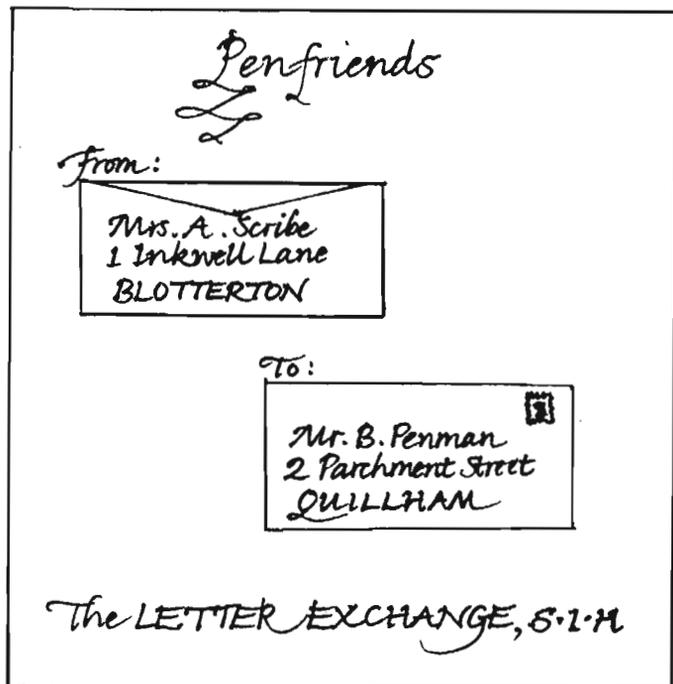


Writing Matters

Promoting better handwriting



Issue 36 March 2009 ISSN 1468-9537

Edited by Nicholas Caulkin
203 Dyas Avenue, Great Barr, Birmingham B42 1HN, England

The Journal & Newsletter of the Soc for Italic Handwriting

A Word from the Chair:

Foster Neville

It is with very deep regret that I announce the sad and unexpected death of Graham Last, Vice-President and former Chair of this Society.

I joined the SIH during Graham's long and impressive tenure as Chair and know no other. I associate the SIH with his successful leadership and vision: ushering in the new millennium with *Writing Matters*, the publication of *Dance of the Pen* and the Society going online.

Graham liked meeting and talking, and corresponding, with SIH members and fellow enthusiasts in Italic. Having attended a couple of SIH events I got to know Graham and the friendly atmosphere he created within the Society was frankly one of the attractions I felt to becoming more involved.

When I took over from Graham as Chairman last year he told me, with that smile of his and characteristic mischievous glint in his eye, that I would now have to keep finding new themes for the quarterly *Word from the Chair*. After penning only a few I realised exactly what Graham had meant and wondered how on earth he had managed to do it for so long.

I believe part of the secret was that his interests were so wide in range and rooted not just in genuine scholarship but also very often in genuine craftsmanship. In terms of handwriting, it was its functionality first of all which he regarded as important. To combine the swift and graceful in an everyday hand was what he sought in both theory and practice. Calligraphy concerned him less, but letter forms were a passion and many of his friends enjoyed receiving his cards and Christmas cards produced on his own hand press, using real metal type. Again this was no

dilettante interest; real knowledge and mastery of a dying skill lay behind this as well as other activities.

When latterly Graham's work brought him occasionally to the north we would meet in Newcastle, Durham – and on one memorable occasion on a broken down train in Darlington Station! His craftsmanship, a term I suspect he would have been too modest to use of himself, was all the more surprising since it was achieved despite a busy and demanding professional life – in the most modern sense - where he worked constantly with computers, even using a laptop on long train journeys. He enjoyed the contradiction, imagining the surprise of fellow commuters or colleagues when this 'eccentric' (his word) brought out a collection of a half a dozen ink pens of varying vintages and chose the one most appropriate for making a diary entry or signing a cheque. I am grateful that he never discovered the Holy Grail of fountain pens he talked about, the one that would change his writing 'beyond recognition', since I find something of his warm character in his Italic hand.

