

SUSSEXSCRIBES

Newsletter April 2022

Dear Members,

Spring has arrived! The days are getting warmer, bluebells are blooming, bunches of daffodils are everywhere and buds are starting to appear on the trees. It's a good time of year to be inspired.

Our workshop schedule for the year has begun. Workshops are still a mixture of inperson and zoom, with the online format proving to be the more popular option at present. Those of you who were hoping to attend the Julia Baxter workshop in July will be happy to know that we have changed this to a zoom meeting, so don't hesitate to sign up if you are interested. All our zoom workshops are recorded too, an extra benefit.

Our in-person workshops will be held at the Broadwater Baptist Church, East Worthing, for the foreseeable future. We hope to see some of you there, as making contact with friends and members is an enjoyable aspect of being part of our group.

On the subject of inspiration, a few of our members had work on show in the SSI centenary exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London earlier this year. Congratulations to Cathy, Tina and Janice for their great work.

We would like to boost our membership and encourage beginners, so if any of you know anyone who would like to learn our engaging craft, please pass on our details. We have beautiful business cards to give out and we are writing a guide sheet for beginners with lots of tips drawn from our membership. Things I wish I had known....

We are in the process of arranging our workshop schedule for next year, with thanks to Mariette for the considerable leg work this takes. As always, we welcome your suggestions for topics. Do you fancy a particular script or want to learn how to

Celtic knot? Send us your suggestions and we'll do our best to accommodate you.

Our Facebook page is also full of interesting posts, so drop by and take a look. Everyone is welcome!

Wishing you all a happy spring as we move into summer, and happy writing.....

The Sussex Scribes Committee



Above: Exhibition case of lovely books at the Mall Galleries, London for "Words Made Beautiful".

The exhibition will move to Stockport War Memorial Art Gallery from April 30th - June 11th and then on to Swansea Museum, August 5th - 19th.

There are two Easter eggs still to be found! They are somewhere in this newsletter.....

Sussex Scribes Workshop Programme for 2022

Our programme for 2022 is now well underway and in May we will be hosting our first workshop of the year in-person.

Change of Venue

Please note that we have changed our main venue to Broadwater Baptist Church, Dominion Road, East Worthing, BN14 8JL.

See right for full terms and conditions.

*Saturday May 7th, 2022

"Lombardic Capitals" with Gerald Mynott In-person at Broadwater Baptist Church More info see page 3

*Saturday June 25th, 2022

"Blooming Letters" with Els Van Den Steen In-person at Broadwater Baptist Church More info see page 4

*Saturday July 16th, 2022

"Celtic Angulars" with Julia Baxter On zoom with recording More info on page 5

*Saturday September 3rd, 2022

"Zig-Zag Variations", a bookbinding workshop with Helen Gibbs. In-person at Broadwater Baptist Church More info on page 6

October 15th, 2022

AGM with guest speaker Margaret Morgan On zoom, 2-4pm

*November 26th, 2022

"Illuminated Miniatures" with Cathy Stables In-person at Broadwater Baptist Church More info page 7

*Most of our workshops are suitable for beginners unless the tutor suggests you need to know a script beforehand. We welcome new members and non-members to all our workshops.

Workshop Bookings

T's & C's for workshops in 2022

Our bookings person is Lynda Marsh. Please contact her by email to reserve a place on a workshop:

lyndamarsh2013@gmail.com

We welcome non-members to most of our workshops but priority will be given to members if demand is high for a particular workshop.

Please note that the workshop price varies depending on if it is a zoom workshop, in person or a "Members Special".

Only when the full payment has been received will your booking be complete and a place reserved for you.

We would prefer it if you could pay by bank transfer - please identify the payment you make with your name.

account number 53122093 sort code 20-20-65

Cheques should be made payable to "Sussex Scribes" and be dated two weeks ahead of the workshop date. Please send to Lynda Marsh, 18 Graydon Avenue, Chichester, PO19 8RF and include your name and contact details.

Cancellations:

To cancel your booking please notify the bookings officer (Lynda) *at least one month* in advance of the workshop. Your booking fee will then and only then be refunded in full.

