



# NOTTINGHAM CALLIGRAPHERS

Newsletter Number 12 March 2014

## Committee News

Nottingham Calligraphers Committee met in Southwell on 17 January to review proposals for the workshop programme starting in September 2014.

We have produced what we hope is an interesting and varied programme of 10 workshops taking us through to July 2015. There are six sessions with external tutors, including return visits from good friends of the group, as well as tutors who are new to us. There are four sessions which are either untutored or use the services of our members. In December we will have an **All Comers** session where anyone is invited to present a calligraphic tip or trick that they have found useful - anything from a few minutes to a longer session. See Kate's article on p. 6 of this Newsletter to give you the idea.



You might recall that we decided to hold the AGM in September from now onwards. This allows us to complete the financial year accounts for the group before reporting to the membership. The AGM is on **20 September** and will be followed by a FREE workshop on Paper and Inks. The year's programme is outlined below; we will provide further details of each session in future Newsletters.

Sue Sinclair - Chairman

Kate Hall - Secretary

Gwen Vine - Treasurer

## Workshop Programme

### September 2014 to July 2015

(All meetings will be from  
10am to 4pm at Lowdham)

### 2014

#### 20 September

Short AGM  
followed by  
Papers and Inks:  
An Experimental Day

(workshop free to members)

#### 11 October

Sylvia Thomas  
In Your Own Words

#### 1 November

The Usual Suspects  
Cards, Envelopes  
and Pop-ups

### 6 December \*

All Comers  
Tips and Tricks  
(including Christmas bash)

### 2015

#### January - No meeting

#### 21 February

Horace Staniland  
Contemporary Illuminated  
Capitals

#### 28 March

Jan Pickett  
Basic Cut Lettering

### 2015 (contd)

#### 11 April

Manny Ling  
Informal Roman capitals

#### 16 May

Elaine Guilding  
Foundational Hand

#### 13 June

Cherrell Avery  
Words as Pattern

#### 11 July \*

The Usual Suspects  
One Day Project - with Prizes!



\* Reduced Price Workshops

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## Workshop News

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### Screen Printing

**Tutor** Steve Delaney

**Date** 22 March

Return of a favourite. Places for this workshop are limited to 10 only (due to equipment space requirements), so book early - we will give priority to those who missed it last time.

### Versals

**Tutor** Jan Mehigan

**Date** 12 April

Starting with basic Versals and moving on to decorative letters, Jan will take us through these beautiful and very useful letterforms.

### Unfinished Objects

**No Tutor**

**Date** 10 May

Get out that piece of calligraphy that you have been meaning to finish, but just couldn't find the time. Peer pressure (!) will make sure it will get finished and then you can send it in for showing in the **Members' Gallery** feature (see elsewhere in this Newsletter).

### Monochrome Magic

**Tutor** Jan Pickett

**Date** 14 June

An exciting journey, exploring monochromatic colour schemes, starting with a single colour, extending it to produce a tantalising range of tints, shades and tones using pen made and drawn letterforms.

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## Letters after Lindisfarne

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If you are not a member of CLAS, then you won't have seen the magnificent work submitted by over 200 contemporary calligraphers as part of the **Letters after Lindisfarne** project and published in a special edition of **The Edge** earlier this year.

BUT - all is not lost! If you visit the website of the Sunderland University-based International Research Centre for Calligraphy ([www.ircc.org.uk](http://www.ircc.org.uk)) you will find a display of all the work submitted. It is well worth a visit, and you will see work by a number of people with names that are very well known to us!

**Sue Sinclair**

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## A Thing of Beauty.....

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### Work by Liz Matthews

Liz Matthews is a lettering artist who uses many materials including paper, wood and ceramics. I was lucky enough to see her work at The Ice House Gallery a few years ago. The exhibition was called Watermark and the artist used her lettering skills on numerous objects, some handmade, some washed up by the waters of the Thames Estuary.

Her favourite tools are driftwood sticks which she used to create this beautiful ceramic pot.



**Kate Hall**

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## Workshop Reports I

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### Finding Inspiration - Sue Sinclair

Bags packed – everything collected together, then one last look at the requirements list, then off for my second Nottingham Calligraphers workshop, having joined in September 2013. **Finding Inspiration** was the title of the workshop to be led by Sue Sinclair. Just what I needed in the build up to Christmas with all its business and preparation. I was not disappointed.

