

# Writing Matters

There is no time like  
**Spring**



when life's alive  
in everything

*christina Rossetti*

Issue 84 Spring 2021

*The Journal of  
The Society for Italic Handwriting*

## A Word from the Chair: Foster Neville

I don't know about other members of the Society but I find I can derive a great deal of pleasure just from looking at a good exemplar sheet; perhaps I am imagining what the letterforms would be like once connected together on a page of fluid handwriting. The exemplar which the Society commissioned Alfred Fairbank to produce in 1960, and which was happily reprinted in Issue 81 of *Writing Matters* last summer, represents such an experience for me. The precision and elegance (and triumph of compactness) of Fairbank's SIH exemplar make it easy to admire and the style of Italic represented there appears the ideal one to emulate. It is not surprising that Fairbank continues to attract and to train new enthusiasts of considered handwriting.

Most hands of course actually contain many esoteric fragments (including formal calligraphy and even print). Indeed, I often think serious lifelong Italicists are a little like plant-hunters – their paradise being not only such exemplars as this but anything handwritten. No one guards the foxtail lilies here and you are free to pick them as you wish but should consider how they came to be carried along the road to colonise new terrain. The wide variations make it interesting; each of our rocks and soils vary and the 'plants' adapt.

The cooler north may have been responsible for the letterforms employed by the artist Birtley Aris who died earlier this year. Members may recall his illustrated talk as part of *Fireworks in Italic* at Westminster School in November 2004. Birtley's work, which very often incorporated Italic-derived letterforms, was always animated by his personality and his knowledge of and interest in many subjects including jazz and poetry. I consider his Edward Thomas *Adlestrop* illustrations to be peerless but his Christmas cards were also a very real delight and miniature works of art in themselves. His more recent work was with living poets such as Sean O'Brien and Peter Bennet. His *Night Train* collaboration with O'Brien in particular is worth looking out for as it is a beautiful little book featuring Birtley's characteristically precise ink drawings which always feel to me rather *Secret Garden*-ish.

Covid restrictions in 2020 meant that I did not see friends like Birtley but he and I did fill this void by exchanging 'exemplars' of our own hands

for each other, as well as exchanging selections for *Desert Island Discs* (Birtley's I hope Nick may be able to reproduce at a later date). As befitted an artist, Birtley always emphasized freedom from the exemplar and admired most those hands which had truly begun to dance, whether or not they still adhered to a specific model at this stage was unimportant to him.

Looking once again at Fairbank's SIH exemplar I am delighted by its capturing of the dominant type of letterforms (and it makes me think of a connection of sorts between Alfred Fairbank and Harry Beck, the designer of the Underground map) but I am also reminded that there are still many other exciting species of Italic, some of which do not even think to call themselves Italic like Birtley's own hand.

## **Notes from the Secretary: Nick the Nibs**

### **SAD NEWS**

I am sorry to report that two more of our members have died: Cadwaladr W. Roberts and Colin Giddings. I wrote to Colin's widow, Val, to give her our condolences and to ask if she could send me any of his handwriting which I could reproduce as a tribute to Colin. She very kindly sent me the design for a letter which I have included on the back cover of this issue.

### **ACCOUNTS**

The Society's accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020 are included with this issue. If there is anything that you need explaining or clarifying, please contact Gordon. His details are on page 10.

### **AGM 2021**

Please take a few minutes to complete the AGM form included with this issue and return to me by 31 May 2021. I am allowing more time this year as deliveries in some areas of the UK and countries overseas may be hit by postal delays during the pandemic. Remember that you

can email your responses to me if you so wish by using this address:  
**nickthenibs@hotmail.co.uk**

### **SIH AT THE SSI 2021**

Although the SIH was invited to display items at this event in July, we have decided after some deliberation not to attend mainly because I think it is still too early to be going to large scale indoor events. I also feel uneasy about having to use public transport just yet as I walk everywhere and although I am prolific walker, it is way beyond my capabilities -and shoe leather- to cover 240 miles in one day!

### **MATERIAL**

I have a square for the autumn issue but not for the summer one so I would be happy to receive any contributions. In particular I would like to receive more examples of **italic handwriting** as seen in some of the examples in this issue.

