



NEWSLETTER

Northwest Calligraphers

November 2019

Issue 111



EDITORIAL



Dear Member,

This year giving two of our tutors lifts made me reflect on how much work goes on behind the scenes to bring you our programme of events.

It begins with planning of course, Dr Manny Ling's workshop on brush pen being followed by Mary Noble's gestural Italic was very helpful. In both cases we studied scripts which consisted of individual strokes that are made beautiful when arranged together.

The sum of the parts is greater than the whole when it comes to our membership too. Have a look at how you can join in, by writing articles or signing up to the Envelope Exchange in the new year. Thank you for the images of lettering you've sent in, we're featuring those found on glass, and thank you to Emma and Bob for their excellent photography.

We hope you enjoy reading about Margaret Daubney FSSI, FCLAS and her contribution to calligraphy and are inspired to come and see her original work at our AGM in December.

Seasons greetings to you all,

The Making of Saint John's Bible



In Ludlow last September calligraphers gathered to hear Sir Donald Jackson MVO speak about the making of a complete bible by hand with traditional materials. NWCA have sponsored a verse in the name of our founder David Gould. Some of our members were able

to make the journey to meet Donald and hear his generous and personal account of the endeavour. The above book is a large format publication using a process called stochastic printing and it was on display with the initial rough designs on vellum.

One of my greatest pleasures since retiring, has been scratching a lifelong itch to learn calligraphy. It's something I've admired for decades, but until now, I've not had the opportunity, time or budget to indulge.

So, in autumn 2017, I was delighted to discover North West Calligraphers. Right on my doorstep, I had a group of skilled and enthusiastic calligraphers offering introductory workshops under the expert guidance of Andrew Cowley. For two days, I was in my element. I left bursting

with enthusiasm and, of course, Sue Robertson's shopping list for nibs, inks, paper and suggestions on how to continue.

I spent the first four months of 2018 in Portugal and try as I might, I struggled. I simply could not make my hand do what my brain was telling it to and being isolated 1000 miles from home, I became despondent and discouraged. Calligraphy in Portugal is niche. I have found one expert a couple of hundred miles away, but my mission during my next

trip is to find a local special interest group.

In autumn 2018 and via Sue, I was introduced to my task mistress or should I say tutor-mentor, Hilary Lewis. Together we plotted a course for me to navigate and while my interest and enthusiasm still outstrip ability, I must confess even I can see an improvement. I'm sure the doggy assistance of Professor Fig plays its part too!

Transition to the monthly workshops

NWCA continues to be a significant tool in my calligraphic armoury. The opportunity to be taught by such luminaries as Vivien Lunniss, Jilly Hazeldine and Rachel Yallop is awesome, the friendly welcome extended to newbies at workshops is very warm and no-one has ever made me feel incompetent or stupid



Janice McClelland

(I'm quite capable of doing that myself!) Having scanned the latest newsletter, I can see myself signing up for most of the 2020 workshops.

To demonstrate how far my confidence has grown, I recently produced very short quotes for two dear friends. And it's through one of these heroines that I have just experienced the most sleep-deprived, terrifying event since retiring from work; my first commission. On the first dry and



sunny June morning for ages, my work is currently catching the rays as it dries. Okay it hasn't been the most complex project, but my client and her Mum are pleased.

Meeting Mary Noble

On an unseasonably cold Sunday in June, what could be better

than some quiet time studying Gestural Italics with Mary Noble FSSI, FCLAS?

Mary kicked off with a warm-up session on Italics. As we were a mixed ability group, she kindly provided an exemplar of the formal letters for us to get to grips with. Once we were

warmed up, we turned our hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders to a series of what at first sight, appeared to be a sheet filled with random lines and circles. Clearly Mary knows best, and these were the strokes we needed to master to be able to form the first variant.



Mary Noble

Following a quick demonstration of how to make them, we had the opportunity to use soda (or beer) can pens and then from our individual toolboxes, ruling pens, brushes and nibs to practice this looser style; achieving the characteristic splash was a challenge most of us rose to. Even though this appears to be a less controlled style, Mary reminded us that we needed to retain the integrity of the curve.

After lunch break, we returned to a more elegant version which Mary demonstrated to us first

before sending us off to our desks to practise. Finally we were asked to produce a word for the obligatory show and tell at the end. Those who are members of the Facebook community will have seen the wide range of our collective output.

Thanks to Mary for the handouts, demonstrations and, for me, her highly valuable individual coaching. Thank you also to Cindy Shaw and the current committee for bringing us yet another informative workshop.

Audrey Boston





FOUND LETTERING STAINED GLASS A Personal View

through it can be intensely moving and still resonates with us.

Over the last few months members have sent in examples

of found lettering on glass including this one (*left*) telling the story of Donnán of Eigg a Celtic saint who gave his name to the Isle of Donan in Scotland and who was martyred in 580. This is a modern window with a lovely example of half-uncial and some mesmerising blues, greens and ochres.



