



NOTTINGHAM CALLIGRAPHERS

Newsletter Number 5 April 2012

From the Chairman.....

Hello All!

When I was a student I used to associate signs of Spring with exams looming... feelings of unease as the daffodils bloomed growing to full scale angst by the time the cherry blossom was out! After many years I've managed to get over that association, and Spring now makes me think of calligraphy events – the CLAS AGM in March and the SSI Lay Members Day in April are both excellent events, plus this year a selection of exhibitions to see:

- All That Glisters : OXO Gallery, London 4 – 15 April
- Signs for Sounds : Harley Gallery, Rufford until 9 April
- Horace's exhibition : Retford Library until end April
- Leicestershire Scribes Exhibition: Donnington Le Heath from 31 March



Speaking of exhibitions, I hope you're all thinking hard about beautiful pieces based on our theme of **Food and Drink** to include in our exhibition as part of Lowdham Book Festival in June, and are all holding the date of 23 June to be part of our "have a go" day with the visitors to the Book Festival.

I can also report that the programme for next year is looking very exciting – new tutors, new subjects, plus some returning favourites. Mark's work commitments have meant that he is not able to be the workshop secretary for the group, so I'm caretaking it now. Once the programme is in place it will be the perfect time for someone to take on the role – please have a think about whether that could be you.

Looking forward to seeing you at a workshop soon.

Janet

Our Newsletter

We've been distributing our Newsletter for 9 months now and I think we are settling into a routine with structure and content. We have been thinking about frequency and the Committee agreed that quarterly is probably a good cycle.

We will distribute the Newsletter on or about 1 September, 1 December, 1 March and 1 June in future, with copy deadlines about two weeks before that. This should fit in quite well with our programme of workshops.

If you have any items for the Newsletter such as **A Thing of Beauty**, **Exhibition News**, **Book Reviews** or any other snippets please let us know so that they can be included in forthcoming editions.

Sue Sinclair (sumasqui@btinternet.com)



Workshop News

Roman Minuscules

Tutor Janet Smith

Date 28 April

Location Lowdham 10am-4pm

Janet is going to tutor us on the subject of Roman minuscules done with a pointed nib. This is a beautiful hand which is versatile and extremely pleasing to the eye. This will be a real change to use pointed nibs (and we all have them somewhere) and to be taught by Janet who is extremely talented and skilled at this lovely hand.

Bring and Buy at Janet's Workshop!

Have a look at your collection of calligraphy items Can you honestly say that you love and use every single item? I think not! I'm sure there's a pen you can't get on with, a paper that doesn't suit your writing, a colour of gouache you know you'll never use, a book that doesn't inspire you.

Well – at the workshop on April 28th, bring along your unwanted wares, labelled with your name and a price, and let's see if your unwanted items are someone else's treasure!

(Did I say, you'd better bring a little money too, just in case there's something you NEED to buy...!)

Uncial

Tutor Kathy Sedar

Date 19 May

Location Lowdham 10am-4pm

Uncials appeared in the fourth century and remained an important book hand until the eighth century. There are many variations of this hand but all have rounded and beautiful characteristics which require special pen manipulation. Kathy Sedar will be instructing us about this lovely hand and how we can apply this to calligraphy projects.

Kate Hall

A Thing of Beauty.....

Tom Perkins' incised letters are truly beautiful to see.

This selection was exhibited at the Harley Gallery as part of the 'Signs for Sounds' event which is on until 9 April. The contrast of the shapes on beautiful Welsh slate is stunning. I really wanted to trace my fingers around the letters to appreciate more, the beauty and precision of these fabulous pieces. I hasten to add that I didn't in fear of alarms going off!

Kate Hall



Workshop Reports

Design and Layout for Calligraphy with Sue Sinclair

Eight members met together with tutor Sue to explore the topic of Layout and Design - that essential element which is as vital to calligraphy as is the practising of letter forms.

We began the session looking, via the laptops, at some 20 impressive images of calligraphy in order to recognise and identify the important principles of successful design - consideration of the balance of the main items and the background, plus grouping, alignment, repetition and emphasis. Another factor was the overall shape of the piece and we were urged to consider getting away from the A4 proportion.