### **NEW ADDRESS**

Please send all future and contributions and correspondence to my new address and not to 11 Richmond Close – thank you!

### **NEXT ISSUE**

Issue 85 will be published in late June/early July so please let me have all material by **Saturday 22 May 2021**. Please see *Submitting Material* on page 24 of this issue for further advice.

## Crossbar Dilemmas:

Simon Daniel

Kate Gladstone is quite right in pointing out that in my handwriting I contravene the rule that stipulates that the cross bar of the letter *f* should be at the *x* height, which facilitates the join on to the next letter (*Writing Matters* Issue 82, Autumn 2020). I do my crossbars lower than this because, to my eyes, the conventional position of the crossbar can look too high, at least when I do it, and moving it down slightly results in a letter of more pleasing proportions, with more balance between the top part and the bottom part. Kate's comment inspired me to produce a very simple exemplar to try to demonstrate what I mean (below).

*f f f*  
*family family family*  
*conifer conifer conifer*  
*often often often*  
*suffer suffer suffer*

On the exemplar, the first *f* is the conventional one, the second is the one I favour and the third is a kind of compromise between the two which can work in some situations.

In the first version of the word 'family' you will see that the conventional crossbar joins neatly to the following letter *a*. But in the second version, curving the lower crossbar upwards at the end takes it to the same point, though not quite so neatly, and at the same time lends the letter a touch of elegance. In the third version the join works perfectly well.

In the word 'conifer', all the *fs* join the following letter *e* in the same way, though perhaps the conventional crossbar interferes less with the preceding letter *i* and to that extent is the most satisfactory.

In the word 'often' we have an *f* followed by a *t* which has its own crossbar and this can be difficult wherever they are positioned. It is neater to do one crossbar through both letters, which means writing the two uprights first and I find that this can make spacing a bit tricky. But I hope you agree that all versions work reasonably well.

The word 'suffer' contains a double *f*, which emphasises the characteristics of the letter and on the whole, I prefer the second version with its lower centre of gravity.

However, I think that in the end it comes down to a matter of taste. If we want to write in an italic hand, there are rules we have to follow but some rules are more fundamental than others and it is only when we move always slightly from the exemplar sheets by introducing little idiosyncrasies into our handwriting that it becomes personal to us.

SONNET LXXIII

What time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west;  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all the rest.  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

William Shakespeare

Ron Gordon

## How I Came to Italic:

Tom Barney

I left primary school with a dreadful scrawl, of which mercifully few examples have survived. I had been taught to write there by the notorious Nelson scheme, whose unnatural shapes I found impossible to make correctly and presentably while writing at a serviceable speed. I disliked the model too: its style seemed to talk down to me, just as surely as the books' text did. (Of the exit stroke of a lower-case *l*: 'It's not round like these, it's not sharp like these, it should have a nice little curve'.)

Throughout primary school there had been attempts by both my teachers and my parents to improve my handwriting. The unsound and unattractive model ensured these attempts would fail; this and the hortatory nature of these attempts turned handwriting work into a grindstone. So when, on a visit to a bookshop, I saw a book called *Better Handwriting*, I very much hoped no one else would spot it, in case they bought it for me. It was of course George L Thomson's book. If only I had looked inside.

When I arrived at secondary school several of my new teachers told me I would have to improve. In particular I had an English teacher who took, or so he said, a special interest in handwriting, but he clearly knew very little about it. (Some years later a friend who had met him on a postgraduate course said to me: 'well, he can't write'.) He inspected the handwriting of every member of the class, handing out exemplars (supplied by Osmiroid) of whichever style he thought closest to theirs. To me, though, he said I obviously had difficulty, so I should change to 'this one', as he handed me a sheet on Marion Richardson. I recoiled from this style too, while his foisting it on me seemed a kind of character-moulding. My mother's advice was to go along with it. 'Even though it's Marion Richardson,' she said, 'it will still be distinctly yours.' I could not explain that Marion Richardson could never be mine, and certainly never would be mine. It was with great delight that a year or two later I read Tom Gourdie on Marion Richardson:

'Her writing scheme has been greatly criticised for the immature-looking handwriting it produces because of the over-insistence on a rounded anti-clockwise movement... This is why so many who have



been taught to write this style cease to do so in favour of Italic or Round hand once they leave the primary school.'

