

President's talk on 5 December 2011:

RICHARD: Welcome, everybody, and thank you for making it today. Considering last year when we had such bad weather that some of you could make it, it is nice to see so many people here again this year.

My talk today is about shorthand and sometimes the kind of things that we find ourselves doing that we never thought that we would. I have handed out to you all an example of something that Mary started to transcribe and asked for my assistance as well.

We quite often get this coming to us from different places saying: Can you help us transcribe this? Can you help us transcribe that.

The piece there, as you can see, written in a form of Pitman's shorthand that we before Pitman New Era. We think it is Pitman's Centenary Edition, before 1923 when New Era came in.

I have put the transcript alongside the piece and hopefully this will go in the Journal and on the website along with the record there.

However, we were still uncertain about a couple of words and I wondered if anybody has a clue. Towards the very end, on the very last line we have "his most gracious majesty looking well". Then we have, I think, "an" and the only thing we have come up with is "affluent holiness". In Centenary Edition "holiness" is a special outline, upward "h" for the "holy" and then the "ness". However, also the word before we are not quite sure of and the only thing I could make it out to be was "affluent". Unfortunately, this does not really read well, or make sense.

Whether anybody else has any other clues, based on the outline, we would be grateful for any further suggestions.

MARY: I thought that last word might be "highness", seeing they are talking about the King, but you said, of course, about the special outline for "holiness."

EILEEN: Could it not be "happiness"?

RICHARD: It could.

MARY: It has no stroke "p" in it. It is dated 22 July 02 – that is 1902. It was that King, Edward VII, whose coronation was halted because he had appendicitis.

RICHARD: It is surprising, you know, once you start trying to transcribe something like this, you go on the Internet and browse and find out other people's information and where it leads you to.

MARY: The word "looking" it is the downward "L" which they did in Centenary Edition, where as we New Era writers use the upward "L" with the "K".

JOHN: Could it not be "highness"?

MARY: I thought it was, but as Richard points out, that could be a special outline for “holiness” in Centenary Edition, but it could be either because they were considered Divine!

JUNE: Not at that time!

RICHARD: It is “yours truly” because they did not actually show the “T-R” after the “S”.

MARY: It is too straight for “yours sincerely.”

There is that funny little “x” under the “holiness”, I wonder what that is, other than the full stop, put there instead of at the end.

RICHARD: This was one thing that we had sent to the IPS, but also when I was working at Pitman Training we had other things as well. Journalists, when they are working on a court case, in particular, regarding famous people, sometimes they had to have their shorthand verified by an external source to see whether what they had written in shorthand, based on the interview that they had, is actually correct and allowed as evidence in a court of law.

Unfortunately, I cannot say what the case was, but that has happened a couple of times.

I also had somebody send a photocopy of a medal that had been awarded. One chap actually collects medals and certificates that other people have attained. This was a shorthand medal. It had been inscribed in shorthand and it was about 150 wpm for “excellent outlines and speed and accuracy in shorthand”.

Then there was one instance where a lady had passed away and her nephew was clearing out the house and in the loft there was a diary. He sent through some photocopies of the diary that had been written in shorthand and he said: “I don’t understand. Everything else in the diary is in longhand, but then there are these four or five days where it is in shorthand, and wondered if you could transcribe it.”

It had been photocopied. It was all along the top of the page, so I started to transcribe it and it looked like, let’s just say, that the woman had feelings for another! Outside her existing partnership. Therefore, that was quite enlightening and we said: This is what it says, and take it as you will, but out of the four pages, three of the pages were very accurate shorthand. I could read it. It was light and dark, it was shortened and extra long outlines for the doubling principles. I could read it fine, but the one page I was really struggling with it and I am thinking: She has gone into a different form of shorthand. I cannot read it. I was struggling with it for ages. Anyway, I decided to have my lunch break and clear my head. As an aside, I often read a novel to and from work, probably had nothing to do with shorthand at that moment in time. However, the novel I was reading was regarding deciphering codes and suchlike, some kind of treasure hunt. In the novel – and this was coming to me as I was out and about at lunchtime – it was saying: not being able to decipher something, look at it in a different way. They produced a mirror to see the reflection and then they could

decipher it. Therefore, all the way through lunchtime I am thinking: Look at it in a different way, look at it in a different way, so when I got back to my desk I just literally turned it upside down and there it was. It had literally been photocopied upside down! But because all the shorthand had been at the top and the gaps had been at the bottom it had not even dawned on me that they could have actually photocopied it the wrong way down?