Writing this *Word from the Chair*, the statement that asking for a sample of handwriting is like asking for a sample of someone's smile, came to mind. I am grateful, through whatever approximation handwriting and memory may offer, to have fine samples of both with which to recall my colleague and my dear friend Graham Last.

Our deepest sympathies go to Graham's widow, Rosemary, and to their families.

7/12

Dear Nick,

Many thanks for sending the key.

The meeting was extremely fruitful and there was a good turnout. We have arranged another for Tues. January 16, 6.00-7.30 pm. Could you please book Goner St. for us? Many thanks. We would be delighted if you could join us.

I enclose the invoice. We had to manage in the basement; not an entirely satisfactory arrangement.

All the best,
G.

Notes from nickthenibs

APOLOGIES

First of all, please accept my apologies for the late appearance of this issue. This is mainly due to my working on the website, speaking of which....

WEBSITE

I am pleased to announce that this is now in its final stages. Both Foster and myself have been working hard on the content over the winter and at the time of writing, the site is currently being built by Richard Hilton. Please keep checking **www.italic-handwriting.org.uk** over the next few weeks.

AGM

Please take a few minutes to complete the AGM form included with this issue and return to me by 15 May.

SIH AT THE SSI

Yours truly will be representing the Society at Lay Members' Day which takes place on Saturday 25 April from 10am – 4.30pm at Kings College Franklin Wilkins Building, 150 Stamford Street, London, SE1 9NN. If you are attending, please stop and say hello! Linda Winnett will also be there.

GRAHAM LAST

I have included several examples in this issue of the handwriting of our dear, late friend, Graham Last. I worked with Graham for over 12 years and his sudden death has come as a great shock to me. Like many other people, I will greatly miss him both as a colleague and a friend. A

private funeral took place at the end of January followed by a memorial service on March 16 in Bedford, which I went to on behalf of the Society. Foster, Kathy Lacy and Reg Nutting also attended.

MERCATOR SOCIETY

It is the fiftieth anniversary this year of our sister italic handwriting society, the Mercator Society, in Holland. I was asked by their secretary, Thomas Laudy, to pen them a suitable greeting for inclusion in their magazine *Der Ganzeveer*. I have included a copy of it in this issue.

NEXT ISSUE

Issue 37 will be published in June so please let me have all material by 15 May 2009, please. Remember that you can send contributions via post or email.

Local Groups News

SIH CHICHESTER (WAS WEST SUSSEX)

Organiser: Arthur Reynolds, 14 Roman Way, Fishbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 3QN. Email: arthur@fishbourne.plus.com

Arthur writes:

“With the continuing development of the computer with installations in almost every home in the country and the fantastic capability of modern mobiles, it is likely that handwriting and - many calligraphers fear- calligraphy itself will become a lost art.

After David Tregear had to give up the chairmanship of our Chichester branch, we decided, as a group, not to hire a hall, thus cutting costs and saving some of us a long journey every month. I then took on the role of organiser, with assistance from Jane Gribbon, our long-term treasurer, and we set up as a correspondence group.

We had nine members. Each was given a sheet with their allocated number along with the names and addresses and the numbers of the other members. The system then was that each member wrote to the following number. This meant that each member would receive a letter from a different member each month. If the received letter arrived before midway through the month, they could copy the content for their monthly effort. However, if they wished, they could select their own choice of prose, poem, or just write something.

Our main object was to write in a calligraphic style but with the main thrust to develop a personal style of handwriting based on Italic. This meant that members could see the various developing styles and could adopt any shapes that appealed and to have the opportunity to write monthly.

August 13, 1995

Dear Nick,

Many thanks for your letter concerning the possible involvement of the Manuscript Pen Company in our handwriting project.

We have yet, of course, to draw up a rationale or to set specific objectives for our 'Year of Good Handwriting', but I am sure that we could make good use of your connections with this company. It is certainly reassuring that they would like to collaborate with us.

