

# SHOWING OUR COLOURS

**Ruth Rostron**

*A workshop with the same title was held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2005 at St. Wilfred's in Tite Street, London, the last B.I.G. meeting at that venue. It was well attended and generated some lively discussion. This article incorporates input from those who participated.*

We show our personality through all the choices we make, but are colour preferences really of great significance? Many people are sceptical about correlating colours with human traits and qualities and I was no exception. The subject is hardly touched on in graphology books, and at best the colour of ink or paper is generally considered a minor detail which has little or no bearing on the analysis. I was dubious when I read statements such as - Red: active and adventurous, Blue: peaceful and passive, Black: serious etc. I wanted to know *why* these characteristics were attributed to those particular colours. Hence this study, which came to feel like reinventing the wheel!

## **What is colour?**

Colour is a very strange phenomenon because it changes. Fluorescent lighting can alter the appearance of cloth, bright colours turn grey as it grows dark, and by moonlight almost everything looks black. The colour of an object depends both on the quantity and the quality of the light shining on to it. Sir Isaac Newton first demonstrated that white light contains all colours (except black which is technically a mixture of the other colours). In 1666 he shone a beam of light through a prism and split it into a rainbow of colours. Sending the rainbow through another prism returned it to a single beam of white light.

Light not only enables us to see colours, but it colours objects as well. When beams of light strike an object some of the light waves are absorbed while others are reflected. The quality of the object's surface in combination with the type of light shining on to it, give the object its individual colour. In other words things appear to be different colours because they are reflecting light in different ways.

## **Colours of the Spectrum**

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet are the colours of the spectrum, and a range of objects were displayed at the workshop to bring the colours into the room: tomato, orange, lemon, cucumber, lapis lazuli, aubergine and amethyst. Some colours not on the spectrum were also added: black, brown, grey and white. These were represented by coal, wood, grey stone, and a white leek. All who were present spent a little time focusing on each of these objects from the natural world, mentally selecting the colours they liked the most, and also those they liked the least.

## **The effects of colour**

Colours affect us in a variety of ways. We like some and dislike others. A grey day can be depressing and we may not be able to relax in a room painted bright orange. Colour affects us emotionally and can alter our moods, and this has been understood since ancient times. War paint was used to frighten people and to confer status, and colours were used for religious or therapeutic purposes. Colours also affect living creatures physically. This was demonstrated in an experiment in which mice were reared and bred under different coloured fluorescent lights. Under blue light the offspring produced were 70% female, 30% male; under pink light they were 70% male, 30% female; and in natural light their offspring were half male and half female.

Why does colour affect us physically and therefore emotionally as well? Because colours radiate electromagnetic energy. Each colour has its own frequency and our bodies are sensitive to the different energy levels of the individual wavelengths. For example: red waves are long and powerful so they stimulate the heart and breathing, while blue waves are relatively short and soothe the nervous system.

## **Electromagnetic energy**

The air is full of electromagnetic waves which we cannot see - X rays, radio and TV waves, microwaves, ultraviolet and infrared light waves. The spectrum of light which we can see is actually very small. Different colours can now be defined technically by the frequencies of the waves emitted by them. These are measured in angstrom units, and they range from 4000-4500 units for violet through to 6200-6700 units for red. We humans can only see colour waves, but some creatures such as snakes and bees can see the ultra violet and infrared waves which are on the fringe of our visible spectrum, just as many animals can hear sounds and notes beyond the range of human hearing. We may not be able to see the other waves, but we still sensitive to them and need protection from the harmful ones

## **Colour awareness**

The natural world is full of colour, and human life is sustained by it – yellow light and orange warmth from the sun, blue water and green trees. Our sensitivity to colour has been inherited over millions of generations. It is in our blood and gives us an instinctive understanding of each colour's special qualities. Living in the modern world we may hardly be aware of this because we take colour for granted. We are bombarded with it from paint, cars, adverts and TV, but until modern times it was only in the natural world that most people saw colour.

## **Colourful phrases**

Individually we may have a 'feel' for the qualities of various colours, but I wondered if there might be any evidence of a collective intuitive understanding of them. Common figures of speech can reflect ideas and beliefs which are universally accepted, and these can help us to understand symbolic concepts which underpin graphology. Phrases such as 'on the decline', 'aiming high', 'feeling great' or 'belittling' something, are easily related to interpretations of line direction and size, and can speak volumes in a few words. I wondered therefore whether paying close attention to colour-related phrases in everyday language might be a direct route to a better understanding of what different colours signify to us collectively, at an unconscious level.

## **An Experimental Method**

At the meeting we considered first some common phrases referring to colours in general, then individual colours were discussed. For each colour, things commonly associated with it were listed, followed by phrases and sayings relating to it. Paying careful attention to these phrases enabled us to shortlist various characteristics which they appeared to have in common, and for these characteristics a list of handwriting movements was tentatively compiled. By this method it was possible to link certain handwriting movements with particular colours.

For example: the colour red might be associated with a volcano (among other things). A common phrase is 'red rag to a bull'. The emotion associated with this is anger. Aggressive anger could be reflected through angles and heavy pressure in the writing. This establishes a link between a colour, a personality trait and handwriting movements.

The method was then tested experimentally. I had collected a large number of samples written in different colour inks or on various colours of paper. Each sample had been photocopied in black and white and put in a clear folder with the black and white version to the front. These were distributed to those attending, who were invited to study the photocopy first. Turning the folder over to reveal the original sample allowed the colour to make an impact which could be distinguished from the impact of the writing itself.

As the colours were dealt with one by one each person was invited to share his or her observations and experiences. In some cases the colour appeared to accord with the impression of the writer's qualities, and was even anticipated on some occasions. In other cases the colour came as a surprise or even a shock.

The dominant handwriting movements of each sample could then be checked against the tentative checklist previously compiled for each colour. By these means individual perception of harmony or discord between colour and writing could to some extent be validated by a scientific method, albeit a highly experimental one.

## **Conclusions**

Paying careful attention to common figures of speech and objects associated with various colours enabled us to become more consciously aware of the intrinsic qualities of colours and how they come to be associated with human qualities and characteristics. As we examined samples in all different colours we were able to distinguish between those in which the colour reinforced the writer's prominent characteristics, and those in which the colour added a new dimension.

In these cases the colour sometimes gave the writing a more favourable aspect and sometimes a more negative one. This led to further very interesting speculation. Was the colour in effect a mask or persona disguising the writer's true self? Or was something submerged coming to the surface? Did it give expression to an undeveloped aspect of the personality or Jung's fourth function? Might it indicate the direction of development, or express a wish or aspiration? Or did it serve to release denied emotions from the shadow side of the personality? Could the colour we most disliked make us more aware of unacknowledged aspects of our own personality or behaviour?

