



NOTTINGHAM CALLIGRAPHERS

Newsletter Number 13 June 2014

Committee News

Nottingham Calligraphers Committee has not met since the last **Newsletter** but we have been in communication by E-mail and telephone. The two big topics for discussion at the moment are the AGM in September and general workshop attendance.

The AGM is on **20 September** at Lowdham and will be followed by a free to members workshop on **Papers and Inks - An Experimental Day**. We will cover all the usual Committee Reports (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer) and there will be an opportunity to discuss the draft Constitution already circulated, before we ratify it as a group. Committee Reports will be sent out in the next **Newsletter**, so that we don't need to spend too long on them on the day.

The Workshop Programme for 2014-2015 is of course already arranged, but before we start putting together the programme which starts in September 2015 (unbelievably, we need to start booking tutors in January 2015!) it would be great to have some feedback from attendees and non-attendees. We will be compiling a questionnaire for members to gauge support for different ideas, before we issue invitations to tutors. The questionnaire will be issued by E-mail in August to give you time to think about it, and then we will give out copies at the AGM for completion on the day.



Sue Sinclair - Chairman

Kate Hall - Secretary

Gwen Vine - Treasurer

A Thing of Beauty.....

The Old Printing Shop of London

Not long after I moved to Nottinghamshire, I discovered the delights of Newark Market's bric-a-brac day. One stall in particular had a large basket of wooden type from an old printing press, of the sort that Newark's Millgate Museum had on display.



To this day I could kick myself for not buying up the whole lot, instead I just bought a few items. Imagine my delight therefore to discover The Old Printing Shop of London (www.theoldprintingshop.com) which was established in 1975 by Michael Fenton and is an Aladdin's Cave of printing equipment - wooden and metal type, illustrators' blocks, type trays and other items. These two images give you a flavour of the sort of things available. They also have stalls at Portobello Road and Covent Garden, but failing that do visit their website - it's a delight if you like type!

Sue Sinclair

Workshop News

Transformations

Tutor Sue Sinclair

Date 14 June

This workshop explores the different techniques of symmetry applied to lettering. It covers the creation of an abstract design using a single letter repeated then rotated and/or reflected to form an image which can then be decorated using a variety of traditional techniques.

Pointed Pen Uncials

Tutor Janet Smith

Date 12 July

Using a pointed pen makes a pleasant change from the more traditional edged pen. Janet will teach us a simple hand based on uncial, which will then be used as the starting point for exploring colour and decoration.

Flat Gilding

Tutor Kath Partington

Date 16 August

Come to learn or refresh your skills on flat gilding. There's nothing like a bit of gold to give your calligraphy that "wow" factor!

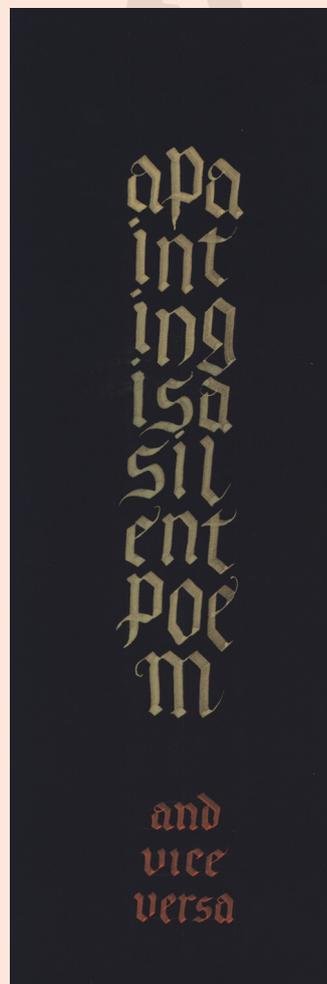
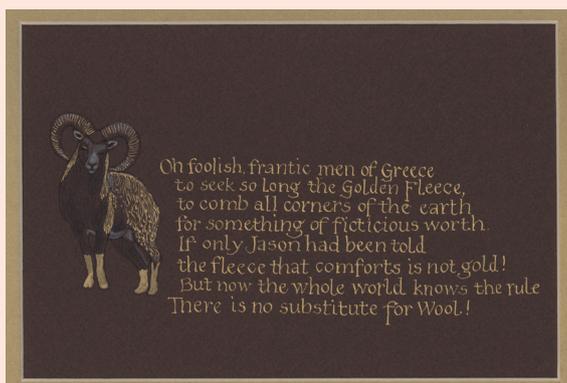
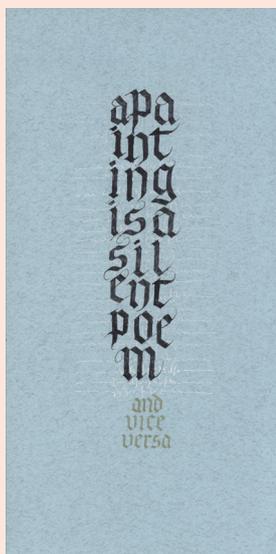
Jan Pickett

You may recall that Jan had planned to give us a workshop this June on **Monochrome Magic**. Unfortunately she suffered a shoulder injury whilst skiing and has had to cancel.