I would be most interested in any ideas you might have for developing the project. David Nicholls has suggested that a sub-committee is formed to take things forward.

All the best,

Graham

Handwriting by the late Graham Last

We have found that this system works well. We are sure that many folk would like to correspond with like minded folk. It could even extend to overseas calligraphers in due course.”

Ed: This sounds like an excellent idea. There is also Letter Exchange, run by Executive Committee member Joy Daniels, to which a few SIH members have subscribed.

SIH HAMPSHIRE

Hon. Secretary: Reg Nutting, Aldwin Cottage, 7 Patrick's Copse Road, Liss, Hants. GU33 7EN. Tel: 01730-300779
E-mail: aldwinjr@ntlworld.com

Reg remembers Graham Last. He writes:

“Graham became Chairman not long before James Watkin and I formed the Hampshire group. He was one of the three activists who devised and implemented the plan for local groups. Except in Hampshire, insufficient local energy and nous were in evidence in the various places where groups were formed: the local groups made half-hearted beginnings and sank without trace.

He never gave up helping us even when it became clear that he and I had very different views about how the Society should face up to new technology: he, with his vast experience of the educational system, believed the system should – and could- adapt its policies of change to maintain handwriting as the important personal means of communication and recording: I, with half a century of computing under my belt, could see that there was no stopping such monstrous power – handwriting, like mental arithmetic, would have to be re-established after the monster had done its damage, and been seen to have done it – meantime keep the art and the Society alive under the umbrella of calligraphy, and plan to be independent, without help from the system.

I shall tell Rosemary at Graham's memorial service in Bedford that that the thoughts of this group are with her and that we will continue to work in the cause to which Graham gave so much."

SIH SOMERSET

Organiser: Rod Dixon, Moorsedge, Chedzoy, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7 8RB. Tel: 01278-451647.

SIH Line Up 2009

PRESIDENT: Vacant position

VICE-PRESIDENTS: Dom Patrick Barry, OSB, The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Nairne, GCB, MC, David Nicholls, CB, CMG

CHAIRMAN: Foster Neville*

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Vacant position

SECRETARY & EDITOR: Nicholas Caulkin, 203 Dyas Avenue, Great Barr, Birmingham B42 1HN. Tel: 0121-244 8006
(evenings and weekends)

Email: **nickthenibs@hotmail.co.uk**

Website: **www.nickthenibs.co.uk**

TREASURER: Gordon Wratten

E-mail: **wrattens@ntlworld.com**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Clifford Bryant, Nicholas Caulkin, Joy Daniels, Kathy Lacy, Paul Lines, John Nash, David Nicholls*, Mark Russell*, Ludwig Tan, Martin Taylor & Gordon Wratten* *(Trustee)

Writing Without Pencils:

Michelle Gallen

In 2003 I read a BBC article on teaching children to write using computers, rather than pencils and paper. I haven't heard much about the practice since, but following a conversation with my mother (an ex-primary school teacher) on how myself and my brothers and sisters learned to write, I became interested in it again.

In Norway, 18 schools decided to teach children how to write just by using PCs. So instead of spending hours and hours being taught how to draw the 26 letters of the alphabet using one hand, the children are taught how to type using all ten fingers. This makes the act of writing a lot easier for children.

Arne Trageton, the associate professor in education at Stord/Haugesund College says he is not opposed to handwriting, but points out that in the 'real' world, hardly anyone writes by hand anymore. Yet in our schools small children are forced to handwrite at a time when it is a challenge to their developing motor skills.

Traditional handwriting skills are taught in the Norwegian schools – but they are introduced at the age of eight, when the children pick up the skill much more quickly.

The director of the school district, Vidar Aarhus, describes the practice as 'learning by playing' and believes that the children become better writers because they avoid 'technical difficulties' of mastering the physical act of writing.

Handwriting still matters in today's school system. Despite the fact that most pupils will graduate into a world where the occasional scribbled post-it note is likely to be the most they will have to handwrite, they must take exams by hand. Research has shown that pupils with faster handwriting get

better exam results. The researchers who discovered this have recommended that we teach handwriting throughout school. Why? Why not teach children the keyboard skills they're going to need – the skills that will give them an advantage in the 'real' world? And why not let them take exams by PC?