If you have to cancel your booking less than one month before the workshop date, Sussex Scribes can only refund you in full if your place can be filled from the waiting list.

If Sussex Scribes have to cancel a workshop due to Covid-19, your fee will be refunded in full.

May 2022

"Penmade Decorated Versals and Lombardic Capitals" with Gerald Mynott

Saturday 7th May, 2022, 10-4pm

Venue: Broadwater Baptist Church, Dominion Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 8IL

Cost £25 members / £30 non-members

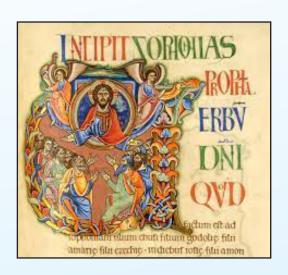
This workshop will explore the development of versals from the early Roman, double penstroke construction with historical references from the Winchester Bible through to the more ornate and decorated Lombardic capitals of the 13th-15th centuries that can also be drawn, painted or gilded.

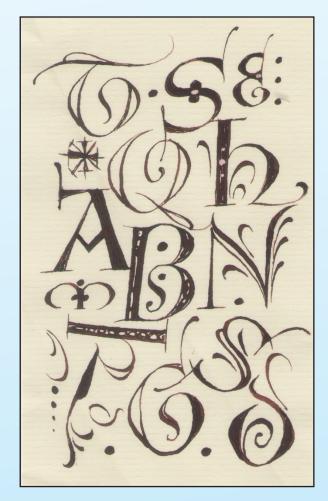
All students will be encouraged to form ideas towards a more contemporary flavour within pen-construction and layout.

Historical and modern examples will be provided by the tutor.

Materials List:

- W. Mitchell roundhand nibs and holders
- Inks, gouache paints (W&N)
- Finetec paints (optional)
- Ormaline gold size (optional)
- Transfer gold leaf (optional)
- Paint palettes
- Pencils, ruler, set square
- Eraser, masking tape
- Cut quills to the scale of No 4 Mitchell nib (optional)
- Cartridge paper
- Coloured papers
- Fabriano Artistico
- Vellum off-cuts (optional)





To book a place on this workshop, please contact Lynda Marsh by email: lyndamarsh2013@gmail.com

June 2022

"Blooming Letters" with Els van den Steen

Saturday June 25th, 10-4pm Cost: members£25/non-members £30 Venue: Broadwater Baptist Church, Dominion Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 8JL

In this workshop, we will create colourful letter designs that are perfect on their own or can be used as a decorative letter as part of a larger calligraphic piece.

We will design our own letters, exploring monoline and edged pen letter variations. Next, we will provide our letters with a colourful background using watercolours. Our colour palette is inspired by wildflowers and flowers from our own garden.

This workshop offers an opportunity to develop confidence in letter design and designing decorative backgrounds, colour mixing and matching, and selecting colours that work well together, all in a fun way.



Materials:

- Layout paper, tracing paper
- Good quality, watercolour paper, smooth/Hot Pressed or NOT/Cold Pressed, 300gms, 2 or 3 A4 pieces
- HB pencil and a hard pencil
- Sharpener, eraser
- Masking tape or repositionable tape
- Black fineliner (not essential, but useful)
- Ruler, set square or protractor
- Compass to draw circles (if you have one, no need to buy)
- Cutting knife and cutting mat /scissors
- Good quality watercolours
- Clean mixing palettes
- White porcelain plate (if you already have one, no need to buy one!)
- Water pots
- Water dropper or pipette
- Mixing brushes
- 2 watercolour brushes with a good spring and fine point, size 0 or 1 and size 2 or 3
- Speedball B-0 (blobby) nib in pen holder (no need to buy one!) or cotton ear bud
- Broad edge nib, 5mm wide (eg Speedball C-0 / Brause 5)
- Black ink
- Kitchen roll

And last but not least:

• Compose a small bunch of freshly picked flowers (approx. 7), wildflowers or picked from your own garden. Select colours that go well together.

NB. You don't have to bring your writing board to this one.

To book a place on this workshop, please contact Lynda Marsh by email: lyndamarsh2013@gmail.com

July 2022

"Celtic Angulars" with Julia Baxter

Saturday July 16th, 10-4pm Cost: members £20/non-members £25

This workshop will now be on zoom. A recording will be available after the workshop.

