



NEWSLETTER

Northwest Calligraphers

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Thirty-fifth Anniversary Year



Hilary Lewis WELCOME

We hope you are enjoying the long hot summer and will be raring to go with our new season of workshops this September. As you will see this year is proving to be eventful as we say farewells, exhibit in London, welcome new people and celebrate awards.

Thank you to those who have worked hard to bring our plans to fruition and to everyone for their contributions, great or small. Heartfelt thanks go to what I can only refer to as the A-Team: Sue Robertson, Gordon Broadstock, Ellen

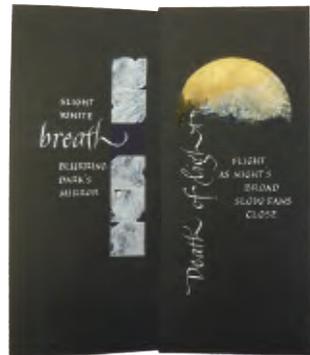
Molloy and Cindy Shaw, who are now handing over their roles. How can we thank them?

As you can see the Advance Planner for 2019 is provisional because we need a new team to bring you these exciting events. A warm welcome to our new members and thanks to all for your patience in waiting for this issue of the newsletter to arrive.

Hilary
x



CONGRATULATIONS



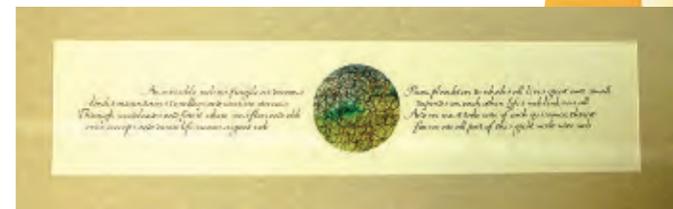
Above left: Barbara Alldred and Michela Antonello, Chair of CLAS
Above: Silent cinema

I am thrilled and proud to be a fellow of CLAS. It has been a momentous journey, with lots of highs and the occasional low. Along the way CLAS has provided so many opportunities to learn new skills, techniques and to stretch my calligraphic horizons as well as meeting with many others sharing this passion for calligraphy and lettering.

Barbara Alldred FCLAS

Congratulations Barbara from everyone at NWCA

Below: Web of Life



WORKSHOP REVIEW PATTERN Jilly Hazeldine

I really enjoyed Jilly's previous workshop when we designed words in an oval shape. This time we started by looking at different ways of writing letters of the alphabet and choosing which styles we would use with our chosen words. Using the Brause 2mm Ornament nib we tried out our ideas to find which letters fitted together and which ones would just cause us trouble!

After we were satisfied with our design we traced the word and flipped it so that it made a mirror image underneath. We then finished our words using nib and ink and began to colour the resulting spaces using our chosen

colours. What a difference the colour made!

Next we wrote the word again and instead of flipping the word after tracing, we twice moved it down a little so that the words

Angular capitals by Sue Robertson



Joyful by Linda Haynes

overlapped. This was tricky as some of the letter shapes I'd chosen didn't make good shapes for colouring in and I had to re-design my word, but it was a great exercise to make you think about patterns!

Just when we thought we might get an easy afternoon, Jilly gave us some text to write out with the nib, but this time we couldn't have any curves in our capital letters - every letter had to have angles! The reasoning was that we were writing the phrase on separate lines so words on the next line had to touch the letters in the previous line. The idea of this was that the touching letters would make shapes which we

would colour and make an interesting piece of calligraphy. Once I'd got the hang of writing the angular capitals I wrote the whole quote out in a couple of straight lines. After I was happy I set about getting the design down on good paper and finished off by choosing which shapes to colour - I soon discovered that less is more in this case as too many shapes coloured in would over-complicate the pattern.

This was a lovely relaxed workshop and Jilly showed us that a really interesting piece of calligraphy could be created with simple tools. How lovely is that?
Sue Robertson

LETTER DECORATION David Price WORKSHOP REVIEW

I was delighted when I saw the topic of this workshop as I am just starting to learn how to paint using watercolour so this could not have come at a better time! David Price was a patient tutor and his dry wit (being a Yorkshireman) kept us all giggling and enthusiastic about using a medium which is notoriously tricky to get right.



We started out being told about some useful, yet simple equipment that may help us. Using drawing board clips on a hard board allows it to gently slope at an angle which helps the watercolour to slowly drain downwards on the paper which is useful when using certain techniques. A simple white candle when rubbed on the paper before applying colour acts as a resist when painting over it and a 'dead ball point pen' is a

handy tool as it can be used to carve patterns over the letter after a wash is applied (while still wet), this allows the paint to settle permanently into these patterned areas, even after trying to blot the colour off! It works by 'bruising' the paper and can produce some striking results. The script we used for all our techniques was Neuland with its eye-catchingly large letters allowing us to experiment with a

number of different methods of decorating them.

