

# Subscribe

WINTER 2004 ISSUE 2

LIVE, STRIVE AND SUBSCRIBE



scribes



ABOVE: Feather by Deborah Morton  
FRONT COVER: Letter H by Jan Pickett

## Coming up in 2005

22 January	10.00am - 4.00pm	<b>Textures and patterns with capitals</b> – Margaret Morgan
19 February	10.00am - 1.00pm	<b>Colour</b> – Deborah demonstrates techniques learned in other workshops
19 March	10.00am - 1.00pm	<b>Bookmaking</b> – Wyn Griffiths
16 April	10.00am - 1.00pm	<b>Gilding part 1</b> – Kath Partington
21 May	10.00am - 4.00pm	<b>Gilding part 2</b> – Peter Halliday
18 June	10.00am - 1.00pm	<b>Graphic Design</b> – Tina will enlighten us
16 July	10.00am - 1.00pm	<b>AGM and craft workshop</b>

*'The last time I picked up a pen was far too long ago.'*

# Mercian Scribes

M E M B E R S M A G A Z I N E

Welcome to issue two of the Mercian Scribes magazine 'Subscribe'. We hope you like the new look and would like to hear your suggestions for future articles and society activities. Just contact one of the team, if you don't already know them, their details are all on page eight.

This issue of Subscribe is packed full of accounts of Mercian Scribes members visits, lectures and workshops. We have also included other small items of interest to hopefully inspire and educate.

# Mercian Scribes members

WHAT THE MERCIAN SCRIBES



## Embossing – basic instructions

Prepare the design or lettering to be embossed keeping letter shapes well defined and increasing the width of fine lines. **KATH PARTINGTON**

Transfer the design to stiff card approx. 1mm thick. Cereal packet card is not really thick enough, the back of a writing pad is better. A product called "TRACEDOWN", "Wax free pure graphite tracing down paper", is perfect for this and all calligraphic tracing purposes.

Cut out the design. A craft knife with a pointed blade helps to cut round the fiddly bits. If the design

incorporates an internal section as in A or O the inner shape must be held in place with a strip of paper taped to the front of the card as follows:

After cutting out both the overall letter shape and its counter put them back into place in the card. Cut a strip of tracing or other thin paper and glue it to the counter and to the card on either side of the letter. Prize out the letter

shape leaving the counter shape in its correct place.

Position the template on the front surface of the paper to be embossed and tape in place such that the top of the template is hinged; this enables the template to be lifted to check the state of the embossing without losing its alignment.

If a painted or written design is to be embossed it should be completed

first. The calligraphy and the embossing should not directly coincide as the embossing will effectively disappear. Arrange the overall design so that part of the embossing is always on plain paper and the eye will be able to pick it out.

Turn the paper and template face down on a clean, firm surface. If you have a light-box it would be ideal. Gently locate the design and make a slight depression with the finger. Using a bone folder or similar implement work

*noticeboard*

ARE GETTING UP TO



the paper into the design shape by pushing it over the edge of the shape and against the lower surface. Work around the edge of the design to give a crisp edge without pushing so hard as to break the surface of the paper.

Embossing works best on good quality, fairly heavy papers, above 200gsm. Thin or hard papers crease and break more easily. Most watercolour papers and hand made papers are very good. I would recommend: Fabriano 5, HP or Not, 210 or 300

gsm, for pure white-on-white effects; Saunders Waterford HP 300 gsm, for calligraphy with embossing; Khadi hand made papers for colour and texture; BFK Rives Printmaking paper, 250 gsm, for all round use (my favourite).

**Caroline Haycock brought with her a huge quantity of materials for embossing;** I'd never seen so many cards, pots of embossing powder, stamps, inks and pens! Caroline demonstrated

### The Aspen Leaf

Having been inspired by Caroline Haycock to visit the Aspen Leaf at Curborough Craft Centre after the Saturday workshop, I of course was compelled to pay a visit. It was a regular little treasure trove and well worth a visit. It is definitely geared towards the card maker but I'm sure could prove useful in other ways.

However – take note – it is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. Frank Zobel noticed this (obviously also compelled to visit!) and felt it should be brought to your attention.

### Next workshop

Margaret Morgan is taking our next workshop in January. The class is now full and a waiting list has been started. It should be interesting and anybody interested in seeing Margaret's work can look at her website.