The workshop moved at a fairly rapid rate with inspirational slides, interspersed with suggested practical activities for us to try. 'No rulers today' was the one of Sue's first comments. What were we in for, we were soon to find out. The workshop had several sections which included:



**Tracing Magic Lines.** We were reminded first of all that letters are symbols and pictures. Then on to slides with examples to inspire us ranging from Robert Fludd's **Letters form everyday objects** (1617), to **Dad's Toolbox Alphabet**, and a minimalist alphabet from the 1930s. The 16th Century **Voynich Manuscript** bemused us, as it has done many others - as yet it has not been deciphered. It was then up to us, as it was time for inspiration. Pre-prepared sheets enabled us to get started and the many different inspired outcomes proved interesting to look at and share, each of us producing a variety of alphabet based ideas.

**A Cabinet of Curiosities.** Part two had an emphasis on words and the way they have been presented through the ages. We saw a slide of the Sator square from the ruins of Pompeii. Russian work showed stacked letters, nested letters and letters with shared stems. **Patterns with Words** by Cherrell Avery and **Repetition** by John Patrick Mckenzie. Then it was over to us to have a go.

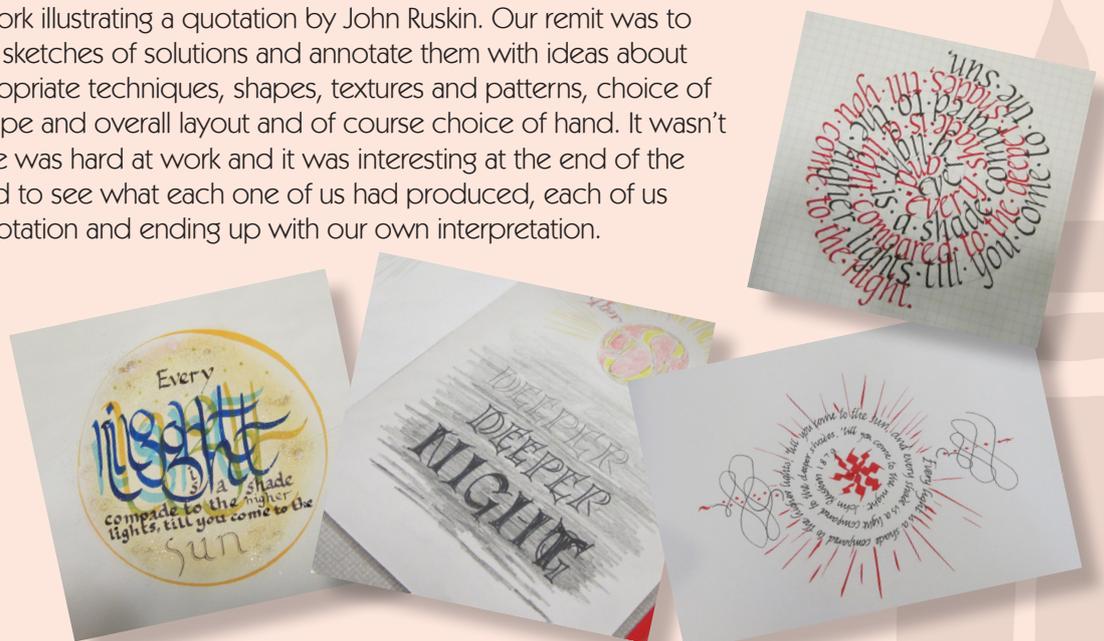
**Nature has the Best Designs** showed us the rich resources offered by natural objects. **Dandelion Head** by Tony Mills, **Melethalia** by Ernst Hækel, also maps and satellite imagery, showing ways of using land forms to inspire calligraphic work. Garden art forms were also shown.



As usual, time was running out and we had one last project to complete. The idea being to use inspirational ideas gathered during the day and to produce a piece of work illustrating a quotation by John Ruskin. Our remit was to develop some thumbnail sketches of solutions and annotate them with ideas about colour associations, appropriate techniques, shapes, textures and patterns, choice of materials, paper type, shape and overall layout and of course choice of hand. It wasn't too long before everyone was hard at work and it was interesting at the end of the session to share ideas and to see what each one of us had produced, each of us starting with the same quotation and ending up with our own interpretation.

Many thanks to Sue for preparing and leading the workshop and choosing such a good selection of slides to inspire us.