An introduction to the drawn Celtic capital letters known as Angulars. These highly decorative letters were created as a display alphabet by the mid-seventh century Irish scriptoria and are found, amongst others, in the Lindisfarne Gospels.

Many of the letters, although archaic in origin, have great design and graphic qualities which we will explore.

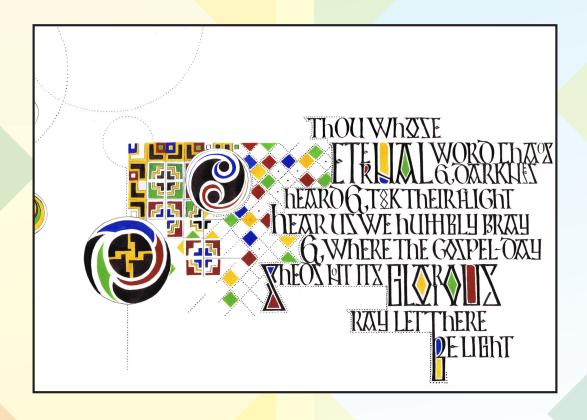
Suitable for all levels.

To book a place on this workshop, please contact Lynda Marsh by email:

lyndamarsh2013@gmail.com

Materials:

- Usual calligraphy equipment including writing board
- 1mm size nib (recommend TAPE) with holder
- Layout paper A3
- Black ink or gouache, as you prefer
- Nice quality cartridge paper A3 (a couple of sheets)
- Gouache colour paints (primary colours)
- A size 000 watercolour brush



September 2022

"Zig-Zag Variations"

Bookbinding with Helen Gibbs

Saturday 3rd September, 2022, 10-4pm at Broadwater Baptist Church, Dominion Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 8JL

Cost £25 members / £30 non-members

Don't throw anything away – save your rejected artwork and practice sheets for this experimental workshop!

You may already be familiar with the zigzag or concertina book format but did you

know that there are a myriad of different variations to discover and play with?

This workshop will guide you through a few of these adventurous and sculptural forms, demonstrating some useful skills for making folds

and joins along the way.

In the afternoon, you will be able to choose one or two of these models to explore with your own artwork towards a finished piece. This can involve thinking about how paper

weight affects the performance of the book form: right paper, right job!

We will also take a quick look at contemporary page layouts and ways to crop artwork, which will help to further extend the intriguing qualities of this playful book form.

Tools and Materials

• Cutting mat, at least A4, kraft knife or scalpel (or both) with spare blades, metal edged ruler 30cm or longer

 bonefolder, sharp pencil, any other bookbinding tools that you have

PVA and a variety of glue brushes

• Scrap paper to glue up on

Water pot

• Two A4 (ish) pressing boards with a weight

• Scoring board if you have one.

A variety of plain and

lettered papers.
The more the better as this is an experimental workshop. Old practice sheets are perfect for this workshop including layout paper and cartridge paper and better quality papers.

• Some thin card (300gsm), A4 is fine,

mixed colours

• Pieces of heavier (2mm) grey board for hard covers

Helen will bring some pieces of book cloth for small covers and a mix of papers for prototypes.



To book a place on this workshop, please email Lynda with your details: lyndamarsh2013@gmail.com.

November 2022

Illuminated Miniatures with Cathy Stables

Saturday November 26th, 2022 Broadwater Baptist Church, Worthing Members £25/non-members £30

Using examples of medieval animals found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford we will copy an animal and paint on vellum or hot press watercolour paper. Each miniature includes an element of gold and for this we will use gum ammoniac and transfer gold leaf.

This is a great exercise in detailed painting combined with gilding.

Cathy will have artwork to choose from or you can bring something with you.

Materials

- Ruler, propelling pencil, eraser.
- Tracing paper
- A4 vellum or HP watercolour paper*
- Any gouache colours you have
- water pots, palette.
- Kitchen towel
- Brushes for mixing.
- Kolinsky sable brushes size 00, 0, 1**
- Transfer gold leaf

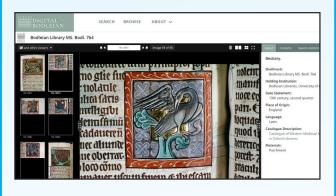
*Vellum, HP watercolour paper, gum ammoniac and transfer gold leaf can be purchased on the day.