MARY: Could she have turned the book round and written it upside down?

RICHARD: Possibly.

Therefore, it is surprising the kind of things we get asked to do as Shorthand Writers and I just wanted to share that. I wondered whether anybody else has had similar things?

MARY: The IPS gets quite a few. I did have one from a gentleman in America whose mother had written something in shorthand. It was written at the time she got married and it was actually written on her wedding night! I am not sure what she wrote. I could not actually read it. When I sent it a colleague who was of an equal age to the mother, he also said he could not read it but he said: "Some things are perhaps best left unread"! (Laughter)

We have had embroidery on the website, in shorthand and various books. I did put in, although I wrote it in Pitman's the Gregg's from the Gregg diaries. Of course, I could not read a word of it and Peter Dorey read it. Unfortunately, I could not include the extracts in Gregg's because I could not read that.

JOHN: How did you get this?

MARY: It was actually posted to me from a member of the IPS.

JOHN: Some years ago I wrote an article in the IPS Journal. It was King Zog's wife, the last King of Albania. His wife, before she married him, she, I believe came from Hungary. Her mother sent her to a secretarial college and she was a shorthand typist before she married into the royal family. But King Zog's wife was a shorthand typist. Anyway, the last Queen of Albania used to be a shorthand typist.

MARY: As far as getting stuff from transcribing this has come from a member.

JOHN: I was just seeing if this was another Royal Highness who could read and write shorthand?

JUNE: It appears to be from the Brigade of Guards. It says "The British Army".

JOHN: It could be "holiness", but then the "e" dot should be under the "n" instead of above the "n".

MARY: Yes. Even the vowel underneath, if it is "affluent", the "U-E" should be above, so they have reversed, so it may be how they wrote it in those days.

Our member, Elizabeth, has written: “I do hope someone in the Society may be able to help decipher message. The art shop proprietor is happy for both the shorthand and the transcript to be published in a future issue of the Journal – and so it will be. Also on the website.

EILEEN: How do you know that every outline though is a proper outline?

MARY: It is very neat. We can only read what we know the outlines to be.

JUNE: It is certainly the Centenary Edition. It is not New Era as it is too early for that.

RICHARD: I do have this book which is the Reporter’s Assistant and it is Centenary Edition and the idea behind this book, unlike a dictionary, it goes by outline based on principles, so it starts off with “P”, then “P” with “P-B”, then “P” with “P-T, P-D, P- CHAY, P-J, P-K, P-GAY” and so on, throughout. I was looking through here for the different options and that is how I got to “holiness” as opposed to “highness.” Bear in mind in New Era “holiness” is using the tick “H”, upward “L”.

JUNE: “Holiness” is very rarely used except by somebody who is in touch with the Roman Catholic Church. In that sense it is the title of the Pope which, for a Protestant monarch, does not quite fit.

RICHARD: That is why I wondered if it was “highness”.

MARY: Just remind me which King this was?

RICHARD: Edward VII.

IRIS: When I get home I will think about it and I might come up with something, or I might not. I cannot come up with anything immediately.

RICHARD: You know how we have different ways of doing the diphones, so if it is a dash vowel it goes up and then down and if it is a dot vowel it goes down and then up, so that is why I was thinking it was “E-U” rather than an “O-U” sound. I just could not find a suitable word, but if you can work something out.

AUDREY: We will work on it.

RICHARD: That was basically a short talk about the kind of things that, as Shorthand Writers, we get called upon to look at other people’s shorthand and Eileen quite rightly asked: How do we know that what is written is what we think it is because they may not always follow the rules as strictly as they should.

In particular with Teeline shorthand, when I was transcribing the piece from the journalist, they were not doubling for “TR”; they were not including the circles for “V” and things like that, so you have to understand context a lot more than possibly following the principles of the full rules.

I just wondered whether anybody else, apart from as the Society itself, had come across other things they might have transcribed.