## **Footnote**

Colours radiate electromagnetic energy, and so do people. The electromagnetic energy we radiate, however, is not just that of our skin colour. Energy emanates from within and Kirlian photographs show people surrounded by clouds of different colours, which change as their inner states alter. It seems that our colouring really is more than skin deep, and our colour choices may be significant in ways which are not as yet clearly understood.

## **Colours Summary**

*Note: For colours such as indigo and violet few related phrases could be found. I therefore had to take associated characteristics on trust from other sources.*

*In all cases the handwriting movements are offered as **suggestions** only. They relate to groups of characteristics, so considerable variation is possible.*

## **Article Revision**

All handwriting samples were reproduced in black and white when this article appeared in the B.I.G. journal 'The Graphologist' Issue 92 Autumn 2006. Samples can now be seen in colour in this revised version, which includes additional samples in the Orange and Brown sections of the Colours Summary and substitutions in the Pink and Violet sections. The pressure of each sample has also been given.

## COLOURS SUMMARY

### RED

A primary colour. Powerful rays which speed up the pulse, release adrenalin and raise blood pressure.

Phrases/words: to see red, red rag to a bull, red roses, the red flag, a red letter day, caught red-handed, red sky at night - shepherd's delight, red alert, scarlet woman, ruby lips, red-blooded, red faced.

Associated with energy and strong feelings: passion, anger, love, hate, guilt

People who like red are lively, energetic, courageous, passionate and enjoy attention. They have force of personality and strength of will. Often assertive leaders with drive and initiative who are not afraid to use confrontation, they may be impulsive or excitable.

Pos: Firm pressure, angles, large size/LZ, rhythmic, fairly connected, R slant/tends, broad, rising lines, fluent, strong t bars/signature, narrow R margin, strong HT, hooks, vertical emphasis.

Neg: Pressure heavy/pasty, close spacing, arrhythmic, triangles, sharp points, slashed/blunted/braced strokes, t bars down/detached, flooded ovals, letters falling forward, misplaced capitals, X-ing.

1a

A photograph of a handwritten message in red ink on a light-colored background. The text reads: "Very best wishes to you and your family as we enter the new Millennium. I hope it is". The handwriting is cursive and somewhat slanted to the right.

1b

A photograph of a handwritten message in red ink on a light-colored background. The text reads: "hi Ruth, Hope you had a fun day!!". The handwriting is cursive and slanted to the right.

1c

A photograph of a handwritten message in red ink on a light-colored background. The text reads: "for a mom. I need to find out about getting my licence in Maryland, but there are so many regulations in this state it will probably involve more classes for me.". The handwriting is cursive and slanted to the right.

1d

A photograph of a handwritten message in red ink on a light-colored background. The text reads: "to Ruth, with best wishes and thanks!". The handwriting is cursive and slanted to the right.

Figure 1	RED			
1a	male	60's	red ink	medium/heavy pressure
1b	male	20's	red felt tip	medium pressure
1c	female	30's	silvery red ink	medium/heavy pressure
1d	male	40's	red ink	irregular pressure

## PINK

Red + white. White softens the effect of strong red. Warm feelings run deep below the surface.

Phrases/words: in the pink, rose-tinted spectacles, flushed with success, the pink of perfection, pink for a girl, rosy cheeks, baby pink, tickled pink, shocking pink.

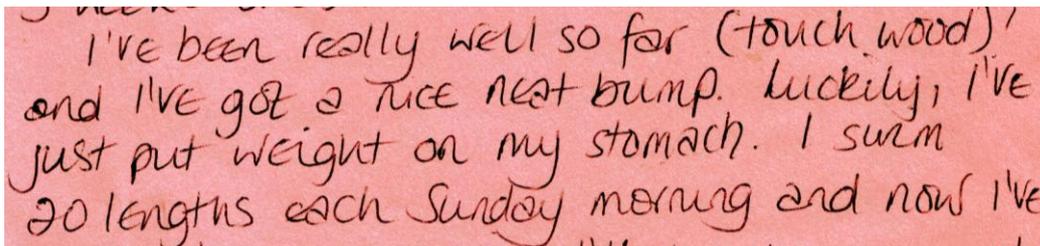
Associated with the feminine: soft feelings, love, well-being, warmth, compassion, sensitivity.

People who like pink want to give and receive love. Romantics at heart, they are caring, gentle, supportive, kind and compliant for the sake of peace, but are also vulnerable and may be passive.

Pos: Fairly regular, flexible baseline, garlands/arcades, medium size/pressure/speed, legible, R slant/tends, good layout, dom. MZ, broad, curved strokes, extended ends.

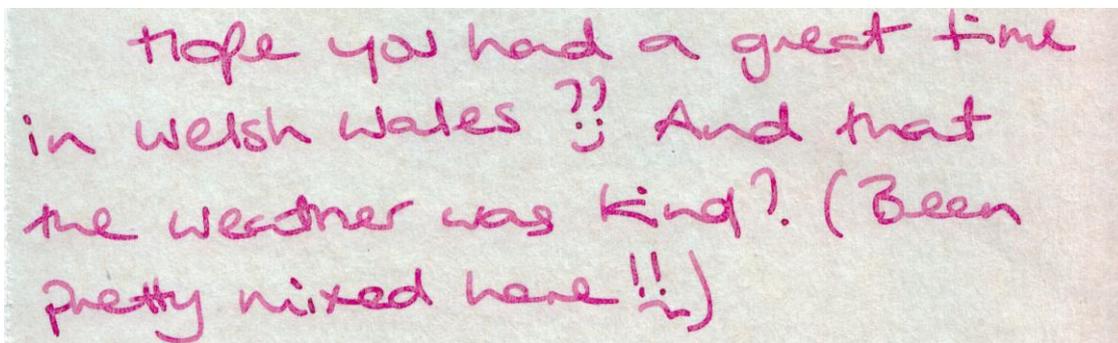
Neg: Copybook, L slant/tends, arrhythmic, falling lines/tiles, unstable baseline, close spacing, LZ cradles, roundness, drooping garlands, elliptical ovals, monotonous.