This was exactly what I had instinctively felt.

My teacher, feeling I needed more than just a solitary exemplar sheet, put me on a course of handwriting cards. These were in fact by Christopher Jarman, whose schemes are sound, but I did not know that then, and they added to my homework, so I resented them. They were inclined to get creased being carried to and fro in my school bag, to my teacher's annoyance. Once I forgot about one; it came to light some days later crushed under a pile of books. 'Oh, the state they come back in!' he said when I produced it. Well, whose idea was it for me to borrow them?

Remarks he made to me implied that I should be following the cards' model more slavishly than I was. I did not believe a model had to be followed slavishly – or necessarily at all. He persisted: when our yearly exams approached, he announced one day that everyone would spend the lesson revising, except for me and two others 'who will do a *crash course* in handwriting'. I had in fact made some improvement by reducing the x-height of my writing so that the strokes were easier to accomplish, or perhaps just less obviously ugly. The overall appearance was somewhat neater, but I defied the cards and did not alter my style.

It was this very improvement which got me into trouble with a new English teacher the following year. For I had reduced the size of my writing so much that it was barely legible. There seemed to be an impossible trade-off between legibility and neatness: the bad model I was taught had left me unable to achieve both. I felt increasingly uncomfortable about the repeated exhortations to enlarge my letters, but unable to respond to them. But I had by chance now heard, and seen a little, of italic. Wearying, after some months, of trying to resolve my impasse, I saw that if I learned italic I could simply walk away from the problem. I borrowed books on italic from the library. (They were easy to find in those days.) It took a while to master the letterforms, but even my first tentative steps instantly improved my writing. I followed them with a concerted campaign in the Easter holidays.

I soon became an enthusiast. Here was a style which was distinctly mine in several senses. In the cut and thrust of its rhythm it appealed to me as no other had. As I acquired some freedom I also acquired a personal style. And – and this I relished – it was my own discovery, in the face of others' ignorance and of their determination to steer me in an uncongenial direction. By learning to write better in my way and despite them, I had had my revenge.

*This italic hand is possibly  
the most accessible to the  
uninitiated, as it is simple,  
direct and very easy to read.*

Ken Fraser 2021

# SIH Line Up 2021

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## **Fountain Pens:** Cyril Deighton

The fountain pen is a remarkable example of micro engineering, mass-produced and modest in price. Its normal use employs capillary-action and surface-tension to defy inertia, friction, air-pressure and temperature changes and even defy gravity.

With the nib downwards, ink flows but because nature abhors a vacuum, ink would not move unless air passed into the reservoirs to replace the departing ink.

The feed is the heart of the fountain pen. Patents registered in the 1880's - notably one by L.E. Waterman - sent ink flowing towards the nib, while in the same channel, air moved in the opposite direction to the ink reservoir. The use of ink keeps the reservoir at a lower pressure than air coming in. This prevents the ink flowing back along the feed's air channel.

Air is sucked into the ink reservoir in slow-forming bubbles governed by the reduction in air pressure there. The entry place where the air-bubble forms is called the weir and is carefully designed and different from one pen brand to another.

Tip the pen to be nib-upwards and gravity takes command as ink from the nib, collector and feed flows back into the ink reservoir. The position of the weir allows displaced air to escape along the air channel.

The weir is the heart of the pen but the nib decides its performance. Nibs of 14-kt gold are 58% gold and 18-kt nibs are 75% gold. The other part is mostly copper and silver. The 18-kt nib is said to be more flexible but nib-makers tell me that it's the thickness of the gold and the way in which it is anchored into the collector that decides flexibility. So does the length of the slit in the nib.

Steel nibs are also commonly fitted to fountain pens. Modern steel nibs are not to be compared with the short-lived ones stamped-out by the millions in 19th century factories. Extensive use of steel for construction and armaments has produced case-hardened steel, stainless steel and other sophisticated alloys. Some steel nibs are coated with gold but this

is entirely cosmetic.. Steel tends to be harder and inflexible but there are many exceptions. For writing italic, the stiff, 'hard shoulder italic' nib of about 1mm width is a good choice.

