

Hi,

I checked Sir Ambrose Heal's book *The English Writing Masters (1580-1800)* for info on Carstairs and found it surprisingly wanting. He was mentioned but no biographical info was listed. Therefore, I am posting what I found including the). E. Butterworth bio.

Joe Vitolo

From Stanley Morison's Foreward from Heal's *The English Writing Masters (1580-1800)* pages xxxix-xl

Servidori, a Roman, followed a taste which seemed somewhat exotic to his contemporaries. Setting aside the teachings of Morante and Palomares, he championed the English methods." It cannot be denied ", writes Servidori, " that the English have excelled the other nations in this class of cursive hand. It is, indeed, true that the English hand is not properly bastard as we have said, but round cursive: from the rules and proportions of which it is clear that some of the English have maintained themselves in a happy mean without yielding the true Chancery or Bastard; doing so because it suits them for the use of commerce."

As our author had been at the pains of collecting the books of the French and Dutch as well as those of the Spaniards, his judgment may be said to be informed and documented in no mean degree. He proceeds to say that "If the above three nations will turn to the excellent and well-regulated craftsmanship of the English, they will correct and soften in part their respective methods of writing and thus acquire greater beauty. If they are to achieve it, they will probably not find among the English any more suitable [teachers] than Charles Snell for the true theory of the English Character, and Geo. Shelley for the theory and practice of the same movement".

Servidori thought very highly of Charles Snell, considering that he had "carried writing to a degree of perfection to which his predecessors had not reached, and although he practised every kind of hand, his execution was worthy of admiration, for he never allowed to be published from his hand any specimen which was not free, graceful, and correct [suelta graciosa y correcta] ".

The spread of the round hand at home may be seen in the works of John Langton who taught at Stamford. He was a writing-master and more than a writing-master. The specimens in his *Round Hand Copy Book (1723?)*, being pleasantly framed in borders with rococo comers, admirably displayed the round hand he originally drafted for the instruction

(Footnotes)

* Servidori's work, printed at the expense of the State, forms a remarkably handsome book. The letterpress discusses in detail the writing-books of Italy, France, England and Spain, while the writers of the Netherlands are less thoroughly treated. The eighty folio plates are magnificently executed. The book is a rare one; no copy exists at the British Museum or South Kensington.

+ The edition collated by Sr Cotarelo (*Dicc. Calig. Esp. I, 247*) is dated 1818. D. Rufino Blanco says that the first edition was issued in 1790 (*Arte de la Escritura, p. 276*).

tion of George, Lord Brudenell, and which he further supports by the claim that it is now the only hand made use of in public business. The book is limited to this strong masculine hand. * Langton was something of a craftsman as a stained glass maker "in the way of the antients ", even discovering new methods of applying colours in this work. He seems to have come to hand-writing with a clearer idea of it than many other masters.

Snell had already noted that the putting forth of specimens of writing "designed for a gawdy show among knots and flourishes" confused rather than instructed a child. The proper thing to do, according to Snell, was to cut a writing-book "asunder" and make the pupil master of one before allowing him to see another

hand-to put a complete book into a learner's hand endangered his mastery of any one hand. Langton's idea was to have everything plain.

He also published a specimen book of the Italian hand. Massey considered both it and the round hand specimens, though well designed, afflicted with a certain sameness which he found tiresome. The fact, however, is that Langton, having a very clear idea of what he was about, taught a plain hand for a plain purpose. As far as the "round hand" is concerned, it is precisely the letter which we shall find in the books of Butterworth—even more matter-of-fact and more standardised. In the nineteenth century the hand was less round, but the angle of the slope was increased. It will be recollected that the so-called Italian hand was also narrower in the body than the round hand. The assimilation was no doubt unconscious; but it is the fact that as the Italian hand became less practised the round hand became less round. The baroque tradition of weighted ascenders had disappeared by 1800. By the early nineteenth century all ornament and striking had disappeared; the revolution which led to a certain flourishing was commenced by Carstairs. This writer, who practised and taught the craft in a Bond Street apartment, very powerfully affected the hand-writing of England, the Continent and the United States. As, however, this bibliography terminates with the year 1800 a discussion of nineteenth century and derived movements falls outside the scope of these notes.+

The present-day calligraphical renaissance, which has affected formal rather than cursive hands, grew out of the arts and crafts movement, and seems to have little or no continuity with the immediate past. The good "clerkly" hand taught in the commercial schools of to-day differs in genius, because it differs in purpose, from the "artistic" calligraphic hand used for inspirational mottoes and texts—one is for city, while the other is for suburbs. Both differ from the hand which Chancery Lane persists in using for the engrossing of conveyances, etc.