But back to the theme of 'writing without pencils'. I really like the idea that children can spend time on a creative activity at an early age, rather than being consumers of an imposed 'system'. Instead of making small children sweat over recreating a legible *q*, they could be freed to explore the creation of words and sentences – to express themselves.

From the Writing Equipment Society's *Journal* No 83, Winter 2008. Reproduced with their kind permission. Thanks to member Russell Robertson for sending in the article to me.

Forty Years Ago

HINTS TO BEGINNERS

A suggestion in the Summer JOURNAL was made that, for the beginner who has no teacher and has to be his or her own guide, learning by tracing with a dry pen might be of help. The use of grease-proof paper is another possibility and this would allow pen and ink in lieu of the dry pen. Tracing could extend to learning the simple Roman capitals and to the more sophisticated but freer swash capitals.

ILTHEF OQCG AMNK DPBR
VWYJUSXZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPS
TUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPS
TUVWXYZ

The swash capitals *E F H J K T U* begin with a hairline starting slightly below the intended height of the capital and bending to become a flat stroke. But not a curly flourish so: *H*. The capitals *B D P R* begin in the same way but continue to curve to form the bow. *A M* and *N* may also have this initial flourish, whilst *M* and *N* have only one pen-lift and indeed could begin with an upstroke from the base of the letter and have no pen-lift. The capital *I*, a difficult letter, could also be made so: *I*. Like *G J L O S V W Y* and *Z*, both forms of *I* have no pen-lift. There are other alternatives to shapes shown above, which may follow experience and taste. It is interesting to consider how many forms of *A* and *H*

can be devised by extending strokes and by flourishes. The capital Y could be made of two downstrokes or be related in form to U. As shown above, the second downstroke moves along the thin line before curving away. The tail of Q is almost straight but finally turns to a hairline.

To gain a good sense of rhythmic movements and fluency, practice is recommended of words that involve both clockwise and counter-clockwise motions, as in *n* and *u*. The two groups of letters are *b h k m n r* and *a d g q u c e o*, and some words that might be practiced are *hum*, *nun*, *mum*, *announce*, *ammunition*, *dining*, *guardian*, *quaint*, *homing*, *hammock*, *murmur*, *mimic*, *minimum*, *nomination*. In writing these words, use the linking diagonal join.

Alfred Fairbank

From *Journal* 58 Spring 1969

Partnership
of Love & Creativity

Beginners
made welcome

Calligraphic Arts
David & Nancy Howells

RESIDENTIAL CALLIGRAPHY COURSES
IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND, A.D. 2009
at Lancing College, Sussex

ONE WEEK: 4-11 JULY
5 DAYS: 20-25 JULY

WRITE FOR
BROCHURE

14 Mill Hill Drive
SHOREHAM-ON-SEA
WEST SUSSEX BN11 1AB
43 5TL UK

Tel: UK: - 0127
International Code: +44

email: nyohowells@msr...

The Society for Italic Handwriting

a try-out rough
for website headings

Mercator Society

for

Italic Handwriting

1959-2009

50th

Congratulations to the

on the occasion of their

from their sister society in the United Kingdom

We also send our very best wishes to THOMAS

THOMAS LAUDY

for his enthusiasm for and active promotion
of the Italic hand.

May he and the Mercator Society continue to flourish!

THOMAS LAUDY

Congratulations to the

Congratulations

The

ongratulations to the

50th Anniversary

Congratulations to the
Thomas

on the occasion of their from their sister society

for his enthusiasm for & active promotion of

Thomas Laudy

The Society for Italic Handwriting

We also send our very best wishes to

Archives

some rough workings out: nickthenibs

Congratulations to the
Mercator Society
for
Italic Handwriting

on the occasion of their

1959-2009
50th Anniversary

from their sister society in the United Kingdom,
The Society for Italic Handwriting.