## **Sign of the Tines: Your Correspondence**

### **SCRIBES AND SCHOLARS**

I read issue 83 of *Writing Matters* rather hastily and recently felt that I had left something undone so have just re-read it. Kate Gladstone was lamenting that *Scribes and Sources* might be generally unavailable, however, it can still be found for a similar price to when it was newly printed. Below is a link to [abebooks.com](https://www.abebooks.com) (USA), but it is also available on [abebooks.co.uk](https://www.abebooks.co.uk) where some months ago, I purchased a very nice copy of *A Book of Scripts* in a dust wrapper and signed by Alfred Fairbank for a very reasonable price.

[https://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/SearchResults?cm\\_sp=SearchF--home--Results&an=&tn=scribes+and+sources&kn=&isbn=&n=200000237](https://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/SearchResults?cm_sp=SearchF--home--Results&an=&tn=scribes+and+sources&kn=&isbn=&n=200000237)

*David Hope, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands*

### **SHOULD WE WORRY ABOUT HANDWRITING?**

There's an interesting article in the publication *The Confident Teacher* entitled 'Should We Worry About Handwriting'. It can be found on [www.theconfidentteacher.com](http://www.theconfidentteacher.com).

*Phil Evans, Barnsley, West Yorks.*

### **DIGGING**

In Issue 83 of *Writing Matters*, Foster Neville wished to trace a line between agriculture and writing. I think I have found that line in the 1966 poem *Digging* by Seamus Heaney.

*David Tregear, Chichester, West Sussex*

David wrote out this poem in a fine italic hand, however, as the Heaney poem is still in copyright, I am unable to reproduce it here, sadly. If you are thinking of writing out any poetry to send for publication, please make sure that it is either out of copyright or you have permission from the copyright holder. *Ed.*

## Forty Years Ago

### THROUGH THICK AND THIN

This is a report of a talk given at the Society's Annual General Meeting on 2 April 1981 by Father Simon Trafford OSB, in which he drew on his long experience of helping boys at Ampleforth College to learn italic handwriting.

He dealt first with the italic pen, pointing out that, although this gives the best result, it could be attended with certain problems if it were not properly adjusted to its task. For example, the chisel edge could cut into the paper if it were too sharp. Success in handwriting depended largely on finding the right mixture of five variables, three related to materials and two to their manipulation. The former consisted of the sharpness of the pen, the smoothness of the paper and the quantity of ink: the latter of pen pressure and pen angle. Thus, the extremes within which the solution lay were a very sharp pen on rough paper with minimum ink, and a very smooth nib on smooth paper with a copious flow of ink. The best combination occurred when the pen glided over the paper with sufficient ink to act as a lubricant, but not enough to blotch the paper.

***Nib-grinding.*** The speaker demonstrated the tools that he employed in preparing his nibs – a small, hand turned grindstone for the initial shaping, carborundum stone for fining it down, a cloth on which to rub the pen to remove any traces of loose metal, and a pocket microscope or magnifying glass to inspect and check the result. The nib should not be ground to too sharp an edge. Free movement of the pen over the paper ought not to be sacrificed to high contrast of thick and thin strokes.

***Paper.*** Various kinds of paper, ranging from the porous duplicator variety to the very smooth high-quality product were discussed. Paper resting on wood or a hard top presented an unsympathetic surface. This

could be remedied by writing over a paper pad, which should not, however, be so thick as to impede the operation of the pen. It was also helpful to insert a sheet between the hand and writing paper to afford protection from the natural grease of the hand, which often marred the last few lines of writing.

***Ink-flow.*** This was determined by the position of the reservoir in relation to the nib (the nearer the nib, the greater the flow) and by the width of the slit in the nib. The tines of the nib should not be separated as this would inhibit the flow of ink.

***Pressure.*** A light touch, just sufficient to allow the ink to flow, was recommended.

***Pen angle.*** The more the writer turned his nib to the vertical, the less smooth it was to write.

Father Trafford then considered whether one could write Italic with other instruments. He thought that this was possible, though the characteristic thicks and thins would generally be lost. This was not important if the letter shapes were sound, and the result looked good and thoroughly italic. Pupils could in fact learn to write with one of the 'easier' instruments, and it might well be better to teach in this way than to insist on the use of the 'difficult' italic nib from the outset. He showed on the screen several illuminating slides of the nibs of writing instruments and enlargements of the letters which they made on paper and made the following comments.