2a



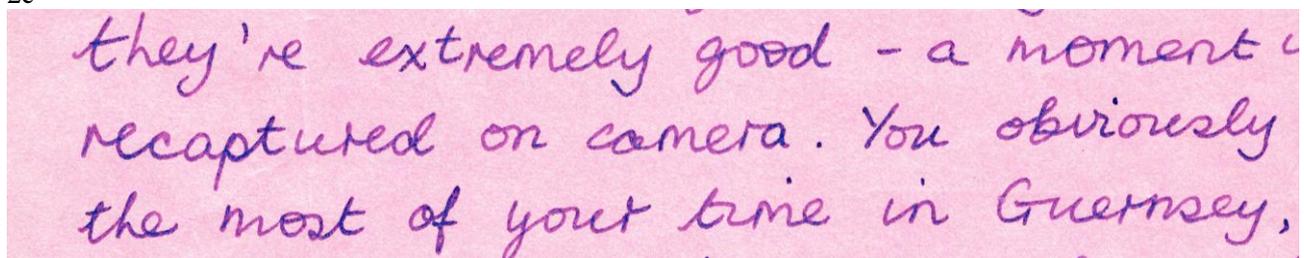
I've been really well so far (touch wood) and I've got a nice neat bump. Luckily, I've just put weight on my stomach. I swim 20 lengths each Sunday morning and now I've

2b



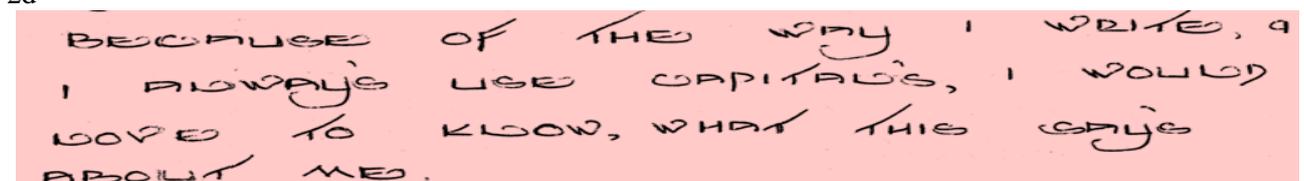
hope you had a great time in Welsh Wales ?? And that the weather was kind? (Been pretty mixed here !!)

2c



they're extremely good - a moment captured on camera. You obviously spent the most of your time in Guernsey,

2d



BECAUSE OF THE WAY I WRITE, I ALWAYS USE CAPITALS, I WOULD LOVE TO KNOW, WHAT THIS SAYS ABOUT ME.

Figure 2	PINK			
2a	female 33	black biro, pink paper	light/medium pressure	
2b	male 40's	pink ink	medium pressure	
2c	female 60's	blue felt tip, pink paper	medium/light pressure	
2d	female 55	black ink, dusky pink paper	irregular pressure	

## ORANGE

Red + yellow. Both are strong and direct rays. Radiant warmth but with less intensity than red. Sunrise and sunset reflect opposite moods so feelings may be turbulent.

Phrases/words: zest of an orange, a shining example, amber nectar, copper-bottomed, burning bright, scorching hot, sunrise, sunset, amber-gambler, Orangemen, a fiery personality.

Associated with dynamic energy, intensity and radiance, stimulating and disturbing.

People who like orange are energetic, adventurous, enthusiastic and outgoing, with a zest for life. They may also be restless and impulsive, or impatient, reactive or overpowering.

Pos: Large size, broad, R slant/tends, firm/medium pressure, lively rhythm, quick speed, angles/mixed FOC, full, partly connected, simplified, rising lines, high t bars, irregular R margin.

Neg: Irregular, arrhythmic, angles/threads, mixed slant, triangles, sharp points, slashed/blunted strokes, irregular pressure/width, t bars down/detached, disconnected, L tends, tics.

3a

Handwritten text in orange ink on white paper. The text reads: "Vanessa, Always fellow heart". The writing is slanted to the right and has a lively, somewhat irregular rhythm.

3b

Handwritten text in brown ink on apricot paper. The text reads: "Thankyou for your call. You are booked into the Blue room for the night of Friday Feb 21st. I look forward to meeting you then." The writing is slanted to the right and has a medium-heavy pressure.

3c

Handwritten text in black ink on orange paper. The text reads: "Dear Ruth Please forget about my last P.H.S. as I thought it was". The writing is slanted to the right and has a heavy pressure.

3d

Handwritten text in black ink on orange paper. The text reads: "moment, but I have a bean-bag + a single bed! Double bed is on order + sofa I'm buying off of a friend." The writing is slanted to the right and has an irregular pressure.

Figure 3 ORANGE  
3a female age unknown orange ink medium pressure  
3b female 40's brown ink, apricot paper medium/heavy pressure  
3c female 80's black biro, orange paper heavy pressure  
3d female 20's black ink, orange paper irregular pressure

## YELLOW

A primary colour. Brilliant rays which feed the nervous system and stimulate the mind and body. Bright & cheerful, it promotes clear thinking but can be disturbing or unsettling.

Phrases/words: bright spark, flash of inspiration, little ray of sunshine, sunny temperament, look on the bright side, golden opportunity, sparks flying, yellow streak, yellow peril, jaundiced.

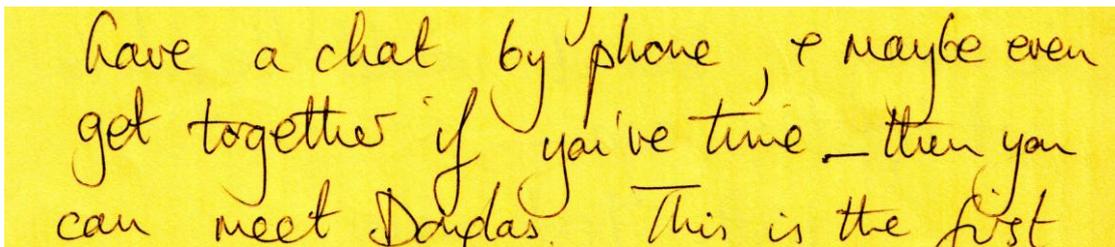
Associated with clarity, brightness and excitement, also sharpness and fear.

People who like yellow tend to be optimistic, vivacious, alert and witty, but may be critical, restless, superficial or disruptive. When tense they can become fearful or jealous.

Pos: Large UZ, quick, lively rhythm, rising lines, lean, simplified, no starting strokes, widening LM, angles/mixed FOC, clever linking, medium/light pressure, upright/R slant/tends, clear spacing.

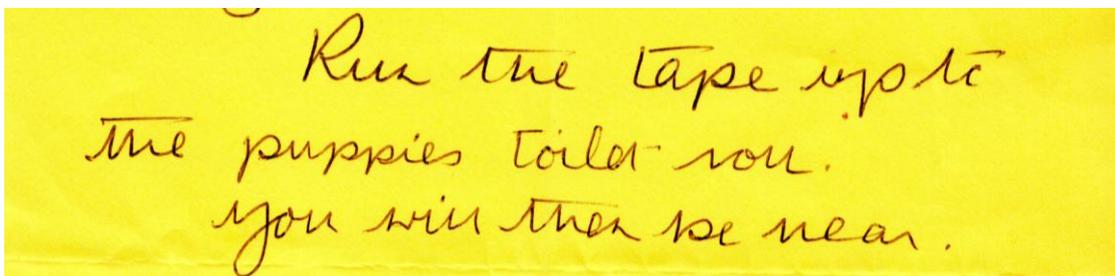
Neg: Arrhythmic, irregular pressure/size/zones/slant, angles/threads, L slant/tends, disconnected, close or wide spacing, tics, sharp points, ovals narrow/enlarged.