We also send our very best wishes to
Thomas Laudy
for his enthusiasm for & active promotion
of the Italic hand.

Written out by Nicholas Caulkin (A.K.A nickthenibs),
Secretary of The Society for Italic Handwriting. February 2009

Sign of the Times: Your Correspondence

Foster Neville, our new chair, seems likely to continue the task(already begun) of breathing new life and bringing more members into our Society -- particularly if he takes his own suggestion that the world could use an action handwriting Book(written in dramatic spy-novel fashion?) to reveal the excitement of making letters well!

Mr. Neville notes the computerised fonts of restaurants' "specials" boards. In the USA, so far, I have seen only handwritten ones: some abominably scrawled (in which case I always let the management know WHY I did not order any of the specials so distastefully. because indecipherably, presented!) but most very legible and -- increasingly -- even beautifully done. (I credit this, not to much influence from complaining calligraphic customers like me, but to the management's wish for visual appeal and -- even more -- to our hard times which increasingly rub managers' noses in the plain economic fact that those who spend their money to dine away from home will not order a dish they cannot decipher.)

Regarding Humphrey Lyttelton's posthumous book -- having that book's title (which *Writing Matters* unfortunately omitted) may make it easier to order! To order the book, *Last Chorus: an Autobiographical Medley*, one can go via computer to <http://www.amazon.co.uk> if wintry weather discourages a trip to the bookstore.

With regard to fonts that emulate Italic handwriting -- those looking or Mr. Kettlewell's articles on handwritten-style (and other) fonts should note that *Writing Matters* misspelled his web-site's address, and should visit <http://www.new-renaissance.net> rather than accepting the misspelling thereof which the December issue provided. Spelling may not have mattered to Renaissance

typographers, but it matters exceedingly in finding websites.

Page 18 of the December issue (in the *Forty Years Ago* section) has come in VERY handy -- as has William Woan's monoline scribal snowflake on page 27 for showing people that neither the SIH in particular nor Italic handwriters generally need abhor the ball-point pen, felt-tip markers, and other modern-day writing tools. Perhaps the SIH can ask members to consider sending in, for reproduction, their handwriting with a variety of pens and pencils? In this vein, thanks to the SIH and to Ludwig Tan for showing the splendid letters and words from his class taught with a Kuretake felt-tip marker: an Italic tool, but one seldom seen in the pages of an SIH publication. Please, Nick, let us see more writing excellently done with modern tools, edged and otherwise. I do not always write with a fountain pen, let alone a quill or other dip-pen, and I suspect that most of our other members do not always do so either.

I enjoy lending the magazine to interested onlookers, and it may take a while for an issue to find its way back to my shelves!

Ed: You raise an interesting point, there, Kate. I write quite a lot using a monoline pen: the Pilot G-Tec -C4. Indeed, I am working on a piece of calligraphy at present using a mapping pen nib of all things! Do other members write more with a monoline pen rather than a square edge pen? Do let me know. The SIH, though, does not 'abhor the ball point pen, felt tip markers and other modern day writing tools'! The name of the Humphrey Lyttelton book was mentioned on page 26.

Kate Gladstone, Albany, New York, USA

saturday

Dear Nick,

I am very sorry that I did not reply earlier to your fax but I have been in Zürich this week visiting schools and the end of last week was difficult as I was trying to clear the decks before setting off.

I am sure that your suggestion regarding another event this time next year at the Art Workers' Guild is a good one. Please include this as an item on the agenda for our next meeting.

John Fricker reminds me that we need to do something about prizes and certificates for the 1996 handwriting competition. I attach a copy of David Graham's report. This is to appear in the Journal. Could I possibly leave the arrangements to you?

Many thanks,
Graham.

PS Rosemary & I now have a fax machine (same number as our 'phone).