[www.thecalligrapher.co.uk](http://www.thecalligrapher.co.uk)

### Book review

The Encyclopedia of Calligraphy Techniques by Diana Hardy Wilson. Excellent source book

whatever level you are at. ISBN 9 780855 329983.



how to use the stamps with embossing powders, then, using the craft hot air dryer (not a hair dryer, however, she did inform us that clever use of a toaster could work) she created a simple, effective and sparkling Christmas card design.

So then it was down to us. Caroline kindly let everyone use her materials and very soon we were all making cards. Caroline had a vast array of designs she had created as samples for us to see the possibilities of

this type of embossing.

I found it very enjoyable, and if I may say very straight forward. So we all know what that means: I too am going to find myself at the Aspen Leaf at Curborough Craft Centre and will be combining my calligraphy with so very clever embossing, Thank you Caroline.

**TINA SCOTT.**

# A visit to the Bauhaus

Whilst in Berlin this summer, I visited the Bauhaus. It is now in Dessau, which is in the East German area and an hour and a half journey by train from Berlin. **GILL COOPER**




The Bauhaus was founded by Walter Gropius, an architect, in Weimar in 1919, his aim being to reform art education and to create a radically modernised kind of society. Today many of the movement's ideas are taken for granted but in the 1920s the ideas were subversive and attracted the antagonism of the National Socialists. It moved to Dessau in 1926 and was forced to close down in 1933.

The Building in Dessau is divided into three parts – a workshop wing, technical school block and atelier building. It is now used to maintain the Bauhaus heritage, as a place for design, research and teaching. Many workshops and conferences are held for events both national and international. It is

possible to take a guided tour through the Bauhaus and the other associated buildings in Dessau – the masters' houses, set in the middle of a pine wood consists of one pre-fabricated detached house where Walter Gropius himself lived, and three semi-detached houses for other professors at the Bauhaus such as Lazlo Moholy-Nahy, Oskar Schlemmer, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee.

We had lunch in the Kornhaus restaurant, situated on the river Elbe and designed by Paul Feiger in 1929, about 15 minutes walk from the centre of Dessau but well worth it.



Bauhaus architecture has inspired some of the other buildings in Dessau today, and it is possible to tour a few, such as the Employment office; the Steel House (an experimental house build of steel) and Show Houses with balcony access.

I was disappointed to find that there were no paintings and almost no furniture from the original Bauhaus movement in Dessau, but these have been moved to the Bauhaus-Archiv Museum in Berlin, which we visited another day.



PETER HALLIDAY

The John Radcliffe Hospital seemed an unlikely place for scribes to be meeting, but in my search for the venue, luckily everybody else seemed to know that this was the Oxford Scribes regular meeting place. **DEBORAH MORTON**

## Oxford Scribes Anniversary Lecture

The Oxford Scribes are a huge group and in order to accommodate all the wishes and desires of the members, they have a monthly lecture on a Friday night at the hospital, followed by a workshop on Saturday. Often the two events are taken by the same person.

I think I was the only visitor at the lecture at which there must have been about thirty people in all. Everybody was extremely friendly and it was nice to mingle with a different circle of calligraphers and see what they get up to.

Peter Halliday is a very good speaker and presented a very interesting lecture with a huge collection of fabulous slides. His talk was on the progress of calligraphy over the years since Edward Johnston's re-introduction of the craft following inspiration by William Morris. He spoke of how calligraphy in the UK seemed to stagnate in the 50s and 60s, with a few exceptions like Irene Wellington and Marie Angel. Hella Bassu in the 70s produced exciting work. Sheila Waters noticed work from outside the UK seemed to have more life and vigour. She, along with others like Anne Hechle and Donald Jackson went to America to promote calligraphy there.

Slides of European scribes then demonstrated how calligraphy had been more alive and dynamic in Europe. There seemed to be more interest in the

dynamics of mark-making. Rudolph Koch and Joan Miro were examples I noted down.

Peter then brought in the question of what did the future hold for calligraphy. He said "working in a tradition does not mean you have to work traditionally". Some calligraphers such as Tom Kemp are stretching the limits of mark making – attempting to move calligraphy on to the next level. He said that the work using computers was obviously going to be strong, but it didn't have the "smell" of Chinese ink or sandarac. Something in this field would come forward eventually, created by people with an intellectual vision.