These principles guided our practical work. In the morning no writing, but a series of cutting and pasting exercises, firstly creating positive and negative shapes, secondly designing the alignment of linear shapes in a grid structure, and thirdly involving repetition of shapes plus one slightly modified. These were relatively quick to do and made their point in an effective way.

After lunch came the challenge of designing a poster - suddenly we were out of our comfort zone and an intense quiet came over the group as we wrestled with the task of the "thumbnail" torture. It's reasonably easy to recognise principles in other peoples work but quite hard to incorporate them into your own. But, we all accepted the truth of Janet's dictum that it is better to have a good design, even if some of the letters are not perfect, than to have a weak design with perfect writing. Sue had directed us towards recognising the principles of successful design, now we have to work towards applying them. It had been a challenging workshop but a tremendously helpful one, superbly planned and co-ordinated by Sue for which we were grateful.



Pat Allen

Carolingian with Angela Dalleywater

The workshop started by us all refreshing our knowledge of the basic Carolingian hand its characteristics, beauty, elegance and its place in the calligraphy timeline. Angela skilfully taught us by demonstrating how to manipulate the pen to achieve the tall and typical club shaped ascenders. As she went around the room it was interesting and amusing to hear her keep saying, "You're slipping into italic/gothic or it's too widely spaced, not spaced widely enough."

The afternoon was spent deciding on what we liked and disliked about the hand and how we could vary it without losing the true essence of the hand. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day and felt that they should use Carolingian more.

We have a new member Gilroy who attended Angela's workshop. A big welcome to Gilroy!

Kate Hall

Exhibition Reports

Signs for Sounds Contemporary Letter Forming and Calligraphy at The Harley Gallery, Rufford (until 9 April)

This exhibition explores letterform and calligraphy, from traditional quill pens and stone cutting, to tattoos and cutting-edge technology. It is an interesting and lively exhibition displaying work by Ewan Clayton, Brody Neuenschwander, Mick Paine, Tim Donaldson, Julien Breton, Jason Edward and Tom Perkins. There is a good contrast of traditional work with work such as the graffitied train door and the work of Jason Edwards who has created interactive poetry, which can be re-shaped and played on a touch screen monitor. This exhibition is well worth a visit, but for me personally Tom Perkins' carved letters are the highlight of the exhibition. His work is stunning and it is evident how he explores the subtle variations of letterform.

Kate Hall

Celebrate Calligraphy

Back in January I went to the opening of the SSI's 90th Anniversary exhibition in Halifax. The exhibition was in the Piece Hall which is an amazing venue in itself.

I was quite familiar with the catalogue for the exhibition, as I manage the postal sales for it. It's a great catalogue with large full colour images of every piece – and yet it cannot come close to the impact of seeing the actual work, which took my breath away.

There were 75 pieces from calligraphers based not just in the UK but Ireland, Australia, Norway, Japan and more. The work included really traditional lettering through to the very free and highly decorated work, and even computer-assisted calligraphy (which I'm not sure about, but it's certainly very clever).

The event was opened by the Mayor of Halifax, and his genuine surprise and delight at the variety of work that comes under the heading of calligraphy was evident – a reminder that most people out there still think calligraphy is black and white, quills and parchment.

Of course at such an event I can't resist thinking about which piece I would steal if I could get away with it.... This time I think I'd have to back a lorry up and take most of them....

And that was only the half of it! At the opposite end of the gallery was an exhibition from Calderdale Calligraphers, which provided a really interesting contrast. Their theme was Shakespeare, and every piece was the same dimension (I'm guessing a 10" square) and mounted in the same way. So the variation was constrained – and yet the creativity was exciting to see, and unlike the SSI work, showed the work of people at all levels of calligraphy.

As a member of SSI I was entitled to submit a piece of work, but as usual I chickened out at the last minute – but a friend pointed out that I've just under 10 years to get a piece ready for the centenary exhibition....

Janet Smith