Handwriting by the late Graham Last

GRAHAM LAST

There are two things I remember about Graham. I attended an SIH function several years' ago at which lunch was available. During a pre-lunch discussion with a group of members, Graham asked me if I was having lunch. I replied 'yes' and reached into my pocket for money. To my horror, no money! I had travelled to Queen's Square courtesy of my Freedom Travel Card. Immediately, Graham opened his wallet, offered £10 and said, "Would that be enough for lunch and to get you back to Kingston safely?" I was a complete stranger but gladly accepted his offer.

The other occasion was another SIH meeting and we were discussing Italic handwriting in general when Graham said, "We must always keep in mind that Italic handwriting is based on the oval."

We are all certainly aware of this fact but being reminded struck a cord with me. It gave my memory a good jogging.

William Woan, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey, England

I was very shocked to hear of Graham's sudden death. What a loss to the Society he will be and at what is now considered to be a fairly young age. He had always worked so tirelessly to promote the SIH and did such a lot for it when it was struggling to keep going. Graham was a charming and delightful man. Those of us who are left handed and came to one of the workshops a few years ago will remember his helpful advice for other "lefties".

I wonder if there could be a Graham Last Memorial for italic writing and competition in *Writing Matters*. I fear that so many of our members do not contribute to the magazine. Perhaps an appreciation (in Italic of course) could be included in the next few editions of *WM*.

Rosemary and Graham Last

Tuesday

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your recent correspondence. I regret that I have been tardy in replying but this has been a particularly busy time at work.

I have made a few suggested amendments to the proposed agenda for the next cttee. meeting and to the AGM minuces. With reference to the former, I think that we need to consider a number of linked events/ projects if we are really serious about promoting handwriting improvement. At earlier meetings a number of suggestions were made, for example, writing - and getting others to write - to the press.

With regard to JF's letter about the handwriting competition, schools are simply not interested any longer in this kind of approach. I made this point three years ago. The envelope competition is much nearer the mark but I doubt whether even this will attract schools. We must wait and see!

All the best,
Graham.

Come on, members! Write something to express your appreciation.

Kathy Lacy, Dartford, Kent, England

BIBLIOGRAPHIES & BINDINGS

I have several questions arising from the last issue.

Firstly, the article by Ken Bartlett on Wilfrid Blunt, contained interesting references about writing and people's (Blunt's) thoughts. Is there a bibliography of such books? I am referring to books which are not of the technical 'how to' variety but more reflective and autobiographical?

Secondly, is it possible to have copies of *Writing Matters* bound or to buy a folder for them?

Richard Jones, Lancaster, England

Ed: I do not know of any bibliography in existence, Richard. Although folders were available several years' ago in which members could keep their copies of the old *Journal*, it would not be financially feasible to do this now since we have a very small membership base.

LEGIBLE HANDWRITING

Responding to an advert in *The Independent* which said that thousands of children are incapable of answering exam questions in longhand, Peter Waters of Belton in Norfolk writes that in the course of most modern careers, computers are the primary method of producing work. He stated that schools need to be encouraged to embrace new media, instead of clinging to the archaic idea that exams should be a test of students' handwriting as well as their brains!

28 Long Lane
Croydon.

4. X. 33.

I am hoping to arrange a meeting in
the last week of October. Will you
therefore let me know at once whether
you are proposing new members for the S.S.I.

Yours sincerely
Alfred Fairbank

This postcard was kindly sent to me
by Len Perry who knew the recipient,
Daisy Alcock, when she lived in
Wednesbury in the West Midlands.

Mr Waters must surely be aware that most schools have already embraced new media, some for more than two decades and no one (except the most miserly!) would deny them the right to keep ahead of new technology. However, it is essential to defend legible handwriting.

The point of the report was that examiners were struggling to mark papers because pupils' handwriting is so illegible. However much schools are 'encouraged to embrace new media', the problem facing examiners will remain unless legible handwriting is demanded. I was flabbergasted to read that one of Britain's biggest exam boards said that some writing was so bad that more adults should be allowed to act as scribes during tests (whatever next!) Will these 'scribes' follow them around in their future careers I ask myself?!

