

Subscribe

SPRING 2005 ISSUE 3

LIVE, STRIVE AND SUBSCRIBE

NOW
THE
WINTER'S
DAY
WAS SET
IN MOTION
AND WE
RODE
THROUGH^L_T
CRYSTAL
KINGDOM

meridian

scribes



ABOVE: Letter Q by Kath Partington
FRONT COVER: Margaret Morgan

Coming up in 2005

16 April	10.00am - 1.00pm	Gilding part 1 – Kath Partington
21 May	10.00am - 4.00pm	Gilding part 2 – Peter Halliday
11 June	10.00am - 1.00pm	Graphic Design – Tina will enlighten us (<i>note date change</i>)
16 July	10.00am - 1.00pm	AGM and craft workshop

Our programme for the rest of 2005 and into 2006 is currently being scheduled. Details will be printed here as soon as they have been finalised.

'And once set out, a word takes wing beyond recall.'

Horace

Mercian Scribes

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

Issue three of *Subscribe* already, where does the time go! Thanks to those who responded so positively about the magazine's new format. By all accounts you like it.

Again this issue is packed full of accounts of Mercian Scribes members visits and workshops. There is information on the envelope exchange which may interest some of you to join in, information on calligraphic materials suppliers and many other items of interest to inspire and educate.

Mercian Scribes members

WHAT THE MERCIAN SCRIBES

Margaret Morgan Texture and Patterns with Capitals

Our full day workshop started with an introduction to Monoline Lettering by our tutor Margaret Morgan. **VIVIENNE HARRISON**

Working in conjunction with the handout sheets Margaret had brought along, we started with standard Roman Capital. Then, using words and rhymes we went on to extend and compress these letters.

Margaret came around to each one of us in turn and gave us some useful ideas on how we could improve our lettering and where we had made quite common mistakes. We used a rhyme Margaret had written on the board for us to follow, which we

used as a basis for our extended and compressed lettering. Judging by the concentration of all concerned, it was not hard to see why some very interesting work was beginning to emerge.

After lunch, Margaret demonstrated the use of special nibs – Brause ‘ornament’ nibs – which Deborah had managed to obtain through Martin Taylor at Penmandirect, for those who did not have this particular nib. It was a very unusual nib being almost spoon-shaped and

producing some very heavy lettering styles. I personally quite liked it, but I think it will take a little more practice for me to use it well.

We then came to the fun bit... COLA PENS.

Margaret demonstrated with the use of our handout sheets, how to make a cola pen from an aluminium can. So out came the cans and scissors and after much crinkling and crunching, we were soon making our own cola pens. After initially writing with them, we soon had various reactions to the new pen – most finding it very different from the methods used earlier.

I found it fun and something I shall definitely be using again as part of my Calligraphy equipment in the future.

We displayed our work at the end to see what had been achieved. A great deal of variety, style, colour and imagination had been used and Margaret was very impressed. Especially as most of the work had been done without the use of lined sheets.

I am sure you would agree our thanks should go to Margaret for a fun, light-hearted, but very informative workshop. I for one enjoyed it very much.

See you all soon.



Next Workshop

Gilding – part one,
16th April 2005, 10am-1pm.

To add a touch of gold to our calligraphy needn't be difficult. Using a range of sticky substances we will apply gold as decoration and as the lettering itself. We will also combine gold and colour using oil pastels in the simplest technique of all. This is very basic gilding but very effective.

Gilding – part two,
21st May 2005, 10am-4pm.