I had already explored with Jan the idea of doing a Cut Lettering workshop in March next year (2015). We felt that the **Monochrome Magic** workshop would be less strain on her injured shoulder so we have decided to postpone Cut Lettering for the time being.

Sue Sinclair

Members' Gallery - Pat Allen



Workshop Reports I

Screen Printing and Lettering - Steve Delaney

The workshop saw the very welcome return of Steve Delaney to take us through the trials and tribulations of screen printing, with the hope of producing a satisfactory piece of work to take home at the end of the day.

Steve became interested in screen printing 20 years ago after attending an informal workshop by a colleague at Leicestershire Calligraphers. When the colleague retired from screen printing a few years later, he kindly donated his equipment to Steve. The rest is history.

Although, we had all prepared a piece of calligraphy prior to the workshop, Steve started the morning session demonstrating on his own example on how to successfully cut our stencils using craft knives and swivel cutters. He also explained and showed the difference between negative and positive lettering for screen printing. When we returned to our desks to undertake this task, we discovered it wasn't so easy as it looked, or as quick.

As the morning progressed the stencils were successfully cut, then it was time to tackle the screen printing. This stage required the placement of a piece of cardboard behind your chosen piece of fabric. It was then fixed to the base of the screen (supplied by Steve) by masking tape and the stencil put on top before shutting the printing mesh. Now it was decision time as to the colour, and we certainly had a good selection to choose from. Finally, we were ready to 'bite the bullet' and print our designs. We soon realised that a strong arm was a definite requirement to make the ink penetrate the mesh onto the fabric. Oh Joy! when the mesh was lifted the results were revealed.

Lunch time came upon us unexpectedly and as we were eager to 'get on' this was consumed very quickly. During the afternoon session, the designs became more adventurous, experimenting with different fabrics and colours resulted in some amazing pieces of work to take home. These were going to be turned into bags, aprons, wall hangings and printed tee shirts.

Although the group was small, what it lacked in numbers was more than compensated for in enthusiasm and enjoyment. Thank you Steve for your excellent tuition and patience, we all had fun and a really great day.

Sheila Palmer



Workshop Reports II

Chinese Lettering - Peter Millward

Peter Millward's workshop back in March was an interesting, lively and extremely productive day. Peter (a Chinese painting specialist) started the day by explaining how Chinese painting historically represented nature and people's relationship with the natural world. Mountains, deserts, forests animals are all frequent subjects in this form.

He taught us how painting was first on cloth and then when paper was invented in 100BC in China artists soon began to relish in choosing paper over silk. Holding the bamboo brush vertically is of paramount importance for this technique. It looks straight forward, but can feel a little awkward. We all persevered and then it was onto making marks with the Chinese ink that we had ground earlier.

Peter's demonstrations were swift and sometimes difficult to follow, but with patience, repetition and individual help he got us to try our Chinese birth symbol and its respective lettering. We were confused by the names of the basic strokes such as, 'schul', 'deng' and 'yong'. The latter word meaning courage and bravery and yes we needed it! These basic strokes containing eight brush strokes are needed to create beautiful calligraphy and with these same strokes, they can be used to paint and represent bamboo, leaves, grasses and flowers.

Chinese painting is based on disciplines such as 'less is more'. Our attempts at bamboo, morning glory flowers and grasses demonstrated that the simplest of strokes created recognisable images. However, we would all say that it is incredibly difficult to achieve. The group did achieve some quite pleasing results I particularly liked painting the bamboo aiming to get subtle graduation of the ink to look like the stems. Gwen was in her element with all of this and produced some really lovely images. Well done Gwen!

The day was intensive and sometimes very challenging, but we all felt that Peter gave us our money's worth. An example of this is with fifteen minutes left of the day, he decided that we were all to paint a Chinese landscape! Well why not?

Kate Hall



Vibrant Versals - Janet Mehigan



On Wednesday 12 April 2014 we had another excellent workshop at Nottingham Calligraphers. The tutor was Jan Mehigan - professional calligrapher and illuminator.