4a



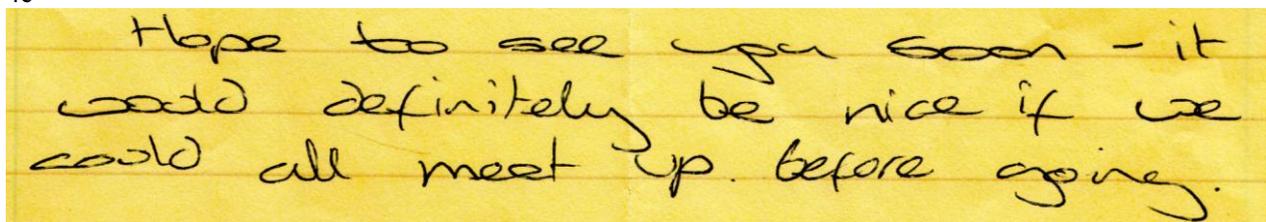
Have a chat by phone, & maybe even get together if you've time - then you can meet Dadas. This is the first

4b



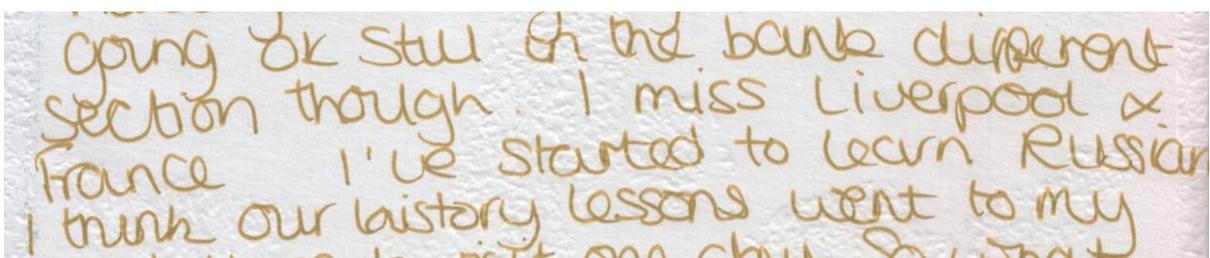
Run the tape up to the puppies to let you. you will then be near.

4c



Hope to see you soon - it would definitely be nice if we could all meet up before going.

4d



going ok still on the bank different section though. I miss Liverpool & France I've started to learn Russian I think our history lessons went to my

Figure 4	YELLOW		
4a	female 50	black biro, bright yellow paper	medium pressure
4b	male 60's	black biro, bright yellow paper	medium/light pressure
4c	female 24	blue biro, lined yellow paper	irregular pressure
4d	female 24	yellow/gold ink, card	medium pressure

## GREEN

Blue + yellow. Green rays calm circulation and breathing, relieve stress and relax the body. Harmonises and balances opposite elements: the calm of blue + the force of yellow.

Phrases/words: salad days, the Emerald Isle, green fingers, get the green light, green room, green, jaded, to turn green, green with envy, the grass is greener on the other side, green-eyed monster.

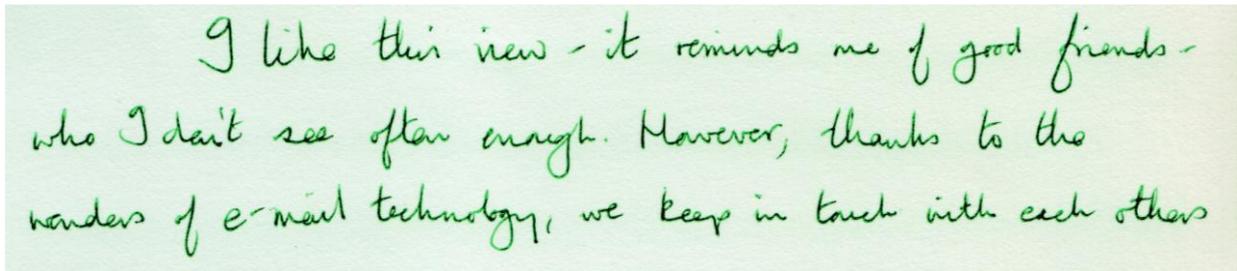
Associated with relaxation, natural renewal and change, also envy and dissatisfaction.

People who like green are open-minded, nurturing and expansive individuals, but they can be restless and may become exhausted. They may also be immature, envious or jealous.

Pos: Rhythmic, medium pressure/speed, medium/large size, broad, pasty, large LZ/balanced zones, flexible baseline, upright or R slant/tends, half connected, garlands + angles, fairly regular.

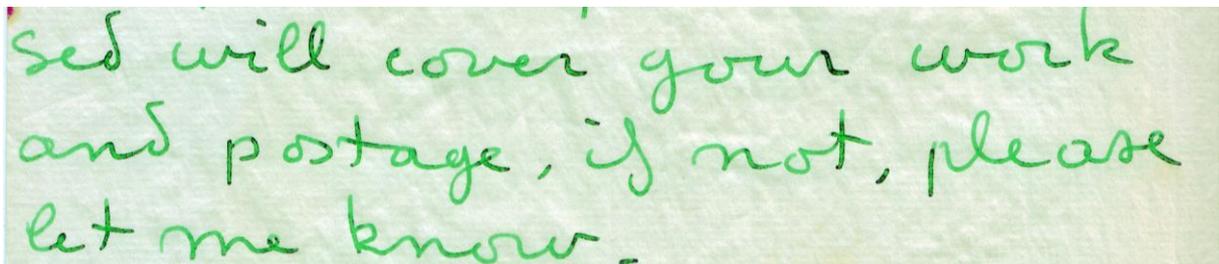
Neg: Arrhythmic, irregular, heavy/irregular pressure, L tends, disconnected, small initial loops, large o/a, hooks/tics, starting strokes, arcades/threads, falling lines/tiles, slow speed, circle i dots.