If you enjoyed part one gilding make sure you attend part two with Peter Halliday. This workshop will expand on the use of gold within calligraphy and show as well as many other things how to make the gold really shine.

noticeboard

ARE GETTING UP TO

THE SOUL
WOULD HAVE NO RAINBOW
IF THE
EYES
HAD NO TEARS

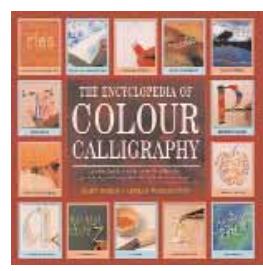
I WANT TO
BECOME
ALL THAT I AM
CAPABLE
OF BECOMING

IT IS THE GIFT TO BE SIMPLE IS THE GIFT TO BE FREE IS THE GIFT TO COME DOWN WHERE
YOU OUGHT TO BE AND WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES IN THE RIGHT PLACE THE
BE IN THE VALLEY YOU LOVE AND DELIGHT IS THE GIFT TO BE SIMPLE IS THE
GIFT TO BE FREE IS THE GIFT TO BE WHERE WE OUGHT TO BE

NOW THE WINTERS A
WAS SEEMING TO
AND I OUGHT
IS A RAINBOW
KNOW

Book review

The Encyclopedia of Colour Calligraphy, by Mary Noble and Adrian Waddington. A superb visual guide to using colour in backgrounds, alphabets, borders and images. ★★★★★
ISBN 1-903975-85-9.



A Calligraphic Day in Dublin

We chose the right day to go to Dublin. From pouring rain at Nottingham East Midlands Airport we flew into a cooler but much brighter and dry day in the Republic of Ireland. **JUDITH THORPE**

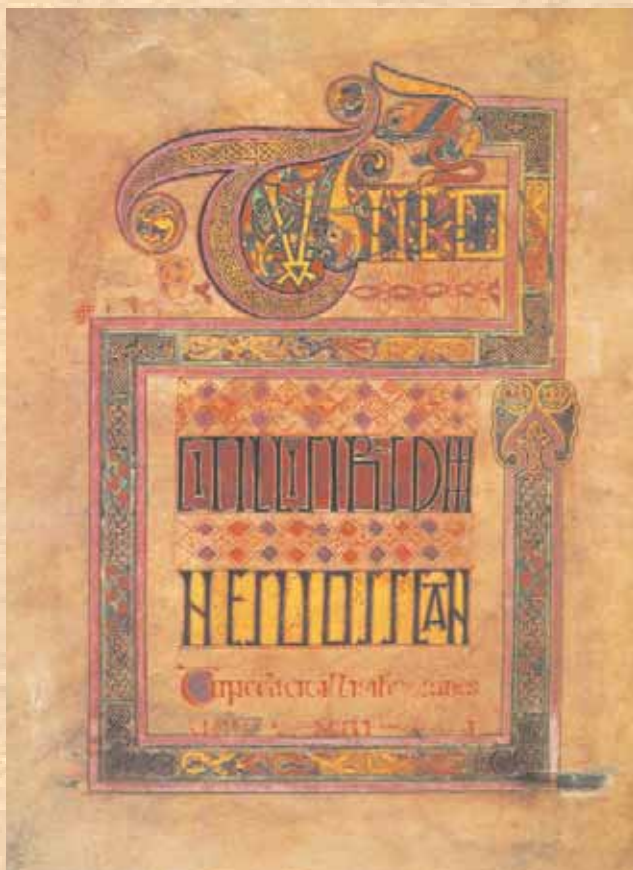


The Book of Kells is housed in the Treasury of Trinity College, Dublin, which was founded by charter of Queen Elizabeth in 1592. Other Irish medieval gospel manuscripts including the Book of Armagh and the Book of Durrow, are also displayed there on the ground floor of the Old Library, in what was originally the Philosophy School.

The Book of Kells is a large-format manuscript codex of the Latin text of the gospels. It is the most lavishly decorated of a series of gospel manuscripts produced between the seventh and ninth centuries when Irish art and culture flourished. The artistic style of the period is commonly known as "insular" and the Book is written in a script best described as "insular majuscule". The text is based on the Vulgate version of the Bible, completed by St Jerome in 384AD and is illustrated with iconic images. The book's celebrity is mainly founded on the great decorated pages which comprise symbols and portraits of the evangelists, portraits of Christ and of the Virgin and Child, and illustrations of the

temptation and the arrest of Christ.