***Non-italic fountain pen.*** These usually had blob nibs, but they gave the best feel and left a good line.

***Ball point.*** A most convenient instrument for notes and rough work. The cheap ones were messy and splodged. Although expensive models were most satisfactory, all slithered about and made an inferior line. On the other hand, where pressure was required, e.g., with carbons, they were serviceable. Best results were obtained on Roneo paper.

***Nylon/Fibre tip.*** This instrument moved with greater friction than the ball point and therefore required a smoother, but not too thick paper. The amount of ink varied with different makes but the nylon/fibre tip always left a better line.

**Rolling ball.** This pen was a poor starter, giving a ragged, uneven line.

## ITALIC

||||||

Anticlockwise uuuuuu      nnnnn Clockwise  
oall iulty      nmh  
adgq      bp p n b r  
oc e e r      rk

Diagonal letters: vwx yz

Other letters: fjs

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p p q r r s t u v w x y y z

### Joining

Diagonal joins from the bottom: ai ci di ei ki li mi ni ti ui

Horizontal joins from the top: fi oi ri ti vi wi

Difficult diagonal joins: bi pi si zi

Letters which do not join: g j q r y y

The two stroke 'e' [<sub>1</sub> <sub>2</sub> e] is easier than the one stroke 'e'  
for some joins & for spacing: oe re ve we fe te ea ed eg eq

### CAPITALS

Straight lines: I L E F T H      Diagonals: A V W M N K Y Z

Based on an 'O': O Q C G      D P R B      Others: J S

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Figure 1



From this group, the speaker favoured the nylon/fibre tip and the fountain pen. For at least one member of the audience, his slides proved conclusively what a shoddy, nasty thing the ballpoint is.

The next theme was pen hold. Here, Father Trafford suggested a light grip with sensitive fingers, a pear shape between thumb and forefinger, and a comfortable distance between the end of the nib and the thumb and fingers holding the pen. This distance could be measured by writing with a pencil sharpened to a stubby point and marking the place where it was gripped. He had found that, in his own case, it was 1.1cm. He warned against the bent forefinger.

Our speaker then proceeded to describe his methods of teaching, indicating groups of letters linked by family likeness, various sorts of joins and capitals. Figure 1 sets out his system and makes further description unnecessary. (After the lecture I wrote to Father Trafford, suggesting that his 'difficult joins' were not necessary, since letters should only be connected when the joins are natural. Excessive joining such as we see in almost every recent writing book leads to sprawl and spoils letter spacing. He kindly replied: 'I agree that difficult joins should never happen; therefore, I teach them unjoined, but show how they *can* be joined because they will be in writing fast, when shapes will be modified and the joins then become easy and natural.' I am not sure whether this isn't like saying: 'All our boys will be certain to tell lies when they grow up; let s then teach them to do it properly.')

After outlining his teaching methods, Father Trafford reflected on the problems of handwriting competitions. There was unavoidably a certain artificiality about them. In ordinary handwriting, the pen movements made more or less accurate marks on the paper. But a writer in his competition entry was tempted to slow down movement in a self-conscious attempt to make more accurate marks to satisfy the judges. Since most people did not have the skill to do this unless they were formal calligraphers, his writing on that occasion might not be his best. In principle, the only fair competition would be one in which all competitors had to write to dictation at various speeds. Results of competitions unavoidably owed something to the personal predilections of the judges. Nevertheless, boys should be encouraged to enter competitions since the discipline of trying to write as well as possible was beneficial.

Father Trafford concluded his talk by describing ways of educating the eye and sharpening awareness of letter shapes, e.g., blackboard work, including the use of double chalk; writing with lettering nibs in pupils' books and on covers; writing monograms and overhead ligatures; and writing notices, letterheads etc. for reproduction by offset litho or photocopying. Excellent examples of these were illustrated on the screen.

*A S Osley*

From *Journal* 105, Spring 1981

*I am writing this letter very  
slowly, because I know that  
you can't read very fast.*

Ken Fraser, 2021

## Paper: Cyril Deighton

The same capillary-action that takes ink down to its nib will continue into the fibrous-capillarity of paper. Without the fibres woven in the paper the pen will not write; it won't write on paper or glass.