Peter spoke for nearly two hours, but it was over surprisingly quickly. I was very glad that I had gone and was especially pleased that I had been primed by Peter during Thursday morning classes about the lectures' content. I did learn a great deal more.



# Cut letters with Jan Pickett

This was a fabulous workshop I attended with Northampton Scribes. Jan was an excellent tutor and kept us on our toes all day. We started with stencil-cut letters and followed with silhouette-letters. If you think about it, you will note the difference. **DEBORAH MORTON**

This was a fabulous workshop I attended with Northampton Scribes. Jan was an excellent tutor and kept us on our toes all day. We started with stencil-cut letters and followed with silhouette-letters. If you think about it, you will note the difference. I took my camera, so the photos are more useful than words. Jan's motto was "think twice, cut once" – in other words, think what you are going to cut and then think again to make sure that you are cutting the right section. There were no sliced fingers, but a sharp craft knife was essential. In fact Jan said that during the course of the day, we should

have changed our blades at least 3 times. So if you are going to have a go at home – remember that. I found I was struggling to cut through the paper and had a very sore finger – a change of blade soon cured that.

The paper used is ordinary Ingres paper, or pastel paper. You can use anything that cuts easily – not too thick or you won't get nice shaped letters.

Be careful with the counter-spaces – i.e. the centre piece of the O, the space in the A and B and P. Make sure you have connected them to something. If you look at the

examples in the photographs, you might get an idea of where connections have been made to avoid bits dropping out! Letter construction has to be good, but some adaptations can be made to fix the counterspaces.

Individual letters do make very nice cards – but Jan showed us a dress she had made for a fancy dress party that she attended. I think it was the alphabet down the front and a quote at the back. It was gorgeous. Just another thing for you all to try!



# The First Workshop

## 16th October 2004

Our inaugural workshop was 'Italic with a Twist', lead by Martin Taylor, and attended by some seventeen(?) members. Martin runs 'Penmandirect' mail order calligraphy supplies, and had brought his 'shop' mainly for our indulgence over lunch, operated by his wife, Lola. **FRANK ZOBEL**

Martin started with a description and demonstration of the 'rules' of the italic hand. Our first exercise was writing with double pencils, ie two strapped together, both plain and in colour. He then showed adaptations to enable different width letters to be produced. Narrower examples were done by cutting strips off pencils to bring the points closer together or twin leads in

compasses. Wider ones were produced by making a packing piece from card to space pencils, pens, felt tips etc., apart at a chosen width. We took this latter as a practical exercise, which has its uses in sign writing.

After lunch various pens, scroll and shadow nibs were demonstrated to produce 'double line' letters, and a brush used to fill space between the

lines with a second colour. Using a border pen, Martin showed that each side could be loaded with a different colour, taking care not to let them mingle. Lastly he showed the 'music nib', writing five lines at once provided ink flows at all the 'points'- not so easy! He also talked of his interest in collecting vintage writing instruments.

At this point a number of us descended on the shop to buy and try out these more exotic nibs. The session then became rather a free for all, some producing rather decorative letters, and others like me (perhaps only me) tending to doodle. A more organised

exercise here would perhaps have been a good idea, followed by an opportunity to look over people's work.

However, I found it an interesting day, being surprisingly my first exposure to a tutor other than one P. Halliday, and certainly an enjoyable get-together. I am impressed with the venue, including the snack bar, but be warned of the 1230 closure on Saturdays. Thanks to Deborah who foresaw this and brought supplies of tea and coffee for our comfort.

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## Workshop

### February 19th, 10-1pm

### with Deborah Morton

Making coloured backgrounds with watercolour paint will be the aim of this morning. We will use a lot of paint and a lot of paper to produce, what I find, exciting backgrounds to use either for text or cards or paintings in themselves. I can try and pass on what I have learned in two of Penny Price's colour workshops and perhaps even Jan Pickett's paper cut letters workshop.