David demonstrated a number of different ways of applying the watercolour including 'run back stain' (also known as 'flowering' or 'blooming'), mixed-coloured letters, white letters with either hard or soft edges and 'cloudy' letters.

We were also introduced to masking fluid and how to make even round dots using a sawn off kebab stick. A cocktail stick is effective at applying fine lines - just keep brushes away from masking fluid as it will ruin them! 'Cloudy' letters can be made by painting the entire letter with pale watery paint (working quickly so it doesn't dry) then using a cocktail stick to apply concentrated paint to the edge of the letter. Use a 'thirsty' brush to



David demonstrating some of the watercolour techniques shown left.

lift colour off from the middle of the letter - keep drying the brush on a paper towel in between dabs.

Finally we learnt about mixing colours and the difference between 'physical' mixing and 'optical mixing' (when one colour is allowed to dry and then a second colour is painted over it). A very worthwhile workshop full of useful tips, techniques and laughter, thank you.
Emma Sheldon

Apparently, all you need for calligraphy is pen, paper and ink, and that ink is, of course, usually black.

An Indian ink like Higgins Eternal has all the qualities we need, good flow through the pen, sharp writing (ie good definition of thick and thin strokes), opacity and light fastness. Everything that is except colour. So what products are available that have all those properties, but colour as well?

Unfortunately, it's impossible to cover every available product, it would also be very expensive, so what follows are the most commonly available mediums that I've used, and my humble opinion.

Gouache

Buy Designers' gouache which is the best quality and worth the extra money. It was developed for professional designers who

needed opaque colour that was good for reproduction.

Gouache is usually in a tube, Winsor & Newton, Schminke, Talens and Daler Rowney are all good products. They can be intermixed, you don't have to stay with one brand.

The gouache needs to be diluted with water for writing. This is usually loosely described as 'a consistency like thin cream'.



So, to save ourselves the bother of all this mixing to tailor the perfect colour at exactly the right consistency, it is now possible to buy ready mixed gouache. I have bought three. I couldn't use any of these direct from the bottle and still needed to adjust the



Getting the mix right involves some trial and error and different brands and colours behave differently. The addition of a little Gum Arabic provides extra binder and avoids the paint lifting off when you erase your guidelines. Ox Gall Liquid can help with flow for pigments that are a little stubborn. Be organised and make notes so you don't have to repeat your experiments.

mix. This means that I might as well have started with a tube of gouache in the first place. Disappointing and I'm not planning on buying any more.

If you want to write on dark papers or painted backgrounds then the opacity of gouache would be important.



Watercolours

Available in tubes, pans and sticks, watercolours are transparent, ie not opaque, and the colour tends not to be as strong as gouache. Flow is good. Artists' watercolours are the best quality, and light fastness will depend on the pigment.

Bottled ink

There are a lot of bottled inks... Calli, Winsor & Newton, FW,

Speedball, Dr Martin's. Most say they are waterproof and this is due to the presence of an acrylic medium. I find that this causes the writing to be less sharp. However, W&N Calligraphy Ink isn't waterproof and does not contain acrylic so is my bottled ink of choice, I keep the others for background washes.

A quick word about W&N Drawing ink as they sometimes turn up in student's kit. These are intended for pen and wash work and contain a varnish



called shellac to enable washing watercolour over the pen drawing. You could use shellac to waterproof your yacht, so it is not good for pens. They have a wide and seductive range of colours, but only black is lightfast. I'm not sure that I see the point of them.

I have tried two of the 24 colours in Dr Martin's Bombay Ink range. The inks claim to be waterproof when dry and all colours are said to be lightfast. Only white and black are opaque. Lettering was sharp with these inks.

Walnut ink/Van Dyke Crystals

Intended as a wood dye, I bought the crystals from an ironmonger as I like to make the mix quite strong, also it's incredibly cheap

that way. Although not opaque, with Walnut ink, this seems to enhance its lovely warm brown rather than detract. Writing is sharp and flow is good. It has been suggested that its acidity may damage paper over time although it doesn't seem to do furniture any harm.