**supplied by www.handover.co.uk or we may organise a group order of brushes for this workshop. Tell Cathy if you are interested.

To book a place on this workshop, please email Lynda with your details: lyndamarsh2013@gmail.com

Did You Know?

The Bodleian library has digitized a lot of their treasures and you can see lots of bestiary pages online for free.



Just go to **digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk** and type "bestiary" (or anything else you would like to look at) into the search bar. A list of digitized documents will appear and you can browse these by clicking on the thumbnail image. The pages are straightforward to navigate through.

Member's pages



Our new set of four business cards have now been printed and are ready for distribution. They will be used to promote the group at exhibitions and at other venues such as libraries, shops etc. - anywhere that people go who may be interested in what we do. If you can help with this please get in touch, either with suggestions for places to leave them or if you would like some to give to your friends.

CLAS AGM in March

I went to this event for the first time this year. The venue, in Regent's Park was terrific and all the talks and demonstrations were also great.

But the exhibition was disappointing so I thought perhaps next year we could make a big effort to submit work from Sussex Scribes and really show what we are about! If we all do it together it won't be so scary.

Watch this space for more info......Helen

Volunteers Wanted!

If you are attending one of our workshops and would like to practice your reporting skills, please do offer to write it up for the newsletter. It doesn't have to be a long report and you can style it anyway you like. Just let Helen know sometime before the event. No prizes, just the glory of seeing your name in print! Thank you.



During the Easter break from Lavant Scribes, I have been playing with colour, much inspired by our workshop with Gemma Black and a previous workshop I did online with Carol Du Bosch. It is ongoing work but I have today found my focus which is to try and match natural colours that I see around me as closely as I can. I am finding it quite a challenge but a very enjoyable journey. I have also been trying out some different products - Schmincke Aquadrop and Winsor and Newton Calligraphy Ink, but have returned to good old watercolour!

I would recommend that you look at the website of lettering artist, Ruth Rowland. She shares her watercolour sketchbook online and I have found her work which has a seasonal colour base, inspirational too. *Angie H*



Our Members Tips for Beginners

Thank you to everyone who sent in their tips for beginners. Here is a selection of them. These will form part of our "Guidelines for Beginners" document that we shall make available on our website. (If you think of any more, please send to Helen.)

Don't buy equipment (pens, nibs, paper or ink) until you've had advice from a tutor as it's too easy to waste money on products labelled 'calligraphy' which aren't that good.

Learn from a tutor in-person if possible, rather than a book.

I'd say practise, practise, practise and work slowly and carefully.

Also, take care when ruling guidelines. It's easy to lose concentration and end up with wonky lines, or lines of varying width.

Practice little and often, paying attention to correct letter formation. Don't reinforce bad letter forms by writing pages of them: 5 letters at a time, review the good parts and bad parts and then try again.

Make pen patterns with a broad-edge nib. It's so tempting to want to make letters straight away but try not to be in a rush to move away from pen patterns. They offer the opportunity to get to know the tool (and substrate and medium) but with no pressure and a sense of play.

Once the lettering begins, new learners are often very critical of their early attempts and, as a tutor, I have found that learners who take their time in the early stages fare better in the long run.

Learn to walk before you run.
This would include starting with bigger size nibs (for broad edge work) as they can highlight early teething issues before they become established bad habits.

Choose projects carefully regarding volume of words and complexity of design.

Have fun and smile. There's enough stress and nonsense in the world - learning to make beautiful letters, and arrange them well, should bring the sunniest smile to your day.

If you can't find a class with a tutor or want to progress, enrol on an online or correspondence course. It took me two years to complete the SSI course but it was well worth the effort.

Be prepared to prepare and also reflect. This will limit the number of "redo" cycles which can be very disheartening and lead to frustration. Look at work with a positive but critical eye rather than rush into constantly rewriting without making notes on what can be improved and what is working.