Jillian Naylor





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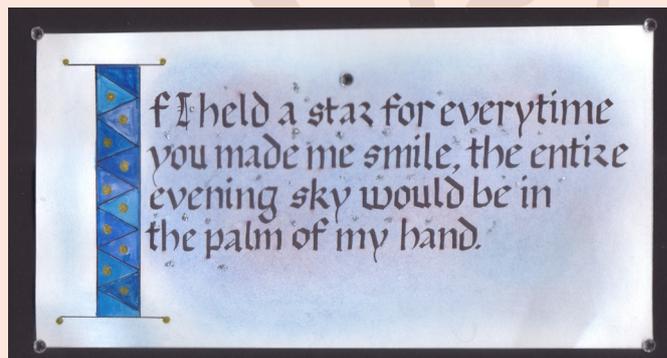
## Members' Gallery

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Since we only rarely have exhibitions of our work, it seemed a good idea to give space in the **Newsletter** to a "virtual gallery" to share the results of our calligraphic efforts - either done in workshops or other work done at home. This space is open to all - either scan or photograph a piece of your work (or bring it to a workshop and I will photograph it) for inclusion in a future edition of the **Newsletter**. You could also write a little piece to go with it (as Kate has done, see below)) - describing materials, challenges etc - but just the piece itself will do if you don't want to write anything. It doesn't need to be a finished piece - work in progress is really interesting to see as well! So, don't be shy, send something in for the next edition, please. **Sue Sinclair**



1. **Joyce Rowen** made these beautiful cushions from the work she produced at last year's Screen Printing workshop with Steve Delaney. If that's not an incentive to attend the repeat session at the end of this month, I don't know what is!



2. **Gwen Vine** produced this magnificent piece of Gothic Rotunda following Horace's recent workshop (see p. 4)

3. This piece was done as part of the inspiration workshop led by Sue. I have always found circular designs attractive so this was my attempt at using the quotation provided.

The first problem was trying to fit the words into the space so that it is clear to read, but without leaving big gaps. I didn't find this easy. However I did like the freedom of altering the sizing of the letters. Some tilting a bit, but this is an area I would work on for the next attempt.

A few problems with ink flow resulted in some bleeding in the first few letters but on another attempt this could be corrected. I then coloured in between spaces with some Derwent watercolour crayons. I particularly enjoy using these as the colours are subtle and for me as long as the crayon has a good point, easier to use than a very fine brush. If you have never used watercolour crayons, I would recommend them. They are clean, light to carry (always a bonus) and enjoyable to use either as a dry crayon or by applying water after shading in, you get a soft watercolour effect.



**Kate Hall**

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## Ten Calligraphy Tips

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1. Don't forget to warm up before writing. A few exercises of vertical horizontal and curved marks of the hand you are going to write in will really help you to relax. You are then less likely to grip the pen holder too tightly.
2. In the course of practising letters, names, flourishes and also when trying out techniques with colour washes, inks and bleaches, keep pieces which are pleasing if only in part. These pieces if on reasonable quality paper can be cut out to serve as a label or as part of a collage, or they can be applied to a card or decoration.
3. To avoid spilt ink and a big mess, cut a hole in a bath sponge the size of your bottle of ink. Place the bottle in the hole and hopefully, this will prevent the bottle being knocked over and any spills will be absorbed by the sponge.
4. A piece of damp sponge kept nearby is useful to touch on the tip of the nib. This helps the ink to flow better.
5. Try feeding your nib with ink by using a brush. This feeds the ink between the reservoir and the nib. I find you get 'cleaner' pen marks.
6. Pressure and 'wobble' technique is very useful, if you are having problems getting your dip pen to work. Try applying a bit more pressure and wobbling the nib from left to right on the spot.
7. Attention needs to be given to your choice of paper even when practising. It will always affect the quality of your work.
8. Keep some old, part worn nibs for practising writing with acrylic inks, bleach, gilding size and masking fluid. These materials are really harsh and will ruin your better nibs. I speak from experience!
9. If you are ruling up with a pencil, keep a sharp point, by gently twisting the pencil as you go along the ruler.
10. We have been told so many times by tutors, but always try to use a guard sheet to protect your work from any grease and dirt on your hands.

If you have any little tips (and we are sure you do), please write them down to include in our Newsletter.

We will be having a workshop on Tips and Tricks in December - so save up some ideas for that too!

**Kate Hall**