I was further perplexed to learn that pupils who struggle to write quickly can apply for help during tests. Adults can act as 'scribes' if pupils fail to write at least ten words a minute (heaven forbid!). In the past three years the number of pupils getting help in GCSE and A Level papers had risen from 28,324 to 40, 215.

Computers may well have become a necessity but legible handwriting remains indispensable. Imagine a day when you are denied the use of a pencil or pen. Telephone messages, shopping lists, a note left in your car for your mechanic or adding a few names to the golf club's Christmas dinner list doesn't really necessitate rushing to a computer. And how dreadfully impersonal it would be not to reply to an important invitation in your 'best hand'.

John Smith, King's Lynn, Norfolk, England

Margaret Dambrey's perceptive comments on the common ground between calligraphy and music (Spring/Summer Newsletter) set me off on a tack of my own. Asked about the lip problems which beset even the greatest trumpet-players, Louis Armstrong put it this way 'Me and my trumpet are good friends - but you know, good friends sometimes fall out'!

How often have we striving handwriters ~~and~~ felt the same way about a favourite pen! Some essayist once wrote a thesis on 'The Cursedness of "Things"', and, apart from a trumpet, no 'thing' can be more cursed than a pen. For days and weeks it flows perfectly, responding instantly to contact with the paper and gliding effortlessly over the surface like a champion figure skater.

Then one day, for no reason, it throws a wobbly. You may shake it until your wrist dislocates, even - if it's one of the modern fountain variety - dismantle it and squeeze the cartridge until it yields a reluctant blot. Start to write and the most you'll get out of it are a few dry, disjointed flecks. No longer a figure skater, it has turned into an inept ploughman, digging ragged furrows into the paper.

(para!)

When friends fall out like this, there's only one thing to do. Give the friendship a rest - you've probably presumed upon it too much. Take up with another pen. It won't seem the same. Identical pens (and trumpets) seldom do. But it will soon adapt to your idiosyncracies and become quite chummy.

I own two trumpets of the same make and specification. By avoiding making a favourite of one or other and ringing the changes quite often, I get on well with both. With pens, I can afford to spread my circle of friends wider, to cope not only with variable temperaments but also with my own tendency to lose friends as quickly as I make them.

And I mean 'lose' literally. When the time comes for my house to be demolished to make way for a motorway - or perhaps a space-shuttle runway - they will find the foundations teeming with pens (and combs, incidentally) which over the decades have disappeared without trace, presumably heading for Australia.

So I've had to learn one musician-handwriters rule the hard way. When it comes to pens and trumpets, Strictly No Favourites. When the valves start to stick, or the ink dries up for no reason in mid-word, you need all the friends you can get!

Monoline writing by Humphrey Lyttelton.
This article originally appeared in Issue 8,
Autumn 1995 of the old Newsletter, which I
also edited

Graham Last:

b. 29 August 1948 – d. 15 January 2009

I first met Graham on a sunny, late spring day in 1998, when the SIH was holding a very successful *International Dimensions of Handwriting* at the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Then an undergraduate at Lancaster, I had come to London for the day, in between my final examinations. It was my first time at an SIH event and I felt a little overwhelmed. Still, looking back, I can scarcely believe I hadn't dared approach Graham (whose name I had spied and recognized as the SIH chair's) — for he was to prove one of the nicest and most unassuming people I had ever met. Indeed, when word got around that I was at the event, he sought me out for a chat; and when he learnt that I was commencing postgraduate studies at Cambridge in the autumn, he asked if I would join the executive committee. That was the start of a firm friendship and a close association with the SIH.