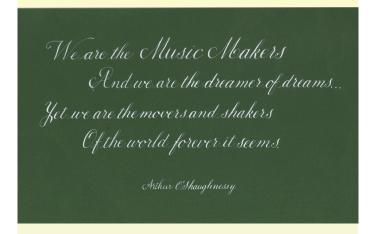
It's only a piece of paper, so if you don't like what you did, discard and start again.

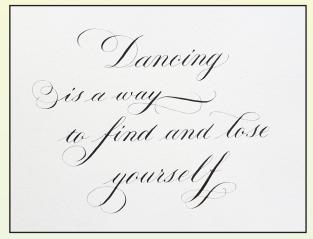
When I started, I found it took a long time to make a strong, confident line with pen and ink but eventually it came, with lots of practice.

Keep looking at work by other calligraphers of all levels for inspiration and encouragement.

Member's Pages cont.

Some work from students on the Copperplate Certificate of Skills: Top by Teresa Stephens, middle by Mariette Hardman and bottom piece by Val Ware.









Sketchbook Revival Online Course

I cannot draw. In school I didn't show any talent for art, and don't recall my art teacher actually teaching anything. However, in recent years I have discovered sketchbook classes. A few online classes have taught me some tips and tricks that will never make me a great artist, but that have helped me to have a go and try some techniques.

Recently I signed up to "Sketchbook Revival", a series of short online classes taught by many different teachers from across the world, organised by a lady in the US called Karen Abend. Some of the classes appealed, others did not, but all of the ones I watched gave me some techniques that were useful in their own way and may help to add some illustrations for calligraphy work one day. *Mariette*

Here are some examples and the names of the tutors: above: From Blobs to Birds with Terry Runyan and below: Expressive Watercolour Portrait with Tamara Laporte.



SSI Exhibition at The Mall Gallery

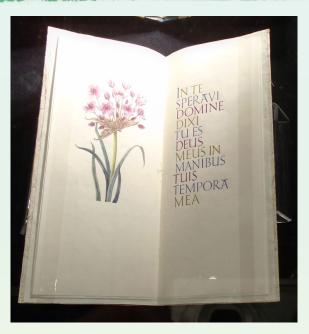
"Words Made Beautiful": A personal view by Helen G

In February this year, The Mall Galleries hosted the covid-delayed centenary exhibition for the Society of Scribes and Illuminators. This large venue offered an airy space and all walls were festooned with delightful works. Alongside calligraphic works on paper, there were also quite a few cabinets with books and other objects – even a lettered garment hung from the ceiling.

Everyone who visits this show will have their own stand out pieces. For me the sense of the exquisite came from Tim Noad's work, especially "Sailor's Song", and also a small book that was part of the Edward Johnson Foundation collection by Marie Angel from 1983. The book was open at a page with a beautiful watercolour botanical illustration. Both of these pieces demonstrated some fabulous Roman capitals.

"Calligraphy at its best acknowledges and celebrates the value of the past and, at the same time, looks to discover ways in which history can be interpreted as a springboard for the future."

I was also very much drawn to the work of Scottish calligrapher, Susie Leiper, who was showing three pieces based on the writings of Nan Shepherd. I liked the way she interpreted the texts with colour, texture and letter style. These elements all seemed to point to the time and place of Nan Shepherd's writing whilst speaking also with a contemporary voice, and this was perhaps the "big idea" that I took away from the exhibition.



Marie Angel 1983

Our group was well represented with works from Tina Warren, Janice Simmonds and Cathy Stables. Cathy's small work on vellum, "Seaweed" was the piece I would have most liked to take home with me – two interpretations of the same text, illustrated with gold seaweed.

It was a joy to see so many wonderful pieces of calligraphy close up: beautiful lettering, shimmering patterns, text drawn from across many cultures and times and a diversity of media. A real treat.

The show will reappear at two more venues in Stockport (May) and Swansea (August). More info on the SSI website.



Susie Leiper FSSI

Make Your Own Inks

I have been experimenting with making my own inks since I took a natural dye course with Jenny Dean at Ditchling Museum in 2019. The inks are mostly concentrated versions of the dye baths that we used to dye fabric, yarn and paper.