Closer to home is Chester Cathedral. In the cloisters there are a fascinating series of

windows, representing a calendar of the church's year, showing saints' and important feast days. A favourite pastime when visiting as a child was to find all the family's birthday saints - mine was St. Cecilia, patron saint of music.

A very different kind of glass lettering can be found at St Nicholas' Church, Moreton in Dorset. It is famous for the engraved glass windows by Sir Laurence Whistler, as well as for being the burial place of Lawrence of Arabia.

Bombing on 8 October 1940 extensively damaged the church and the 13 windows were part of the refurbishment by Whistler, who revived glass engraving in the 20th century. The effect is quite breathtaking



even though the windows are colourless (*above*).

There is less text on medieval windows as the pictures were used to tell the bible stories to the mostly illiterate population. One of the Canterbury Cathedral windows is actually called the Poor Man's Bible (*details shown right*).



Zodiac window, Cirencester attributed to William Morris but actually designed by Philip Webb in 1865. This is set above the bright modern colours of a window made in 1963 by Paul Quail.

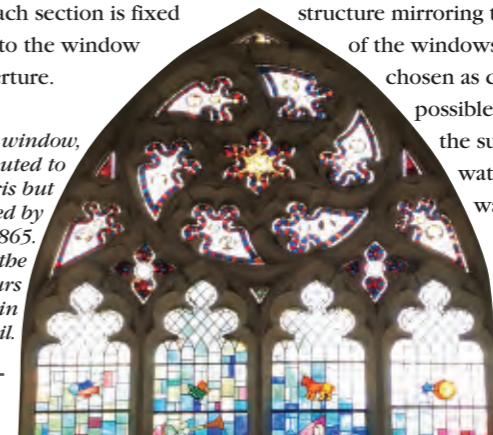
For over a thousand years the methods to make a stained glass window have changed very little.

The sketch for a window is called a vidimus and is copied full size onto paper - or in medieval times a white-washed tablet. The design (cartoon) shows the location of the lead lines which hold the pieces of glass together as well as the colours and any additional areas of painting.



The artist chooses the colours of glass, cuts and places them onto the cartoon like a big jigsaw puzzle. In medieval times the paint used was made from copper or iron oxide, powdered glass, gum arabic and wine or urine. The glass is fired to fix the paint.

The window is assembled using strips of lead called calmes. The glass is slotted into the H shaped calmes and soldered with molten lead. Windows are built up in sections and each section is fixed into the window aperture.



Zodiac window, Cirencester attributed to William Morris but actually designed by Philip Webb in 1865. This is set above the bright modern colours of a window made in 1963 by Paul Quail.

A Personal View STAINED GLASS FOUND LETTERING

An exception to this process of design can be found in the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona.

The artist Joan Vila-Grau has interpreted Gaudí's vision in quite an experimental way. Instead of making a grid and placing the coloured glass into it Vila-Grau paints loose watercolour washes which he then overlays with a black card structure mirroring the tracery of the windows. Glass is chosen as closely as possible to copy the subtle watercolour washes.



Depending on the time of year, hour of the day or weather, the feeling in the cathedral can range from joyful, explosive heat to coldness and melancholy. It is an ever-changing symphony of colours running the gamut of emotions. This is all thanks to the stained glass windows. *Sarah Morgan & Hilary Lewis*

Seven keen calligraphers turned up at Burley Hall, Waverton, and for those of us living in built-up areas, it felt like a day out in the country.

with picture frame sizes. Framing can be expensive, but using reasonably-priced frames from outlets like Hobbycraft and Ikea is a good option. Vivien favoured framing the completed works to protect them.

The question is do we find a frame to fit our work, or fit our work to a frame? Vivien gave us guidance on how to fit our work to an existing frame.

Who would have thought we could spend the whole day talking about presentation? We covered such a lot of ground. One major consideration should be the proportions of the margin around the text. A loose guide is

generally the bottom margin should be greater than the top. Some of us experimented with these proportions. Discussions around where to place the authorial credit followed.

Vivien's workshop was lovely, very relaxed and calm and a super topic. I shall be more careful when starting to write something without having thought it through to the display stage.
Jan Bowen

Vivien brought along copies of the same work on paper, and we experimented with the L-shaped mounts. If the mounts were too close to the text, the effect may



appear 'cramped'. Likewise, wider-placed mounts allowed the text to 'breathe'.

In summary - what did we learn?

- To plan carefully
- If we want to use ready-made frames, we may have to compromise on presentation
- Bespoke frames are expensive
- Temporary displays protect the work and give a 'finished' look
- Cheap frames can be re-used

Thank you for an excellent day, providing much practical information on presentation rarely available in books.

Linda Haynes



Toni Watts' much anticipated gilding workshop was well attended at both venues. It was wonderful to see the exquisite work she produces up close and her patient answers to our many questions were appreciated.