The book is written on prepared calfskin or vellum but its make-up is unorthodox in one respect. In most manuscripts, such as the Lindisfarne Gospels, the vellum was taken from the skins of very young calves and cut so that the spine of the calf runs horizontally across the middle of the book. Most of the Book of Kells is like this, but two gatherings contain leaves where the spine of the calf runs vertically in line with the spine of the book, and there are some single leaves where the spine runs in the same way. These slightly thicker leaves taken from older calves were preferred for pages of major decoration. Scholars' views differ as to the number of artists and scribes who created the book. One, who may have been responsible for the Chi Rho page, made particular use of yellow and silvery blue in very detailed draughtsmanship. Another's hand can be seen in the temptation page, and yet another is thought to have produced the images of Christ, St Matthew and St John. But the latter two may have been the same person – it



just depends which scholar you support! Most scholars seem to emphasise the collaborative nature of the artists' work.

As far as the script is concerned, it seems to have been the product of scribes trained in the same scriptorium, and there may have been four of them. There are few obvious differences in letter forms and all had a fondness for ending a line of text on the line above for decorative effect and to make use of space.

Scribe A, who began and completed St John's Gospel and began St Mark's gospel, had a conservative and sober hand with little instinct for decoration. Scribe B was an extrovert who enjoyed using coloured inks and completed his page with

an endline in minuscule. Scribes C and D copied most of Matthew, Mark and Luke combining the writing of the page with its decoration. There seem also to have been several correcting scribes.

For the text the scribes used mostly a brownish iron-gall ink made from crushed oak-apples and sulphate of iron in a medium of gum and water. A black carbon ink, made from lamp black or soot, was used on several preliminary pages in combination with red, yellow and purple script. Knives were used to excise mistakes, and brushes of varying fineness were used for the painting, the finest possibly being made from marten fur. Drawings were constructed using compasses, dividers, set-

squares and other equipment.

Pigments were many and varied, some readily available and some imported from the Mediterranean area and therefore costly. Lapis lazuli came from only one source in the Middle Ages, in north-east Afghanistan. Other blues came from indigo or woad, white from white lead and from chalk, and yellow from arsenic sulphide. There are organic mauves, maroons and purples, red lead and copper green, and the binding medium was normally egg white.

It's a work which demands admiration for the skills of the scribes and decorators who produced it.

The Chester Beatty Library, housed in part of Dublin Castle, has an excellent restaurant as well as a wonderful collection of manuscripts.

There is a collection of early New Testament papyri which includes one of the oldest Gospel texts in the world, a fragment of the Gospel of St John in Greek dating from the second half of the second century. The Christian manuscripts originate from Byzantium and Armenia, from Ethiopia and Europe. There are several books of hours, and the Walsingham Bible, written in about 1153 in Latin text on parchment in English minuscule with English Romanesque illustration. There is the stunningly decorated Evangeliary of Santa Giustina where the Paduan illuminator has included elements from the paintings of Giorgione and Titian.

The Islamic collection consists of over 4,000 manuscripts and single page paintings which were produced mainly in the Middle East and India between the late eighth and early twentieth centuries in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish. The decorated manuscripts consist mainly of Qur'ans, prayer books and works of the great poets of the Islamic world, though the Qur'an is never illustrated. Usually the text is written in a fine hand on highly polished paper and bound in an intricately decorated binding. They are made largely to proclaim the wealth and sophistication of the persons for whom they were produced.

The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be a record of the exact words which God spoke to Muhammad. Therefore to copy the Qur'an is to copy the very word of God, and thus calligraphy has become the most highly esteemed art in Islam with the calligrapher pre-eminent above all other artists. A number of different styles of script evolved, some of which serve special functions while others are peculiar to specific regions or periods of time. One of the greatest treasures of the Library is the Qur'an created in AD1000 in Baghdad by Ibn al-Bawwab, one of three great medieval masters of Islamic calligraphy.

It is a fascinating collection of beautiful works of art and a must for anyone studying calligraphy.