Metal inks

A suspension of finely ground metal is not likely to be a suspension for long, and these inks separate quickly, they need stirring constantly when in use. I have found most of these unpleasant to write with. Opaque yes, but the writing is not sharp. I used to use W&N gold gouache, until the advent of Fine Tec. These metallic colours made from mica (a silicate mineral) are wonderful. I prefer to lift the paint directly off the pan with a brush and water to fill my pen.

Light fastness

This should be specified in the product information. It is easy to test this yourself and would be wise for an important piece of work. Make swatches of your medium, say 1" wide by 2" deep. When dry, fold the paper over so that roughly half the swatch is covered. Fix to a preferably south-facing window. Check every so often but a month would be plenty.



In conclusion, I still prefer Designer's Gouache, I can mix any colour to the required consistency and if kept covered it can be re-used even though it has dried out. I like the acrylic inks for background effects and Fine Tec for a bit of bling, unless I'm using the real thing.

Vivien Lummiss FSSI FCLAS



THE LETTERING OF DAVID JONES Janet Smith WORKSHOP REVIEW

I came across David Jones' lettering on the internet some time ago and fell in love with his playful yet ordered style, the quirky changes in word sizes and letter shapes and the beautiful muted colours. In my ignorance I tried to copy it and discovered that, although it might look simple, it really isn't.

I was really looking forward to Janet's workshop to shed some light on how Jones made these lovely pieces of work, and it didn't disappoint.

Janet told us a bit about Jones' life and work. An accomplished poet, writer, wood engraver, painter and letter artist, his art education was cut short by WWI which left physical and emotional scars.

After the War he continued to pursue his interest in art, eventually becoming part of Eric Gill's circle at Ditchling. He started creating what he called 'painted inscriptions' in Latin, English and Welsh later in his career and these have been of interest to calligraphers ever since.

Making and using these letters is a considered process, Jones was reported as saying that 'he would have the E by Friday' on one piece of work. We were on a tighter schedule.

Janet set us to work in the morning practising Versals using a thin Brause nib. Versals, we discovered, are written with a very tall x-height



Work by Pauline Hall, Sally Hall, Sarab Morgan, Gill Taylor, Sue Robertson



and show every wobble. It was the first time I had ever written them and was a little downhearted with my results but as Janet pointed out only I will ever look so closely at my work, and if I imagine they had been done by someone else I'd be quite impressed.

Janet gave us lots of tips such as thinking of a snowman shape when making the S and then there's always a bit of jiggery pokery to even up the serifs. We were assured it's a technical calligraphy term.

We also practised some design skills or what Jones referred to as 'arse-ing about with the words' then set about our own Jones inspired piece, breaking some of the Versal rules and freeing up the letters, playing with scale and, in some cases, colour.

Much beautiful work was created on the day and I am looking forward to carrying on with my piece - but unlike Jones it might take me a bit longer than until Friday to finish it.
Sarab Morgan



I wonder how many people thought they knew all about Italic? I was guilty of that and had drifted somewhat - in my attempts to add my own variations to this script. This was the awakening I required and I think I managed a little progress in the right direction. It was not

easy, but Jilly was available for fair comment and instruction. It is always difficult to see your own faults and this familiarity with the Italic script leads to 'sloppy' concentration.

We studied a sample of an original manuscript enlarged greatly and from this established the important points of the script. Letter height, width, and angles of slope and pen. A lot to take in and perform with the pen. Personally I found it difficult to keep 'all the balls in the air' to achieve a measure of success.

Once we had achieved some refreshed understanding of this hand by a fair amount of practice of difficult letters, we moved on to reducing our pen size and writing out some lines of verse to establish our understanding of Italic.

ITALIC AND VARIATIONS Jilly Hazeldine WORKSHOP REVIEW

Those of us not familiar with small writing would be amazed at the actual size of this script in an original manuscript as shown in our sampler. Quite extraordinary, I measure it as 1.5mm. Thank goodness we were not expected to reduce our work to that height.

The real beauty of this hand is its ability to adapt to various moods from formal to free, using pen and manipulation. This is when we took the 'handcuffs' off the formal script and enjoyed ourselves with clever hairline strokes or perhaps adjustment to serifs, keeping a careful eye on the basic Italic principles. Thank you Jilly for your patience and delightful workshop - and maybe someone at Lower Withington might have a comment to make.

Mike Orriss

Hayley Baker at Lower Withington

We had this email from Hayley Baker who goes to Lower Withington

Once again my boss has nearly given me a heart attack! The first time was when he gave me one night to do his party place cards and this is even better: I had ten minutes to write a sympathy card for one of the engineers family while funeral cars were waiting outside!! I have just stopped shaking, thank goodness I had a day of doing Italic on Sunday.