# Experimenting on Papers with Suzanne Murray

Birmingham Scribes are just down the road really, so I decided that in that they had spaces in the workshop, I would give it a go. It was going to be playing with paper which is a favourite of mine – and I found Tina was excited by this prospect too. She would be my map-reader and it would be easy ...ha, all the best plans. **DEBORAH MORTON**

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own. I was only an hour late.... having got seriously lost. A friendly postman had an A-Z of Birmingham, and I was able to sort myself out in the end! Next time they have spaces in their workshop I will know where "just off the Hagley Road" is!

Anyway, it was a great workshop. The Birmingham Scribes were

a very friendly lot and didn't mind me being late – I just squeezed on to a table. Suzanne is from 'up north' and had brought her immense selection of papers for us all to play. She happily gave us strips of different types and then told us to just go and write on them – any old how, no pressure, just test the paper with different pens, inks, pencils.

In the second half of the day, Suzanne made us combine papers and make little pieces of work. This was also very satisfying. Quotes used were short and then another piece of paper was used to frame or accentuate the written piece. Suzanne worked around everybody, helping those stuck for ideas or

expanding on what you had tried or showing you alternatives. It is quite surprising what you can achieve with little bits of paper.

The end of the day of course also brought the prospect of what papers did we want to buy. Suzanne's collection of paper is actually all for sale. As we all know, interesting paper is hard to find – Suzanne solved the problem for herself, by just becoming a supplier! She has a web site if anybody is interested – [www.individualsltd.co.uk](http://www.individualsltd.co.uk). Maybe this would be a good idea for a workshop next year – will have to keep it in mind.



## Fear not – things could get worse

I found the following in an old diary.

**DERRICK SHELLEY**

"Having been turfed out of pottery, woodwork and art classes before the age of twelve, he then married an art teacher. When he reached the age of sixty-five she inquired whether he was planning to spend the whole of his life in philistine debauchery, or to grasp the fading embers and do something vaguely artistic.

So he went to a meeting of calligraphers, where he found that he was the only one with no knowledge of the subject whatsoever. He did however bring a calculator and a pencil with him and hence became treasurer, perhaps the only one in the country whose knowledge of accounts matches his knowledge of calligraphy".

All that looks a bit depressing to me, but then I always say, if you don't want the answer don't ask the question.

The worst bit was trotting to the bank every ten minutes to get another form to fill in; Ursula and Deborah did the same but I felt somehow vaguely responsible. We got it all done in the end, and now have an account at HSBC in Lichfield, wherever that may be. As we generally pay in more than we draw out the staff are still reasonably civil to me but I daresay it will get where I am frightened to go in there.

According to the bits of paper that keep arriving we are just over a thousand pounds in credit. We have paid the bills to date, but still have to pay the rest of the room hire for the year and any fees and expenses to speakers. There are various other little bits like admin (£2.52 to date! Where are the rest of the claims please!) and insurance and we always have to expect the unexpected (I think that's right).

It looks as if we may have a small balance at the end of the year, in which case we can either all go out and get pie-eyed (as sensible people would) or maintain/reduce the membership etc fees for next year. Let me know if you have a preference for the former, as the rest of the Committee is likely to opt for the latter. If of course we end up with a deficit I shall be round with a begging bowl.

I ought to mention that the local Co-op, for which I have the highest regard gave us a grant of £25 at the beginning of the year. Many thanks to them.

If anyone lives a sad enough life to want any information about the accounts or anything anytime do please give me a call. There will be a full and boring recitation at the AGM.

## What is a PDF?

You may all be aware that from now on our quarterly publication will also be available as a pdf document for us to email about and view on our computers. **TINA SCOTT**

If anyone out there is not sure what a pdf is, I will explain. A few years ago a software company called Adobe noticed there was a need to create a document format that could be passed from person to person and viewed on one computer, exactly as it would on another computer. As it was, you could only open and look at a Word document, for example, if you had the correct version of Word installed on your PC, with all the fonts installed and the preferences set up identically. Now with a free copy of Acrobat reader any pdf (portable document format) file will view the same on any computer. You will find a print to pdf option in most software applications to allow you to create a pdf. This can be emailed and even used to print from, most print companies and publishers now prefer pdfs.

To download an acrobat reader visit [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com). Most modern computers will have one pre-installed with the resident software so you may not need to bother.

If you decide to buy a full version of Acrobat you can create interactive documents with links from one place to another, as you may see this in pdf manuals.

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