Paper is made of rag, wood, cotton or vegetable pulp in various combinations. The action is mechanical and chemical. It is mechanical because it must put ink into the paper's fibres and chemical because the ink must combine with the paper and not be repulsed by it. But if the ink combines too readily the line spreads and becomes 'feathered'. This is to be seen when writing on wrapping-paper or poor-quality newspaper.

Good quality paper such as writing paper is coated with starch or size, but cheap notebooks and ring-notebook refills are often unevenly coated. When ink lines skip and slide paper is the most likely cause. Copier paper is cheap and the ink-line is often good enough for quick notes; and this will vary from batch to batch and from ink to ink. Bold-coloured ink can go thin and wishy-washy on paper with an excess of glaze.

Those writing an italic style find that surface tension affects the result so that the ink will be slightly narrower than the width of the nib. The thin line produced by fine or extra fine nibs are best when bold-coloured inks are used. Lastly, I have found that good paper for pens is more rare than good inks. When you have a good ink and paper combination make a note of it!

*Hope and patience are two  
sovereign remedies for all,  
the surest reposals, the  
softest cushions to lean on  
in adversity.*

*Robert Burton  
The Anatomy of Melancholy*

Simon Daniel, 2020

### *Modern Italic vs. cancellaresca corsiva*

An entire paragraph written in Arrighi's *Cancellaresca Corsiva* makes a rather attractive pattern. The emphasis is on the verticals, and the compactness of the writing gives it the lovely texture. To test readability, run your eyes quickly along the top of the lines of writing without too conscious an attempt at reading. Rather judge how easy or how difficult it is for the eyes to ride along the tops of the letters.

Here is a paragraph written in modern Italic based on the models Alfred Fairbank designed in the early 1930's for school use. Test its readability according to the above paragraph. Don't your eyes run across the tops of the letters more easily? Why? The eyes are accustomed to reading Roman type, gliding along the very rounded tops of the letters. Another advantage of this style for schools is that when taught, the fuller arches and lower curves of modern Italic, students are not as apt to slip into writing a scribbly, jagged-topped and very difficult-to-read hand - a very common fault of Italic writers.

*Fred Eager*

From *Journal* 38, Spring 1964

# From the Archives

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHANCERY HAND

*This article was written in consultation with Sir Sydney Cockerell, Sir Francis Meynell, Wilfrid Blunt and Stanley Morison.*

Italic handwriting is the modernised version of the Chancery hand which was first perfected by Roman scribes in the early part of the sixteenth century.

The capital letters of italic handwriting are based on the classical letters of Roman inscriptions of the first century AD, but the small letters have simplified and more easily executed forms which gradually developed in the course of centuries from the same Roman letters under the influences of economy of space and fluency and speed in writing.

The development of the small letters passed through many intermediate stages, and the history is a long and complicated one, but there were two definite epochs which are of paramount importance.

In the year 789AD Charlemagne ordered a revision of all the books in use in the churches throughout his dominions. The work was supervised by the English scholar Alcuin. It was only fitting that the pre-eminent handwriting of the time should have been chosen for such an important task, and it was inevitable that the use of the hand so selected should spread. The ultimate success, however, of what is now known as the Caroline hand was very much greater and more lasting, for it became the progenitor of all subsequent scripts of the Western World. For about three hundred years it was the predominant writing of Western Europe, but during the twelfth century more compressed and angular versions began to preponderate, and by the fourteenth century had ousted Alcuin's generous characters.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the great artistic and literary revival known as the Italian Renaissance began. The humanist leaders of the movement thought the current handwriting uncouth and called it 'gothic' - meaning literally barbarous. Their literary

In 1765, when he was 16 years old, Goethe wrote a number of letters to his sister and to his father, who collected them and sewed them together. Three years later, Goethe read them through again and in his autobiography he described the impression they made on him as follows:

What struck me first of all was the appearance of these letters: I was horrified by the incredible carelessness of the handwriting from October 1765 to mid-January of the following year. Then, all of a sudden, in the middle of March, there appeared a well-composed and well-ordered hand of the kind I was in the habit of using only when entering for competitions. My initial astonishment dissolved into gratitude towards good old Professor Gellert who, as I now recalled so well, used, in his warmly appealing manner, to exhort us to consider it a sacred duty to practise our handwriting just as much as and even more than our style when preparing the essays we wrote for him. He repeated this whenever a piece of scrawl came under his eyes and he often added that if he had his way he would make his students' beautiful handwriting the chief aim of his tuition as he had often noticed that a good hand results in a good style.

