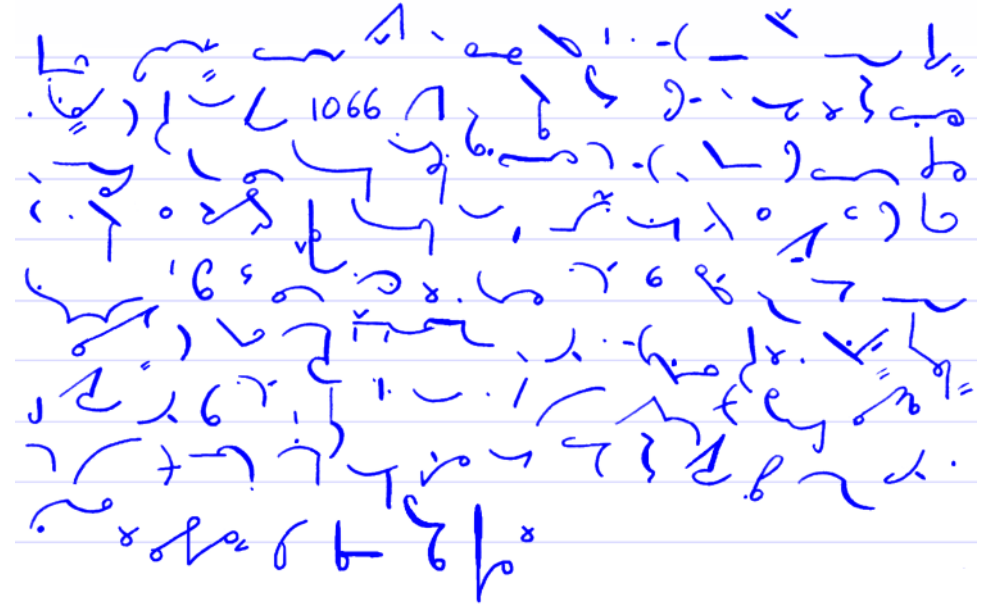


Battle Of Hastings

Spread out on the grass was a large white sheet, painted with the outline of Britain and France. The English were represented by rows of apples, the Normans by rows of onions, and Norwegian invaders by other vegetables. The knowledgeable* and energetic narrator went through the entire history of the conflicts of that year, moving the fruit and veg around to show movements of the armies and their strategies. This made the

whole train of events exciting and memorable, and we just had to stay and find out what happened next and why.

* "knowledgeable" This contraction is identical "enjoyable" and here needs differentiating, therefore vowel added although remaining on the line, although this is not dictionary or strict theory. It is advisable to always insert the diphthong sign in "enjoyable".



Battle Of Hastings

Duke William claimed the right of succession based on an oath given by King Edward The Confessor, whose death in January 1066 led to these battles over the throne of England. Although the claimants to kingships* have some fact, ancestry, agreement or oath to back their claim, it seems that a battle has always been the deciding factor in who actually ended up as ruler, with their attention firmly on others with the same ambition. The famous arrow that is supposed to have killed King Harold was part of medieval iconography to show an oath-breaker's death. The Bayeux* Tapestry did not originally show

this arrow but it was added in a much later repair (seventeen hundreds or later) covering empty needle holes in the cloth, although the original stitches may have shown a lance. Historians still disagree over these details.

- * "kingships" This suffix can omit the P as long as there is no confusion with any other word

* "Bayeux" This sideways dash signifies this French vowel, and also the German "ö", similar to the one in "earl"



Battle Of Hastings

It was quite a culture shock to leave the park and get back into the modern world just a few minutes away, with nose to tail traffic, endless red buses and black taxis streaming past, neon-lighted pedestrian crossings, underground trains with recorded announcements at the stations, and every other passenger looking at their

smartphone. Somewhere there is a Harold and a William sitting opposite each other on the tube train, with no thought of pursuing or defending their right to the throne of England and all thoughts of battle confined to the football field or computer game.
(782 words)

A series of horizontal lines for writing shorthand notes, corresponding to the text in the 'Battle of Hastings' section on page A.