5a



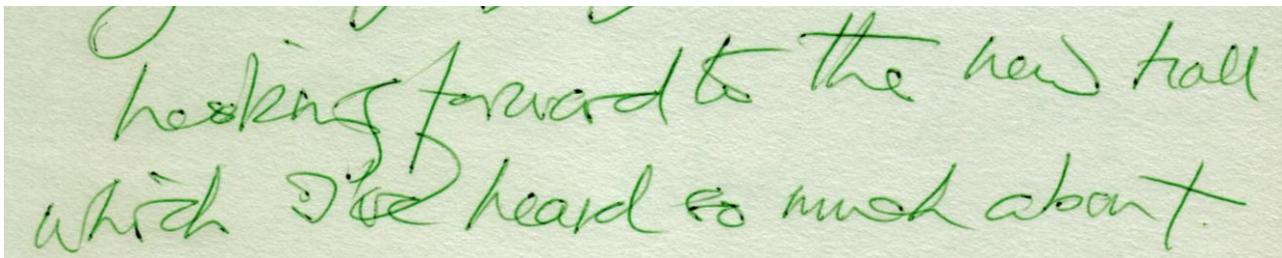
I like this view - it reminds me of good friends - who I don't see often enough. However, thanks to the wonders of e-mail technology, we keep in touch with each other

5b



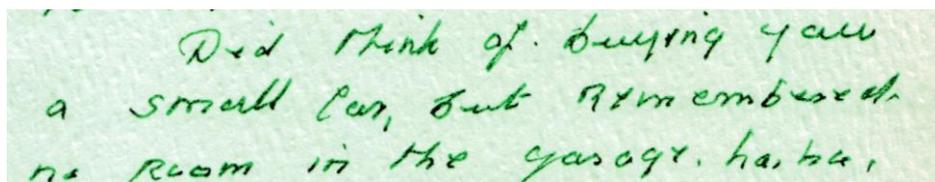
sed will cover your work and postage, if not, please let me know.

5c



Looking forward to the new hall which I've heard so much about.

5d



Did think of buying you a small car, but remembered no room in the garage. ha ha,

Figure 5	GREEN		
5a	female 49	green biro	medium pressure
5b	female 34	green ink	light pressure
5c	male 60's	green biro	medium/light + stabs of pressure
5d	female 87	green ink, card	irregular pressure

## TURQUOISE

Blue + green. Calming rays which encourage expression of feelings through creativity.

Calm leads to constancy, also firmness & resistance to change.

Phrases/words: proud as a peacock, ice blue, to break the ice. Associations: kingfisher, aquamarine.

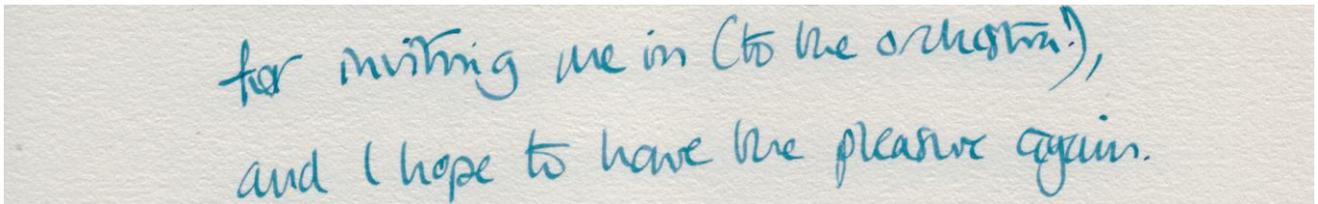
Associated with calm, coolness, self-control and pride.

People who like turquoise need freedom to express themselves. Independent, clear thinking and self-assured, they may be reflective or creative, but can be cool, proud, assertive, resistant or attention-seeking.

Pos: Rhythmic, upright/slight R slant, medium size, arcades/angles, wide/balanced margins, good layout, clear spacing, partly disconnected, original, high i dots/t bars, lean + full.

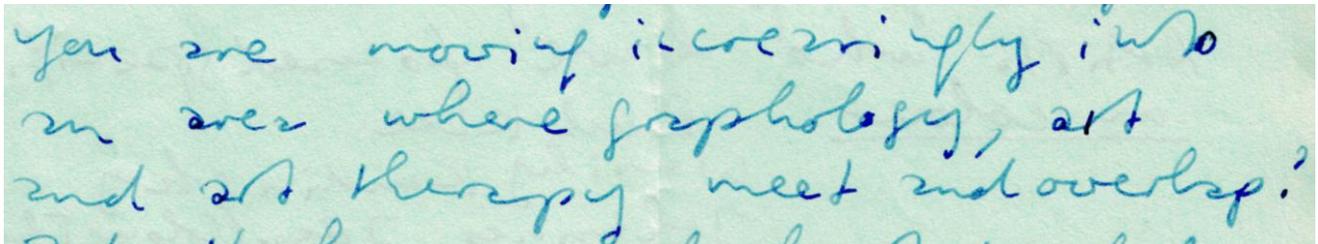
Neg: L slant/tends, large size/MZ/UZ, wide or close spacing, persona, elaborated, arrhythmic, inflated capitals/signature, sharp points, spirals, retracing.

6a



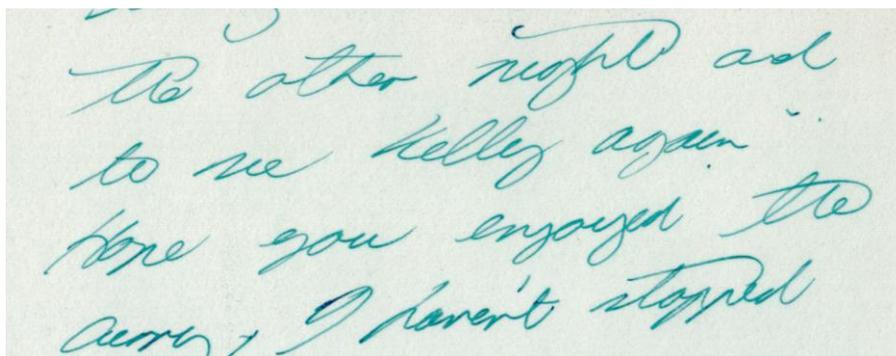
for inviting me in (to the orchestra),  
and I hope to have the pleasure again.

6b



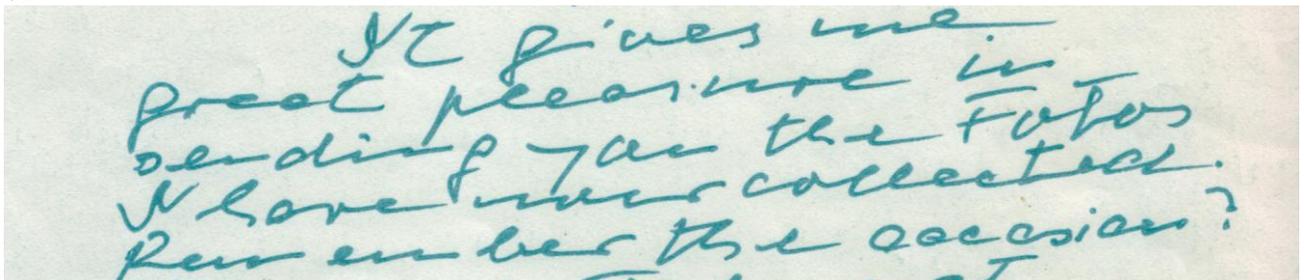
you are moving increasingly into  
an area where graphology, art  
and art therapy meet and overlap?