There are a wide range of plants (and insects) that will yield good colour – colour which is bright and has good light fastness. Some plants are better than others though, and the dyers become expert at knowing which plants will work best and how to use them. Some plants will yield more than one colour; the variations may be extracted using metals such as copper and iron or acids (vinegar) and alkaline (washing soda).

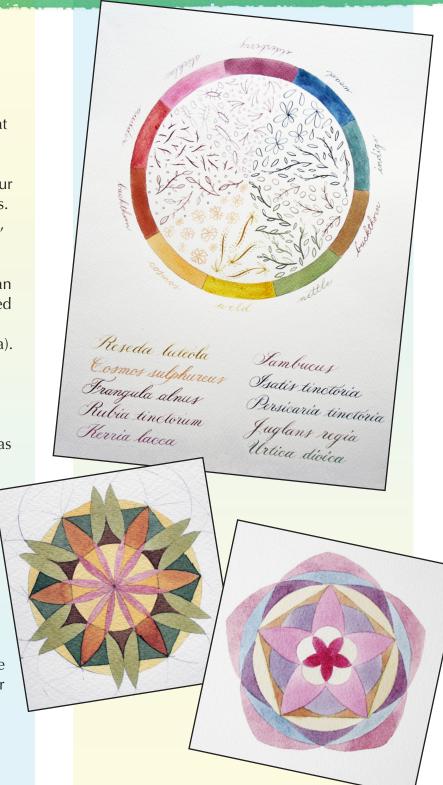
Some flowers such as coreopsis will yield a lot of colour quickly – just pour on boiling water and watch the colour instantly seep out of the petals. Some plants will need a bit more coaxing such as madder root (for red) or nettles. The plant material is simmered and left to seep for a few days to get the strongest colour. Evaporate the liquid on a low heat to get a more concentrated ink.

It is worth experimenting with the plants in your garden – leaves, flowers and roots for example. Just put some plant material in a jam jar and pour on hot water. Then leave for a few days, shaking the contents occasionally, and see what happens. If the water changes colour then you may be on to something.

It is a good idea to do a light test if you want to use your inks on artwork that you are selling. The inks can be made more stable and lightfast by using an alum mordant to fix it but even so direct sunlight is likely to degrade the colours fairly quickly. The sun gives and the sun takes away....

There is a lot of info online about this subject or a good book for recipes etc is "Wild Colour" by Jenny Dean.

Helen



Try nettle, elderberry, coreopsis flowers, walnut hulls, cosmos flowers, privet leaves, buddleia flowers, apple bark, buckthorn bark and weld flowers.

Woad and indigo are a bit harder to process but can be made into a wonderful watercolour paint.

Workshop Review

February 2022

"The Whiteness of the Paper: Painting, Drawing and Lettering with Watercolour" with Gemma Black

Gemma Black led us through a masterclass of watercolour pattern making and lettering for our "member's special" in February. She joined us live on zoom from Tasmania where it was still light in the evening and the weather Gods had not just sent a tree-felling wind that knocked out Mariette's electricity for a few days!

Gemma started by showing us the variety of papers that she works on. The whiteness of the paper will give the colours their radiance – and this is what sets the translucent watercolours apart from other media. Watercolour is seductive and the paper offers the magical luminous qualities that we see in her work.

She demonstrated how to mix a harmonious palette of colour from just two complementary pigments and urged us to try this palette limitation exercise. By mixing the complementary colours together in varying quantities, it is possible to find a wide range of subtle variations and by adding more water to find the paler tones, this palette can be extended further.

Sometimes Gemma will mix up her watercolour pigments the day before she needs them so that the pigments have enough time to properly dissolve. She also adds extra gum arabic to her colours as they are less likely to smudge when she rubs out any pencil marks.

In her demonstration she showed us how to lay down a pattern using masking fluid and then to apply a wash of colour over the top. We then watched as she laid colour into "modules" breaking up the space with additional decorations as required and painting around a letter form to leave it white. In everything she showed us we could see how much she loved the quality of the ink and paint and her careful mark



making was complimented by this slow process which can be paradoxically both deliberate and accidental at the same time.