We had a very interesting day, many thanks are due to Peter for organizing it.

CLAS AGM

The mist that I travelled through on Saturday morning had burned off by the time I reached the British Library and surprisingly I was also slightly early, so was able to have a coffee in the sunshine in the central terrace and watch people arriving.

DEBORAH MORTON

I then took the books I had managed to choose to part with to the Bring and Buy, managed by Kathy Sedar and Mary Noble, and then took my place in the lecture theatre for the AGM. I was sitting with Kath Partington and found that Peter Halliday and Margaret Morgan were immediately behind us.

The AGM was short and sweet and was over in little more than half an hour. Chairman Lorna Bambury welcomed everybody, talked briefly on the success of all the calligraphic educational courses and programmes and then congratulated those involved in the organisation of the 10th anniversary party and the Living Letters exhibition. The treasurer then reported on the accounts, that all was well and there was no need to raise the subscription to CLAS.

So we were now 'free' until 2 o'clock when the lecture by Dr Christopher de Hamel would start. Kath and I first visited the Cornelissen stall and admired what they had brought to tempt us. They had a useful collection of books, gilding materials, pens and nibs. We had a sandwich outside in the most definitely gorgeous sunshine and then spent a

little time in the British Library bookshop which does have a very good selection of books. We could have gone to look at the Manuscript exhibition or seen Christopher Austin demonstrating his lettering – but I think the warm sunshine took up too much time and before we knew it, we were zipping through the Art and the Letter exhibition and being called in to the lecture room.

Christopher de Hamel spoke for an hour on Elephants and Archbishops which was extremely amusing and interesting and basically explained the origins of the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge. This was the first Cavendish lecture in recognition of all the work that Sue Cavendish has done for CLAS.

Kath and I went for another quick look at the Art and Letter exhibition which was being brought down, and then it was time to go. It was a very good day with a number of things to do. Next year, a workshop is NOT being planned on the same day as the AGM and I would recommend a day down to London instead.

Star books

This workshop was a real treat. After having dabbled with the book making thing, it was really good to make a lovely little star book. **TINA SCOTT**

Wyn Griffiths had brought with him some super little hand made books and my favourite, the star book, was the one he was going to share with us how to make.

We were given simple and clear instructions, a demo and a handout, so even I could do it again! Wyn made it very easy for us to follow and soon everyone was using double sided tape (by far the best sticking method for that sort of thing – advice from Wyn) to put together the books.

Wyn kindly supplied beads, ribbons, card and most of the double sided tape to anyone who needed it. The morning just flew by and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it.

As it was nearly time to finish Wyn also demonstrated some really useful folding techniques for paper to make little pamphlets, so useful for calligraphers!

I learned some great, simple and clever stuff that morning, so thank you Wyn, and I am sure I speak for all those who attended.



Did you know...

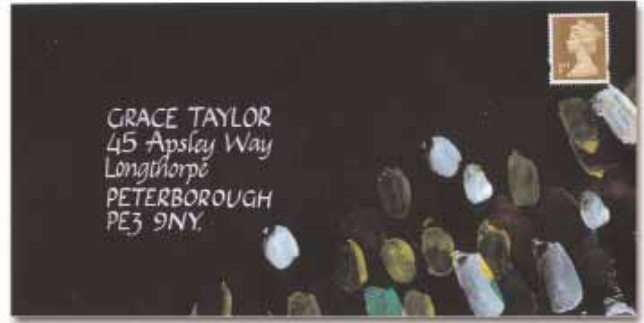
Saint Mark is the patron saint of lawyers and scribes, because he was Saint Peter's secretary? **JUDITH THORPE**

And here is a poem written in Priscian's Latin Grammar by an Irish monk at St Gallen, Switzerland in the mid 9th century.

A hedge of trees surrounds me
A blackbird sings sweetly
Above my well-ruled book
The birds sing far and wide
In a green cloak of leafy branches
The cuckoo sings her lovely chant
Protect me, Lord, on Judgment Day!
Happily I write beneath the trees.

