

# Art of the scribe

SOME of the best examples of penmanship — or the art of calligraphy — are on display in an exhibition 'The Art of The Scribe' at The Arts Centre in Bampton's Town Hall.

It traces the history of calligraphy from its earliest days to the present, which has seen a renewed interest in the different forms of writing.

The Art of the Scribe has been organised by retired teacher Isabelle Spencer, who is chairman of the Art Panel Committee of the West Oxfordshire Arts Association. 'We last held a calligraphy exhibition in 1984 and that helped to launch the Oxford Scribes Society which now has around 75 members,' said Isabelle, who lives in Witney.

The exhibition traces the different forms of writing from the elaborate lettering used by the monks to the italics favoured by the Italians and includes work by many of the leading calligraphers in the country.

Interest in the use of the broad pen was revived by William Morris from Kelmscot and in recent years the number of people learning the art has increased with many classes across the country.

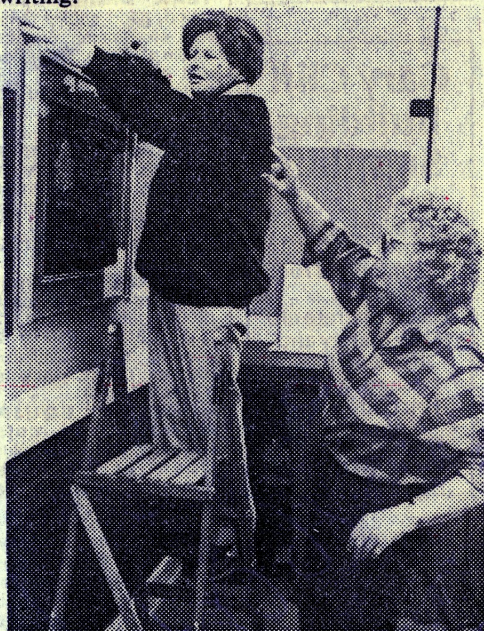
Isabelle, who taught English and was deputy head at Henry Box School, Witney before she retired, has always been interested in calligraphy.

In 1980 she enrolled as a student at Dillington College and now has been invited back to teach the craft. She also teaches students in Witney and Burford and this month will also be holding classes at the WI College at Denham.

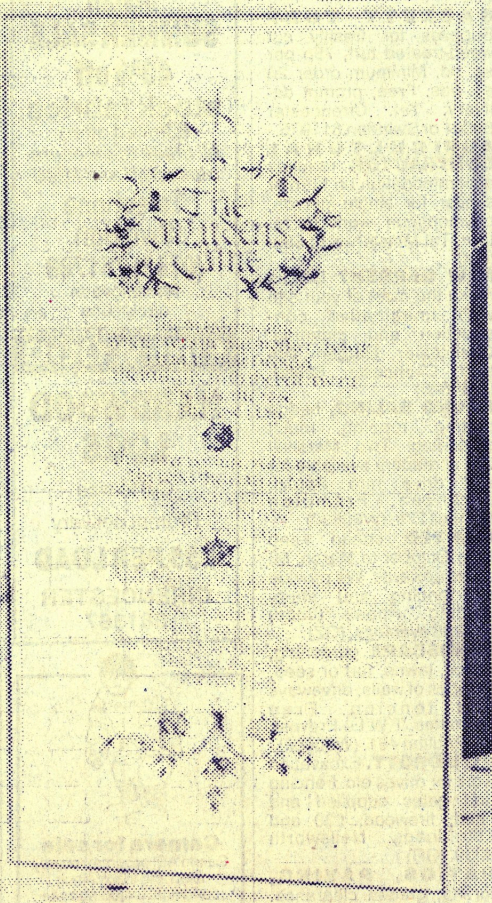
'I started writing to people asking them to lend us work for the exhibition in May this year and we now have over 70 major pieces in the exhibition. I hope it will be one of the best exhibitions on calligraphy outside London,' she said.

As well as exhibiting at Bampton, Isabelle also has work on display as part of the Oxford Craft Guild exhibition in Oxford's Central Library.

The Art of the Scribe exhibition will last until Sunday, September 25. The Art Gallery in the Town Hall is open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10.30am to 1pm and from 2.30pm to 5pm and on Sundays from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.



● Left a bit, right a bit, stop. Calligraphy artist Mrs Isabelle Spencer supervising Mrs Hilda Kent, Bampton Arts Society member, as she hangs an exhibit to the wall while arranging the exhibition before the opening.



● Calligraphy artist Mrs Isabelle Spencer from Witney, and a piece of her work on show in an exhibition entitled *The Art of the Scribe*, run and organised by the West Oxfordshire Arts Association, at Bampton Town Hall.



**THE ART OF THE SCRIBE:** last week in which to see an exhibition of work by outstanding and internationally known practitioners of the art of calligraphy. Facsimilies of authentic scripts beside modern interpretations. Some works for sale.

**The Arts Centre, Bampton Town Hall, Bampton, Oxfordshire (0993 850137).** Until September 25, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 10.30am-1pm and 2.30-5.00pm, Sunday 2.30-4.30pm.

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## Art of the Scribe

An exhibition of calligraphy is on show in the Town Hall, Bampton, until September 25. Organised by the West Oxfordshire Arts Association, it features work by members of the Oxford Scribes Calligraphy Society, who exhibit annually in the Westgate Library, Oxford.

The exhibition also includes examples of work by well known "masters" of the craft

who have been specially invited to take part. Alison Urwick of Bloxham rightly fits this category with her delightful version of a poem by Richard Jeffries, *The July Grass*, which she has written on papyrus.

Although student exhibits are modestly separated from the work of masters like Peter Halliday and Pat Russell, the general level of excellence must surely encourage all those contributing to this show.

There is a slight tendency for some calligraphers to become so skilled technically that they lose sight of the need for legibility. The most pleasing exhibits, and there are many, are those in which the content of the text is enhanced, not obscured, by the lettering and illumination.

Stuart Barrie's free italic rendering of *The Earth we abuse*... is a good example of effective simplicity; likewise a quotation from William Morris by Peter Halliday. Carlyle's inspirational *Every day that is born into the world comes like a burst of music* is lettered on a rainbow sky background by Reeva Kimble.

**Rosemarie Pitts**