6c



The other night and  
to me Kelly again  
Hope you enjoyed the  
work, I haven't stopped

6d



It gives me  
great pleasure in  
sending you the photos  
I have just collected.  
Remember the occasion?

Figure 6 TURQUOISE  
6a male 50's turquoise ink medium pressure  
6b female 40's (Swiss) turquoise ink and paper irregular pressure  
6c female 40's turquoise ink light pressure  
6d female 80's (German) silvery turquoise ink medium/light pressure

## BLUE

A primary colour. Blue rays are very short and still. Lowers blood pressure, slows breathing and heart. Soothing and cool but uplifting, it encourages peace of mind and physical relaxation.

Phrases/words: blue-eyed boy, true blue, blue chip, cordon blue, blueprint, blue blood, boys in blue, navy blue, once in a blue moon, out of the blue, blue stocking, to feel blue.

Associated with calm, trust, self-discipline, loyalty and spirituality.

People who like blue are peace-loving, trustworthy, cooperative and supportive of others. Thoughtful and sensitive people who try to control their feelings, they can be too responsible and become depressed.

Pos: Upright/R slant, stable baselines, rhythmic, fairly regular, medium size/pressure, balanced zones, arcades/garlands, good layout, legible, fairly connected, straight L margin, sig. matching text.

Neg: Angles/copybook, rigid regularity, very connected, stilted rhythm, L tends, narrow L margin, falling lines/tiles, drooping/pseudo garlands, narrow L margin, roundness, retracing.

7a

Handwritten text in dark blue ink on lined paper. The text reads: "Christmas is creeping up on me far too fast (if you can creep quickly ----!) I have so many"

7b

Handwritten text in blue biro on lined paper. The text reads: "mosques than the 10th Cathedrals I've seen around England so far. The animals in gold detail are all from the east and the"

7c

Handwritten text in blue ink on lined paper. The text reads: "day. I had not been warned that the photographic session would take so long, nor that the hosts would not be able to sit back and"

7d

Handwritten text in blue ink on lined paper. The text is in German and reads: "ten sind auch meine Frau und ich mit meinen Lieb: haffenen Wünschen einfinden."

Figure 7 BLUE  
7a female 60's dark blue ink medium pressure  
7b male 30's blue biro medium/light pressure  
7c female 60's? blue ink and paper medium/heavy pressure  
7d male 70 (German) blue ink light/medium pressure

## INDIGO

Calm of deep blue + strength of red. Deepens the breath and encourages meditation and insight.  
 Phrases/words: purple passage, purple patch, born into purple, blues and royals, a dark horse, to keep dark.

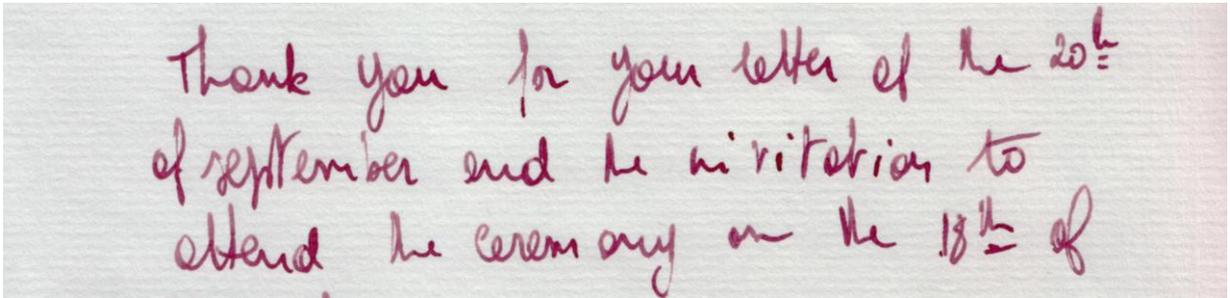
Associated with richness, insight, dignity, authority and integrity.

People who like indigo are deeply serious, responsible and dedicated. Powers of insight and concentration can make them aware and authoritative, but they may become proud, sombre or dull with overwork.

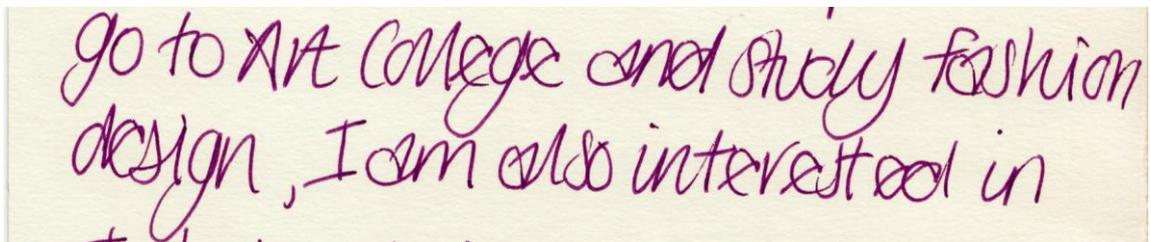
Pos: Upright, arcades/angles, tall UZ, firm pressure, stable baselines, fairly regular, legible, simplified, clear/even spacing, original, partly disconnected, high i dots/t bars, signature matching text.

Neg: Rigid regularity, arrhythmic, very connected, L tends, narrow, roofing strokes, close or wide spacing, falling lines/tiles, triangles, persona, slow speed, monotonous, encircled signature.