And to inspire us all, attributed to Sultan 'Ali who died in 1520 –

"Purity of writing proceeds from purity of heart."



Envelope Exchange

I was introduced to the envelope exchange when I lived in Northampton. The Peterborough Scribes had started a local exchange and through their connections with Northampton Scribes, extended it to include them. **DEBORAH MORTON**

The Chairman of Northampton Scribes, Nicola Dunn, who was organising it when I joined, wanted out of the exchange, so I volunteered to take over. By this time, I had moved to Burton and it seemed logical to see if any local people might be interested in joining. Of course, once Mercian Scribes started, it was a perfect idea to present to you.

Being in contact with other societies is a good idea I think – and I do like sending things to people I don't really know. There are no expectations! The numbers from Peterborough and Northampton are beginning to dwindle as they have been exchanging for quite a time now, but hopefully with a new list coming up other new people might be encouraged.

The most recent envelope exchange proved sufficiently popular to require two separate lists for those wanting to be included in it – or it would have run for over a year and a half. Although administratively that would have been easier, I think the plot would have been lost!

For those of you not involved and perhaps interested, the exchange is very simple. It is not a competition or a test, just a mini-project once a

month that can take as little or as much time as you want. A list of participants is sent out to each person with a month written against each name. Each month you send a calligraphic and/or decorated envelope to the person allocated to that month. It's a little 'over-organised' perhaps for some, but it does get the thing going! And it is such a thrill to receive the little 'work of art'. But I must also add – so disappointing if one doesn't arrive. A certain degree of commitment is required – and 'late' envelopes are fine as long as they arrive!

The envelopes shown here have all been received or sent – hopefully they will inspire you to join. The new scheme starts in May. The most successful envelopes I think are those that start from a homemade envelope as then you can use any paper and any size. They are very easy to make as can be seen from the diagram – fold a piece of paper nearly in two, leaving a lip for folding over to seal it. Then trim the edges. Double-sided sellotape seals the edges very well. Really couldn't be more straightforward!

If you are interested, give me a ring or an e-mail and I will put you on the next scheme.



Watercolour Techniques Workshop - February

Deborah Morton was our tutor for this workshop. She was very well organised and well equipped. She didn't waste time.

JENNY FLAVELL

Deborah's first instruction was to mix cadmium red and windsor blue with a little water. Next wet the watercolour paper and apply the paint mixture. The two colours seemed to separate, which gave a nice effect. We then had to choose a feather, apply it to the paint and paint over it. After the paint had dried remove the feather and WOW! What a lovely pattern it left.

Second picture, the same technique but using a leaf – another good picture!

Third picture, the same technique and using cling film on the wet paint – when dry, another good picture.

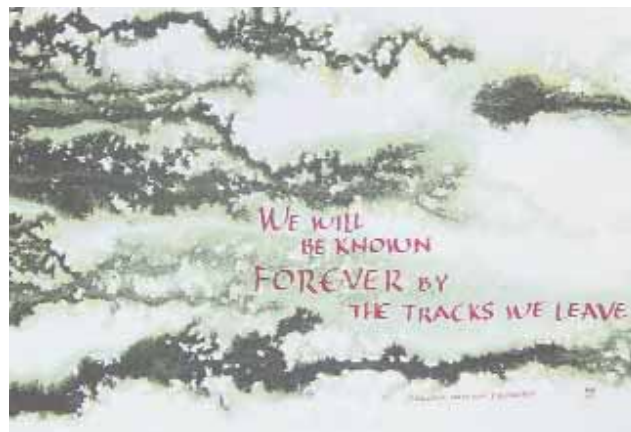
Fourth picture, try something different. Wet the paper first, just one straight line of clear water, apply indigo paint, just on the wet/dry line and see a tree appear – like magic!

(or bush or even a blob), but it still looks good.

Fifth, sixth, seventh – this is how my morning went, one picture after another I just couldn't stop. I felt I had become an artist in four hours.