The range of glues or mordants used for raised gilding inspired us, with garlic and Kölner's Instacoll solving some of the gold issues many of us have. Being able to make the gold so shiny with a just a cotton bud was a fabulous solution for those of us without the ability to make gesso or access to burnishers.

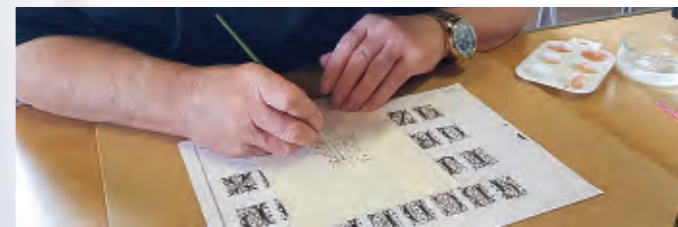
I really enjoyed this workshop with Toni - I learnt a lot of detail which will be really useful, thank you.

Denise Morris, Lower Withington

It was interesting to try the different sticking mediums and to find out which gave the best outcome versus ease of use. For those who tried the gesso there were mixed results.

Given the heat in the room, by the afternoon the atmosphere was too dry for much of the gold to stick well. The main lesson I learned was that a good gilder gets up early in the morning to add the gold!

Sally Hall, Waverton



Toni Watts

We had this message of thanks from Toni who was well looked after at Waverton and Lower Withington.

Thanks for inviting me to teach! It was wonderful to meet two such enthusiastic and hard working groups - I couldn't have asked for more. Thanks also for your generous hospitality with yummy lunches and, of course, the perfect host. Thanks Sue x
Toni Watts





Margaret was born in Nottingham and grew up there. Her first ambition, aged five, was to be a ballet dancer, and aged ten, she began to play the piano and her teacher gave her the principles which she used in her teaching of calligraphy. 'If your feet are squarely on the ground the rest of you is balanced, your muscles are relaxed and comfortable but you have strength and control'.

Music and words, were the twin passions of Margaret's life and

into her teens the words won and she chose English, did a degree at Liverpool University and went on to teach English in secondary schools. A teaching colleague suggested Margaret joined her in a 'fun' evening class in calligraphy and she was immediately hooked.

She met Ann Camp, (one of the two Ann(e)s who became huge influences on her life; the other was Anne Hechle) who was standing in for Ewan Clayton at an evening class at Hampstead

Garden Suburb. Ann suggested she go to Roehampton, which she did as a part-time student for four years, gaining the Diploma with distinction and then after two years, she went back to teach extra-mural classes when Ann retired through ill health.

She was elected to Fellowship of the Society of Scribes & Illuminators in 1989 and was its journal editor from 1989 until spring 1994. In 1994 she was one of four SSI Fellows who broke away from the society and



formed the Calligraphy and Lettering Society, CLAS. Unlike the other three members of this group, Margaret retained her membership of the SSI and therefore her Fellowship.

I first encountered Margaret when I tentatively asked her a question about offsetting gouache. I asked whether it could be the fault of the paint and the reply was typically brisk - 'Nonsense, I use it all the time'.

The second encounter was some five years later when I, too, was a Fellow of the SSI (and I knew about gum arabic). We taught on the same summer school for the NWCA at Burton Manor and discovered pleasure in each other's company and a shared sense of humour.

The following year I was asked to bring in another tutor for the

summer schools that I had been teaching regularly for Alston Hall and I asked Margaret. During that week that I introduced her to a friend and sometime student, John Ward. From that first moment they went on to develop a deep and fulfilling relationship, although their respective careers meant that they retained their houses in London and Bolton, spending holidays and as many weekends as possible together. They married by special licence on 2nd August, 2006, a month or so after the diagnosis of Margaret's aggressive brain tumour.

Margaret and I differed in opinion quite a lot, which was always stimulating - and good for the students - but we developed a very healthy respect for each other and a very good friendship.

Margaret was a tutor at Roehampton and she must, in her



teaching career at various other educational establishments and abroad, in South Africa, Australia and Finland have taught literally hundreds of people and her influence has been incalculable. So many people have told me that they owe everything to her and she developed lasting friendships with many of her students. She had symptoms of illness for a few months before the diagnosis in June

2006 and from then it was shockingly brief; just eight weeks to her death on 2nd September. During that time she was at home with John, who cared for her with love and quite extraordinary dedication.

It is hard to believe that she died thirteen years ago. She was a prolific calligrapher and left a large body of work, some of which you will see at the AGM in December. She wrote three books, which are still available. She used colour in an instinctive way, never washing out her palettes and yet her colours were pure and clear. She was also

an extremely good flourisher; something so many aspire to be. She could be acerbic, but you knew where you were with her and she certainly brought out the best in her students. I was privileged to have known her and to have counted her as a friend.

Jilly Hazeldine FSSI
From an article originally published in *The Scribe* by the SSI.
Images on these pages are a selection of Christmas cards made by Margaret and kindly loaned by John Ward.