MARY: No, I think as far as court was concerned, I can remember Freddy Lovatt (Walpoles) of the Bailey saying if anybody unfortunately was killed during the war, then their work could not be transcribed because nobody else could read their shorthand. They had too individualistic a style and that was it, it would just be lost.

RICHARD: It remains for me to just say, Merry Christmas everybody and hope everybody has a very good Christmas and New Year.

(Applause)

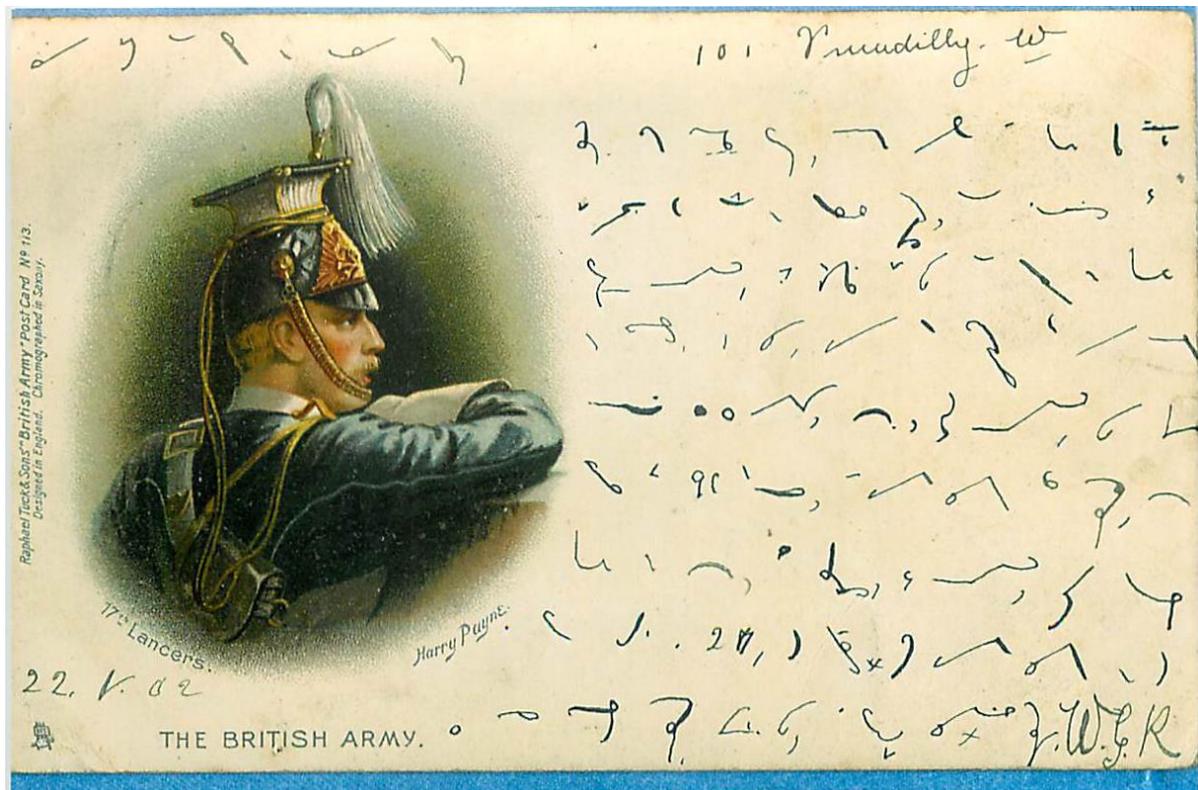
Later that evening The Chairman had a telephone call from Audrey to say: "I have cracked it!"

What it actually says is "a fortnight hence" – so the vowels were in the right place after all!

Grateful thanks to Audrey.

Martin Putnam of Cobwebs

Here is the completed transcription:



Sorry I was not able to answer before

101 Piccadilly,

W

Dear Sir

Very many thanks for your card received a few days ago. I regret that owing to business arrangements, in connection with the forthcoming coronation and the holidays I will not be able to continue to correspond, but still, we are all very pleased that our noble King is rapidly improving so that the coronation will take place on the 9th of August, and we all hope that his majesty, may continue to improve, as the disappointment, when the coronation, which was offset for June the 26, was postponed. Therefore we all hope to see his gracious majesty looking well, a fortnight hence.

22 July 02

Yours truly,

W.G.R