



WRITTEN FOR THOUGHT

by Paul Dugan

For those RGBB Members who take the time to read this article I have an interest in the history of writing instruments by which humans have recorded and conveyed thoughts, feelings and grocery lists, is the history of civilization itself. This is how we know the story of us, by the drawings, signs and words we have recorded, my hope is, that it will motivate members to record and share your interests whilst promoting the Newsletter. I can but dream!

The cave man's first inventions were the hunting club and the handy sharpened-stone, the all-purpose skinning and killing tool. The latter was adapted into the first writing instrument. The cave man scratched pictures with the sharpened-stone tool onto the walls of his cave dwelling. The cave drawings represented events in daily life such as the planting of crops or hunting victories.

With time, the record-keepers developed systematized symbols from their drawings. These symbols represented words and sentences, but were easier and faster to draw and universally recognized for meaning. The discovery of clay made portable records possible (you can't carry a cave wall around with you). Early merchants used clay tokens with pictographs to record the quantities of materials traded or shipped. With the high volume of and the repetition inherent in record keeping, pictographs evolved and slowly lost their picture detail. They became abstract-figures representing sounds in spoken communication.

The earliest means of writing that approached pen and paper as we know them today was developed by the Greeks. They employed a writing stylus, made of metal, bone or ivory, to place marks upon wax-coated tablets. The tablets made in hinged pairs,

closed to protect the scribe's notes. The first examples of handwriting (purely text messages made by hand) originated in Greece. The Grecian scholar, Cadmus invented the written letter - text messages on paper sent from one individual to another, hope you are starting to get the hint?

Writing was advancing beyond chiselling pictures into stone or wedging pictographs into wet clay. The Chinese invented and perfected 'Indian Ink'. Originally designed for blacking the surfaces of raised stone-carved hieroglyphics, the ink was a mixture of soot from pine smoke and lamp oil mixed with the gelatine of donkey skin and musk. The ink invented by the Chinese philosopher, Tien-Lcheu became common, and other cultures developed inks using the natural dyes and colours derived from berries, plants and minerals. In early writings, different coloured inks had ritual meaning attached to each colour.

The invention of inks paralleled the introduction of paper. The early Egyptians, Romans, Greeks used papyrus and parchment papers. One of the oldest pieces of writing on papyrus known to us today, is the Egyptian "Prisse Papyrus" which dates back two centuries. The Romans created a reed-pen perfect for parchment and ink, from the hollow tubular-stems of marsh grasses, especially from the jointed bamboo plant. They converted bamboo stems into a primitive form of fountain pen. They cut one end into the form of a pen nib or point. A writing fluid or ink filled the stem, squeezing the reed forced fluid to the nib. Interesting to note Paper was not widely used throughout Europe until paper mills were built in the late 14th century.