Committee meetings were always highly enjoyable and pleasant occasions — I couldn't imagine a friendlier and more welcoming committee, and soon found myself looking forward to rather than dreading meetings. Graham was a superbly able and dedicated chair. He kept meetings light-hearted and jovial, yet focused and brief — in fact I often secretly wished they would drag on longer. He had a mischievous sense of humour, and was rarely without his characteristically hearty laugh. He was fervently dedicated to the Society's cause. Even if he felt (as most of us probably did) that we were fighting a losing battle to keep handwriting relevant in the eyes and minds of the wider public, he never gave up and was always keen to try new ideas and draw on the talent among the membership. Graham made every effort to be inclusive,

We shared many interests, including books on handwriting and printing, and always looked forward to sharing news about our latest acquisitions, such as a classic book on Italic handwriting from the 1950s or 1960s, bearing an inscription by an eminent practitioner or printer. We also loved chatting about fountain pens, nibs and inks, and shared a fondness for Sheaffers, Montblancs and the Parker Duofold. I was always very happy to grind his nibs for him as I knew his preferred width, degree of sharpness, and obliqueness: he liked his nibs fine and very sharp, but with a surprisingly flat degree of obliqueness. We also enjoyed discussing typefaces, and shared an admiration for classics such as Bembo and Caslon. No sans serif for Graham, not even the classically proportioned Gill Sans! He was very knowledgeable about printing and had his own printing press. His hand-printed Christmas cards — always in impeccable taste, and beautifully restrained — were a delight to receive. Graham and I also shared an enthusiasm for the German language, which I had studied for many years but never mastered. Graham, on the other hand, was a fluent speaker and admired the systems and schools of the German-speaking countries. Indeed, he often looked to Germany and Switzerland for ideas for improving standards in maths.

Whenever we met in Cambridge, it was almost invariably sunny — as it had been in London in 1998 — and I often remarked on it. So it is perhaps fitting that, whenever I think of Graham, I picture him with a sunny, hearty, infectious laugh and full of cheer.

Ludwig Tan

and was never one to stand on ceremony. He had a way of bringing out the best in people — after all, he had spent much of his career fighting to narrow the achievement gap among schoolchildren in Britain. He was, in the early 1990s, senior school inspector for Barking and Dagenham, a post once held by Joseph Compton, who also happened to be the first-ever SIH chair — an association Graham was proud of.

As a left-hander himself, Graham was keenly interested in the problems faced by people who wrote with the ‘wrong’ hand, and was always eager to offer help, sympathy and advice. He was proof, however, that being left-handed wasn’t necessarily an impediment to good handwriting: his remarkably controlled and well-proportioned Italic put my right-handed efforts to shame. I often thought his fine script was a reflection of the man he was: he set himself high standards, valued tradition and discipline, and believed in doing things properly. Indeed, in its obituary, the *Times Educational Supplement* described him as being ‘unyielding determined’ and doing everything with ‘wholehearted commitment’.

As a student at Cambridge, I was fortunate to get to know Graham and his wife Rosemary as close friends. Graham had grown up in the city and knew it intimately. He was an extremely dedicated son and husband. He visited his mother, who lived in Cambridge, every Saturday to help run errands and see to her needs. Although obviously very busy, he made time to meet me for a coffee or lunch, often with Rosemary, and we would talk about handwriting, pens, book collecting, printing and type design. Talking to Graham did wonders for my self-esteem: my experience as a PhD student was frequently discouraging, but he had great faith in me; and whenever he said he knew I would finish it eventually, I believed I actually would.

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Square by Anne Liebenrood

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Front cover designed by nickthenibs

The SIH is a registered charity number 287889R Revenue number X99453A

The Society for Italic Handwriting

A REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 287889/R

The Society was founded in 1952 by Alfred Fairbank, a most notable British calligrapher, & Joseph Compton, a Director of Education in London. Its aim is to spread the practice of the Italic script. It achieves this by holding meetings and workshops & publishes a quarterly magazine called 'Writing Matters', which contains up-to-date information on ^{the} pens, paper, writing equipment & other matters relating to the study and practice of this beautiful hand. A handwriting competition is held annually.

Membership is open to anyone who has an interest in good handwriting, an interest for one's own self-improvement in handwriting, for teachers and for those who enjoy the historical aspects of writing and calligraphy.

'A Simple Guide to Italic Handwriting' by member Nancy Winters is available from the Society at £6.50, including postage & packing. Members' price is £5, including p & p.

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