Because many of our members were on Easter holidays, we were only six in number. However this meant we had plenty of individual tuition!

Jan began by talking about the development of medieval scripts and of Versal letters - so-called because they drew attention to the beginning of a new verse! The script was written by the monks and the gilding was added. Adding red colour was usually the job of the visiting 'rubricator' and the illumination would be done either 'in-house' in the monastery or again by a visiting expert.

Jan showed us how to construct the capital letters and to give them elegance and style - to make them vibrant - before showing how they could be embellished. She brought along many examples of her beautiful work for us to drool over!

We then designed our own initial letter before gilding and painting it. Laying down the gold is always challenging but with Jan's expert help and her many invaluable tips - garnered from years of experience - everyone was successful! This was quite a revelation to those of us who have struggled with this stage and given up trying!

After the gilding we went on to painting our designs choosing a wide range of mediums and colours - although some of us were slower than others in completing this process at the workshop and promised to continue at home

Finally we displayed our illuminated Vibrant Versals for the others to admire! Strangely enough those of us who thought they preferred straight 'lettering workshops' produced the most stunning and beautiful letters!

Jan lives on the South Coast so we might not see her very often. However she has organised a CLAS Study Day on 4 September 2014 based on the Winchester Bible. She mentioned that the Winchester Park & Ride is an excellent service and stops right by the Cathedral - the venue for the day.

Frances Scott-Lawrence

Tiny Books Project - Kate Hall

These photographs show a small book which I made last month. The book is made up of four squares of coloured paper folded (origami style) and then secured together. This style of folding allows the book to 'spring' open into an interesting 3D shape. The pages nestle into sturdy covers which have coloured ribbons to decorate them.

I have pressed flowers for many years and so there are samples of nigella, hydrangea, viola, larkspur, rosa, jonquil and geranium stuck on the pages. I have written their names in an uncial hand.

This was a trial, but I was quite pleased with its construction and so I am hoping to do another one of these soon, but will be more careful with the choice of coloured pages, as these are a bit too bright for the delicacy of the flowers.



News from Anglesey

I have always found words and letters very interesting, so moving to Wales, with its own language, has given me something new to think about.

Here in the north of Anglesey Welsh is definitely the first language, with it being spoken in shops, the bank, the hairdressers, even in snippets at the end of the local news and weather. So you might think I'd be wanting to learn Welsh – and you'd be right – but actually the incentive is not that great because all the Welsh speakers are fabulously bilingual and flip to English without even a pause for breath.



Ieuan Rees – hand carved Welsh alphabet

I learnt the other day that even for those where Welsh is their first language, and who are being taught in Welsh (by which I mean that the whole school day is in Welsh), it's almost certainly their preference to write in English, because written English is so much easier than written Welsh.

I was fascinated to learn also that the Welsh alphabet does not include the letters K, Q, V and Z (which is great for my calligraphy as those who have learnt from me will know that I have an ill-concealed dislike for the letter Z!) They also have 7 extra letters – oh yes! – and they are ch, ff, ng, ph, rh, th. You're probably saying – they're not extra letters, they're just pairs of existing letters! But – if you're doing a Welsh crossword, then these pairs of letters go together into one square on the crossword.

So my mission for the first year is to learn better how to pronounce words – maybe then I'll feel ready to learn some vocabulary and how to speak. (At the moment I can recognise – and say in Welsh – How are you? But it's not a lot of use as I've almost certainly no idea what the reply means!)



Over Easter there was an Open Studios event on Anglesey in which I participated, welcoming visitors to my studio. I met some great people, and gradually people will know I'm here and what I can do. I produced a few pieces in Welsh to have on display – on the left is the first verse of the Welsh national anthem written on a stone from the local beach, which was much admired.

I miss teaching regular calligraphy classes, but with a much smaller population here I've not yet convinced enough people to come along every week – of course I'm working on it... I am offering some weekend courses – 2 days of calligraphy in a hotel which overlooks the sea – inspiration just outside the window!

It was a big move, leaving behind friends, family and everything familiar in Nottingham, but we're really happy and settled here by the sea (that's me, Trev, Toby the dog, 3 cats, a tank of fish and 3 new chickens!). I know it's a fair journey from East Midlands, but it's so beautiful here that I'd urge everyone to come – if not to enjoy a calligraphy course then just to experience Anglesey views and air. The kettle's usually on and I bake a good cake, so visitors are always welcome – just drop me a note.

I'm also thoroughly looking forward to coming to Lowdham in July to teach pointed pen uncial and hoping to see some of you then!

Janet Smith