I have never left a workshop with so many samples, the techniques seemed to be endless. I think every one of the Mercian Scribes had a jolly good session.

Many thanks to Deborah for her time and patience. Can I suggest that we have a full day workshop next time please.



Colour Calligraphy using Italics

Colour Calligraphy using Italics - a weekend course with Peter Halliday at Pendrell Hall

YVONNE COOK

For those of you who have not heard of Pendrell Hall, it is a splendid Victorian country house which is now Staffordshire's College of Residential Adult Education. Mercian Scribes were well represented by Peter himself, Deborah, Frank, Tina and me.

Friday evening we all got back into the basics of Italics to get ready to break free from the rules the following day. Funny how the brain says Italic and the hand says no, no Gothic, Uncialand anything else.

Saturday morning we

started with a warm up - fortunately nothing more physical than flourishing patterns with pencil, pens. We then applied this to a phrase. Peter then showed us how to compress or expand the letters in the Italic hand - much the same technique as we tried with Roman Capitals in Margaret Morgan's workshop in January. We then tried this with a single word, contracting or expanding letters to some kind of rule - every other letter or all the Os, for example. It was surprisingly difficult to find a word and rule that

looked right. I started with "magnificent", but only made it work when I changed the word to "magnify"!

Peter gave us some more ideas and we progressed to a phrase.

The theme of the weekend was colour calligraphy and so we then had a look at colour theory and colour schemes. We were given some thumbnails of Peter's work and other scenes and tried to apply a colour scheme to the phrase. It was interesting looking at other people's work - nine students and nine phrases, writing styles and colour schemes.

In the evening we looked at the CLAS website. If



you have not tried this already you are in for a real treat.

Our final task was to experiment with layering text. The idea was to start with large pale letters and to add layers of smaller and darker text, turning the page through 90°. Peter emphasised that the spaces were as important as the text. This filled the rest of Sunday.

To add a little extra something to the weekend the Ofsted inspectors were in. A very pleasant lady with an interest in calligraphy visited us on the final morning. Students had been asked to bring in work from previous courses. The most interesting contribution was without doubt a collection of little books brought in by a student who was a member of a book exchange. They were beautiful, but as someone who finds an envelope exchange once a month taxing enough, I'm not looking to join one.



Useful Suppliers

Khadi papers

Lovely selection of handmade papers, books and blank cards. Minimum postal charge is £5, so it is worth making a large order at one time, or joining forces with others. They have a catalogue which you have to buy, but it is very useful.

Telephone number

01243 535314

Email paper@khadi.com

Web www.khadi.com

Art Van Go

An art and craft catalogue with an amazing selection of bits and pieces

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01438 814946

Email art@artvango.co.uk

Web www.artvango.co.uk

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Useful paper supplier – delivered to your door promptly and his gouache/watercolour paints are cheaper than art shops. Shopping is usefully on-line

Telephone number

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kenbromley@artsupplies.co.uk

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Abe Books

Has been very useful to find second-hand books, or out-of-print books.

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Calligraphy

Charlie Perkins has a massive supply of calligraphy books. Not necessarily the cheapest source, but often the only source.

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Email chperki@attglobal.net

Web

www.calligraphy.co.uk

Duchy Gilding

Supplier of all sorts of gilding materials

Web

www.duchygilding.co.uk

Scribblers

New to me, but have a large amount of calligraphy materials that can be seen and ordered on-line. Delivery was very prompt.

Web www.scribblers.co.uk

John Neal Bookseller

An American supplier of all things calligraphic.

Interesting to have a browse through the web-site to see what is happening in America. He details workshops and events happening around America and a number of products that we don't get here.

Web

www.johnnealbooks.com



Lots of calligraphy materials for sale including fine papers, inks, pens, nibs, gouache, vintage nibs, automatic and pilot pens penholders, materials for gilding, pencils, bone folders and all those bits-and-bobs that are hard to track down.

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If you have any more useful addresses, please get in touch with them. Information and materials for calligraphy are so hard to come by that sharing is essential!