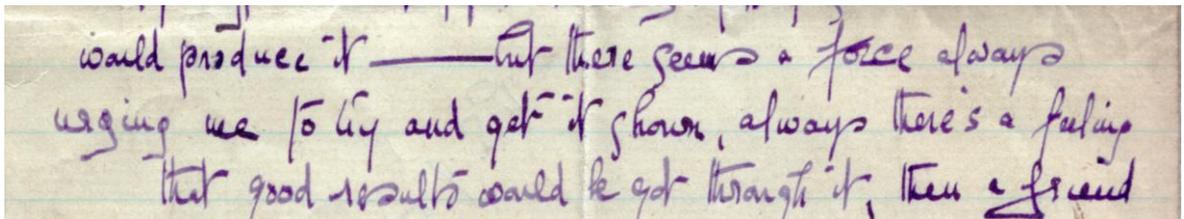
8a



8b



8c



8d

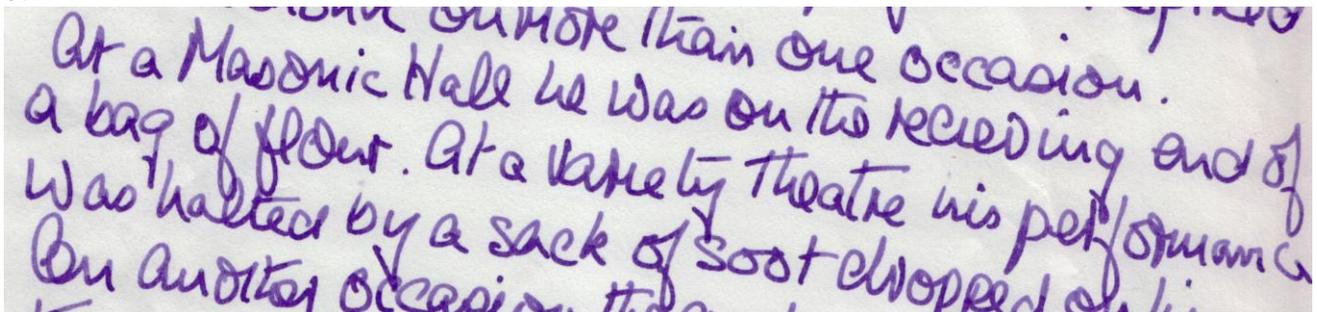


Figure 8	INDIGO		
8a	male 60's	indigo ink	irregular pressure
8b	female 15	indigo ink, cream paper	medium pressure
8c	male age unknown	indigo/purple ink, lined paper	irregular pressure or 'dip in' pen?
8d	male 60's	purple felt tip	medium/heavy pressure

## VIOLET

Red + blue. The shortest wavelength and highest frequency, violet purifies the blood.

Powerful healing through calming mind and body.

Phrases: lilac time, shrinking violet. Associated objects: lavender, amethyst, heather, distant hills.

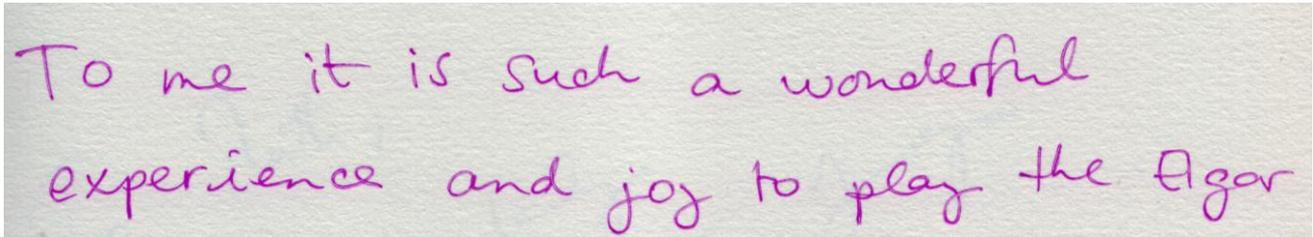
Associated with inspiration and high ideals.

People who like violet are sensitive, intuitive and spiritual, but can seem cool or aloof. Clear thinking and often artistic, they may feel superior or cut off and become melancholic.

Pos: Rhythmic, medium/small size, medium/light pressure, arcades/garlands/mixed FOC, upright/slight R slant, flexible/rising lines, simplified, half connected, clear spacing, i dots high/missing.

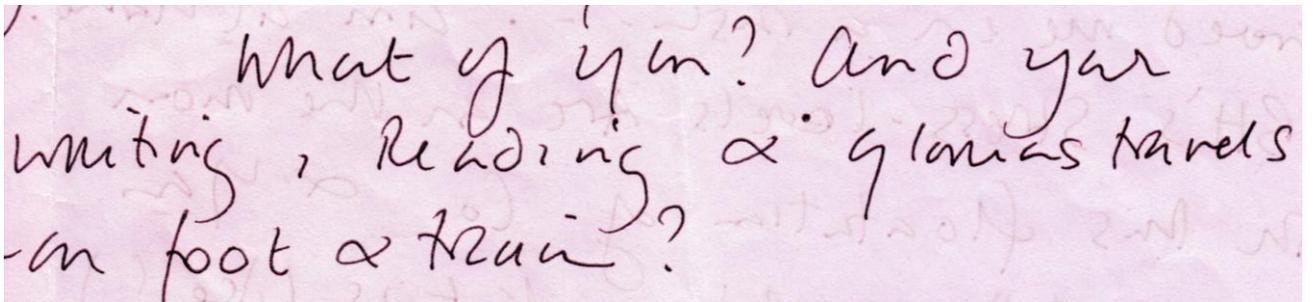
Neg: L slant/tends, wide spacing, tall UZ, sharp, light pressure, disconnected, threads, illegible, falling lines/tiles, closed ovals.

9a



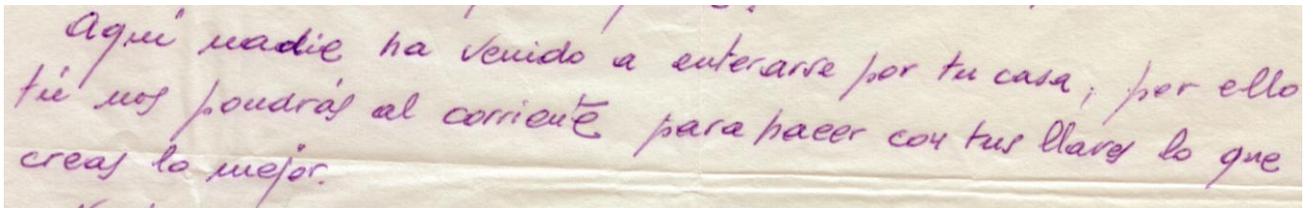
To me it is such a wonderful  
experience and joy to play the Elgar

9b



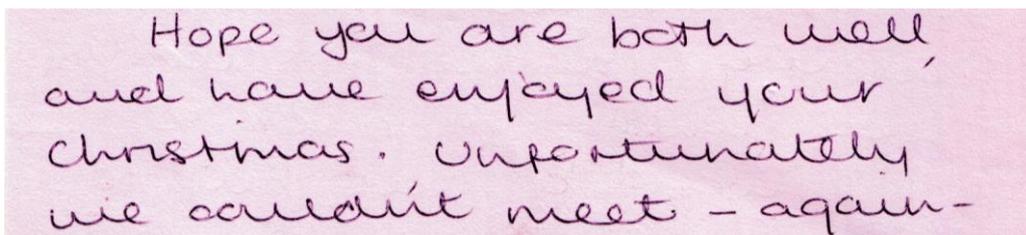
What of you? And your  
writing, Reading & glorious travels  
- on foot & train?