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[translated by S.F.]

Stanley Godman, 1960s

researches led them to the examination of a large number of manuscripts which had long lain forgotten in the libraries of Western Europe, and among them they found many written in an eleventh century version of the Caroline hand which was outstanding for its legibility and beauty. They enthusiastically adopted the 'antique letter' as they called it, with the classical Roman letters for capitals, and in a few years the form known as the humanistic hand developed. The labour-saving informal variant of this hand was exceptionally graceful, and at the same time an extremely practical and expeditious hand. For these reasons it was adopted for diplomatic uses in the chanceries at Venice and Rome in about 1447, and thus became known as the Chancery hand. Printing was invented in about 1450 and the early type makers copied handwriting as closely as possible, so that the printed word would not suffer by comparison. In Northern Europe the first types were based on gothic hands, but in Italy in 1465 the deliberately written formal variant of the humanistic hand was used as a model for the first 'roman' type, and in 1500 the Chancery hand became the pattern for the first 'italic' type. Usage slightly modified the Chancery hand, and it appeared in its most finished form in the first known writing manual which was published in 1522 by the Vatican scribe Ludovico degli Arrighi, a native of Vicenza.

The Chancery hand was introduced into England before 1483, and in 1571 was described as the Italic hand in the first English writing book. It achieved a certain degree of popularity in court and scholastic circles, but insular prejudice militated against its more general acceptance and by the end of the seventeenth century it had been more or less rejected in favour of hands fostered by commercial interests.

The inspiration of the contemporary movement for the revival of beautiful handwriting comes from the incomparable standard of the sixteenth century scribes. The movement has adopted the Chancery hand and adapted it to satisfy twentieth century everyday needs. The spearhead of the movement is the Society for Italic Handwriting.

*Geoffrey Ebbage*  
From *Bulletin 4*, Autumn 1955

*Always remember  
that you are  
absolutely unique –  
just like  
everyone else.*

Ken Fraser, 2021



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## SUBMITTING MATERIAL

Contributions such as articles and handwriting may be submitted via email as an attachment or sent by post to the above address. When submitting handwriting examples, please ensure that they are written in **black** ink on **smooth, white paper**, as colours do not reproduce very well, blue in particular. Anything that is not in solid black, i.e. grey, will give disappointing results. However, designs for the square on the front cover may now include colour. If you have any queries about how to submit, please contact me.

Publication times:

Spring issue: late March/early April. Colour scheme: Green.

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XXVI February M M ANNO DOMINI

**J**ULIE My Dearest Daughter;  
It was customary in a bygone age for  
fathers to write to their daughters, when  
they came of a certain age, to offer advice  
& guidance in order to prepare them  
for the uncertainties of adult life.  
Advice on such matters as learning, honour  
& virtue was thought necessary for any  
young lady to become of good standing in this  
world. Lesser talents, such as civility, affability & an  
agreeable address & manner would make them more pleasing  
to society. It makes me very proud therefore, my dear daughter, to  
know that no such undertaking has ever been necessary on my  
part, for you have achieved all that a devoted father could wish for.  
Over these many years I have observed you negotiate the ill habits  
& awkwardness of youth, which I might add, many very worthy  
& sensible people have surmounted to. At this point, I must give  
courteous submissions to that other great influence in your  
life, your mother. Good breeding is also a necessary requirement  
for my young woman to be accepted by society & for this you  
have much to thank your mother for. She has, by example,  
demonstrated the most strictest & most scrupulous honour,  
loyalty & virtue & is much admired & esteemed.  
How much then, my dearest daughter, does it gladden my heart  
to know that you are following, most assuredly, your most  
worthy mother's example, testimony enough to the enduring  
love & esteem I hold you in.  
In parting I can only add that no father could be more proud or  
love his daughter as I do you.

Your loving Coli