Thus the true present-day representative of the old English writing-master, in the sense in which he has been studied by Mr Ambrose Heal, is to be found in the director of the business-school. The ledger hands taught in such "Colleges" and in many of the elementary schools, and practised in banks and countinghouses, are clearly in the succession from Snell, Clark, Butterworth and Carstairs. Despite the efforts of those who regard Writing as an artistic craft, there is little sign of change in these business scripts, and they must long remain a distinctive though inartistic, commonplace but efficient, instrument of English commerce.

(Footnotes)

* Langton's *The Small Italian Hand* (1727) is, appropriately enough, dedicated to a lady (Lady Elizabeth Cecil), the hand not being intended for use in business.

+ There is some treatment of the nineteenth-century hands in an article by the present writer in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. Handwriting.

++ One such college, established in 1880, issues a "Copy-Book for the use of Students and Schools, with full instructions as to best methods of acquiring a correct and finished style". Flourishes and superfluous strokes are avoided but loops are encouraged and, according to the dogma imposed by the Civil Service Commissioners, all the letters in a word are connected by strokes.

Below from page 25

E. BUTTERWORTH (fl. 1784-1819). E. Butterworth Writing-Master and Accountant to the High School, Edinburgh, issued an edition (? first) of *The Universal Penman or the Beauties of Writing Delineated* in 1785. Another edition, alluded to in one of the plates as "The Second Number of the Universal Penman", was published by Laurie and Whittle in 1799. Both were engraved by J. Kirkwood. He also produced a series of small copy-books in 1799 and 1800. His portrait appears on the title-page of his *Young Arithmetician's Instructor* (1805)

The firm of Butterworth published several copy-books in the first two decades of the nineteenth century which are outside the scope of this volume.

Below from page 70

(*Carstairs is mentioned in this bio for James Henry Lewis.....Joe)

JAMES HENRY LEWIS (b. 1786, d. 1853)- James Henry Lewis was the son of a cloth-manufacturer at Ebley, near Stroud, Gloucestershire. In the preface of one of his books he speaks of teaching writing as early as 1801 at which time he would have been fifteen years old. The following year he was engaged at Worcester and was then working out his new system of writing "The Lewisian System of Penmanship". Although the system was "proclaimed by advertisement" in 1803 its publication was delayed until 1806 when it appeared under the title of "The Flying Pen or New and Universal Method of Teaching the Art of Writing by a System of Lines and Angles". This system of Lewis' seems to have consisted mainly in the free motion of the arm as well as of the fingers. In 1815 he published a book entitled "The Royal Lewisian System of Penmanship Taught at the Original Establishment 104 High Holborn". Previous to this, however, he had brought out his new method of shorthand, which he published under the title of The Ready Writer in 1812 from the "Flying Hand and Pen" No. 55 Great Wild Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. This work ran into 97 editions, in some of which the rules and instructions are given in doggerel and jocose rhymes.

Owing to ill health he was obliged to give up his school and spent several years touring the country, lecturing on writing and shorthand. On his return to London he took a house in the Waterloo Road and finally settled at the Shorthand Institution, No. 13 Strand, nearly opposite Exeter Hall. Very shortly before his death he retired to 49 Milton Road, Gravesend, where he died in 1853

Sir Walter Scott in his diary (10 July 1826) wrote: "This morning I was visited by a W. Lewis, a smart Cockney, whose object is to amend the hand-writing. He uses as a mechanical aid a sort of puzzle of wire and ivory, which is put upon the fingers to keep them in the desired position. . . It is ingenious and may be useful". This invention seems to have been a precursor of Carstairs' System (1840), which he called the "Talangraph", the fingers being bound up into the correct position and the wrist suspended in a kind of sling.