9c



Aquí nadie ha venido a enterarse por tu casa, por ello  
fui nos pondrás al corriente para hacer con tus llaves lo que  
creas lo mejor.

9d



Hope you are both well  
and have enjoyed your  
Christmas. Unfortunately  
we couldn't meet - again -

Figure 9	VIOLET		
9a	female 40's (Dutch)	violet ink	medium/light pressure
9b	female 20's	black ink, lilac paper	medium pressure
9c	male 70's (Spanish)	violet ink	medium/light pressure
9d	female 17	black biro, pale lilac paper	light/medium pressure

## BROWN

Red + yellow + black. Warmth of orange + darkness of black. Colour of the earth not the rainbow.

Phrases/words: brown as a berry, little brown jug, earthenware, nut brown, brownie points, heart of oak, feet of clay, in a brown study, browned off, bogged down, stick in the mud, gone to earth, down to earth.

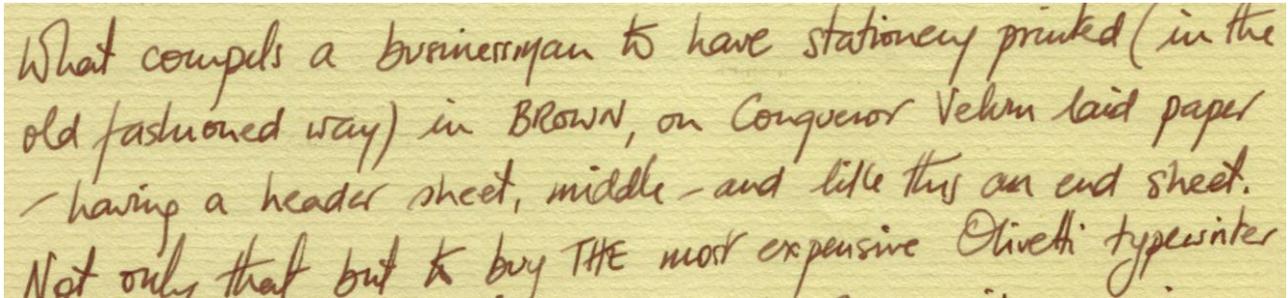
Associated with the earth, security and basic necessities, which may be dull or depressing.

People who like brown are practical and value stability. Down-to-earth, reliable, consistent and hardworking, they make loyal friends and employees, but can seem unimaginative or unadventurous.

Pos: Regular, stable baseline, arcades/angles, firm pressure, medium size/speed, upright, straight L margin, square, large MZ/LZ, connected, legible, careful diacritics.

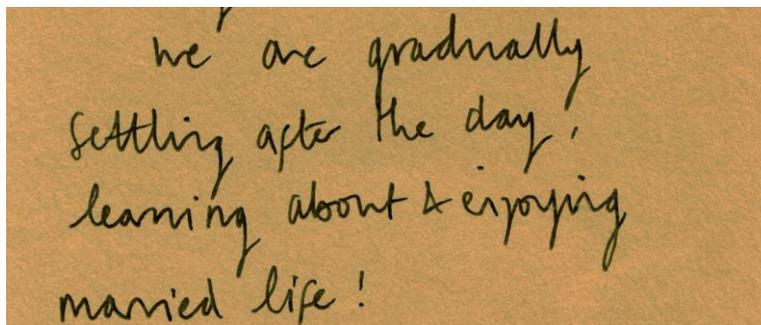
Neg: Copybook, monotonous, arrhythmic, falling lines/tiles, slow speed, pasty, L slant/tends, all capitals, very connected/disconnected, wide R margin.

10a



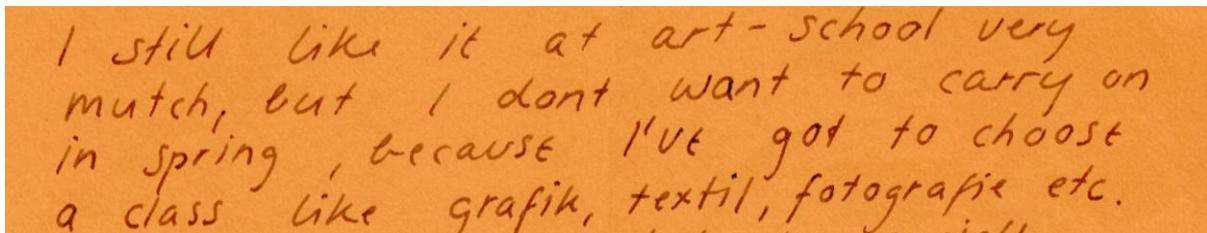
What compels a businessman to have stationery printed (in the old fashioned way) in BROWN, on Conqueror Vehm laid paper - having a header sheet, middle - and like this an end sheet. Not only that but to buy THE most expensive Olivetti typewriter.

10b



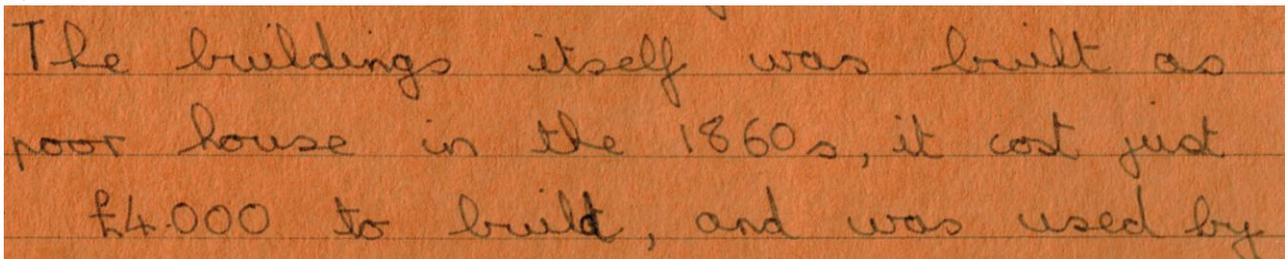
we're gradually settling after the day, learning about & enjoying married life!

10c



I still like it at art-school very much, but I don't want to carry on in spring, because I've got to choose a class like grafik, textil, fotografie etc.

10d



The buildings itself was built as poor house in the 1860s, it cost just £4.000 to build, and was used by

Figure 10	BROWN		
10a	male 50's	brown ink, brown printing, thick cream paper	medium pressure
10b	female 20's	black ink, brown paper	medium/heavy pressure
10c	female 17 (Swiss)	black ink, brown/orange paper	light pressure
10d	female 20's	black ink, thick brown paper	medium pressure