Her demonstration was illustrated with pieces of her work and ideas for displaying it: sometimes she rolls up a lettering piece into a tube as it makes an interesting sculptural form that could be stood on a shelf. *Helen*





"That was mesmeric to watch. So confident and inspirational."

Workshop Review

March 2022

Pointed Pen Patterns with Joy Daniels

In March we enjoyed a fun zoom workshop with Joy Daniels when she demonstrated how to create patterns and floral flourishes with the pointed pen.

This was a brilliant complement to the Copperplate Certificate course as well as for general interest and gave us lots of ideas for pretty cards and envelope designs.

Joy mentioned that she first learnt this idea with Heather Held who has produced lots of Youtube videos on the subject – something to follow up on later for more exploration. Joy has given the technique her own twist and created her own style.

One of the great things about these workshops is that you pick up all sorts of tips and tricks from the experts and the first practical idea that Joy shared with us was to collect cardboard packaging with "apertures". Look for simple shapes such as circles, squares, hearts and triangles

as these can be developed into other designs such as baubles and Christmas trees. My next supermarket shop could be more interesting....



Outline shapes of numbers and letters can be generated by hand or by using a computer but don't make them too skinny. Joy showed us some examples of her first designs including the ones that were less successful where the shapes were misaligned or too thin or over complicated. She also showed us how working on a dark background can have more impact.

The nib she was using was not over flexible, a Nikko G for example. She tests the flex on her fingernail.

We began by drawing a repertoire of flower shapes and leaf stems and

then a few smaller shapes that would be used to fill in the gaps between the larger ones. Joy encouraged us to collect ideas in a notebook and to use as a reference when designing.

In the afternoon, Joy showed us ways to use the decorations on the end of flourished copperplate letters and some other ways to

combine them with lettering.

At the end of the zoom, people held up the samples that they had been playing with during the day and Mariette posted an impressive display of ideas on the Sussex Scribes Facebook page. Thank you Joy for a fun and inspiring workshop. *Helen*

Workshop Review

CLAS Certificate in Copperplate 4 with David Simons

In April we ran the last of the Copperplate CLAS Certificate classes with David Simons. The zoom format has worked well and having the recordings to watch afterwards helps the group to relax a bit more during the live session as you are not so worried about taking in **all** the information as it is being presented.



This session was all about flourishing, the icing on the cake as it were. It feels like a reward for all that repetitive drilling of strokes and slopes that have been practised over the winter months. That said, it is not an easy thing to achieve. The strokes require a graceful style and thoughtful placing to achieve a gentle and eye pleasing design. But they do present an opportunity for the calligrapher to be expressive in an individual way.

We began by looking at some historical examples, with David highlighting things to look out for – legibility, balance and the overall shape to the design. He stressed that flourishes don't have to be complex – simple flourishes can work very well. It just depends what you are looking to create.

April 2022



The long strokes cannot be achieved without the "pivotal arm movement", keeping the fingers still as they hold the pen. This is something I have not found easy to do and will require some dedicated practice. David also showed us a pen hold to enable us to use the pen in the opposite direction. Again, that is going to need some practice.

As this was the last session, we discussed the logistics of handing in all the homework tasks for marking in the summer. It would be great if everyone who attended the course could finish the certificate, even though it has been quite a lot of work. The volume of homework is of course necessary to drive a certain amount of practice without which, the skills cannot be developed. Good luck with the hand-in everyone. *Helen*



Back Page



Hoppy Easter

Aha! Here they are: two colourful Easter eggs by (top) Ann Jamieson and (bottom) John Francis.

Thank you to everyone who sent articles and photographs in for this newsletter.

The next newsletter will be sent out at the end of July 2022.
Please send any copy to Helen Gibbs: email hemgee22@gmail.com

Copy can include: write ups of workshops, exhibitions, calligraphy projects and anything else you would like to share with the group.

Copy deadline July 15th, 2022

Your Committee

Chair: Cathy Stables

01243 782240

Secretary: Denyce Aresti

Bookings: Lynda Marsh

Newsletter/ Membership:

Helen Gibbs

Treasurer/Programme:

Mariette Hardman

Committee Members:

Position vacant

www.sussexscribes.co.uk

