

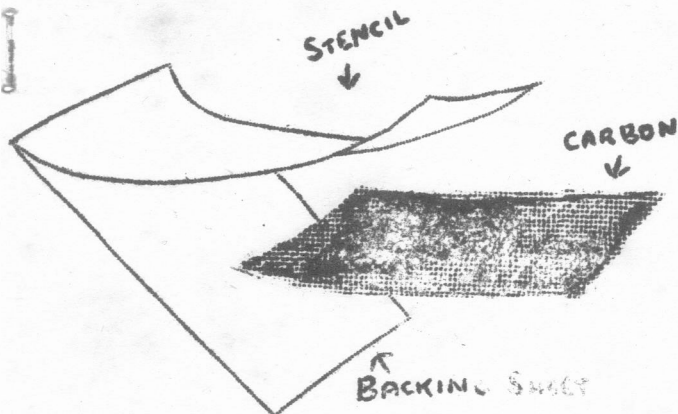
Hints
on

Stencil Cutting

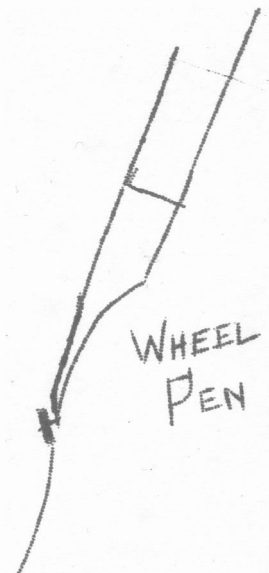
amateur magazine aid, No. 1.

an OPERATION FANTASY publication

distributed by THE SCIENCE FANTASY SOCIETY
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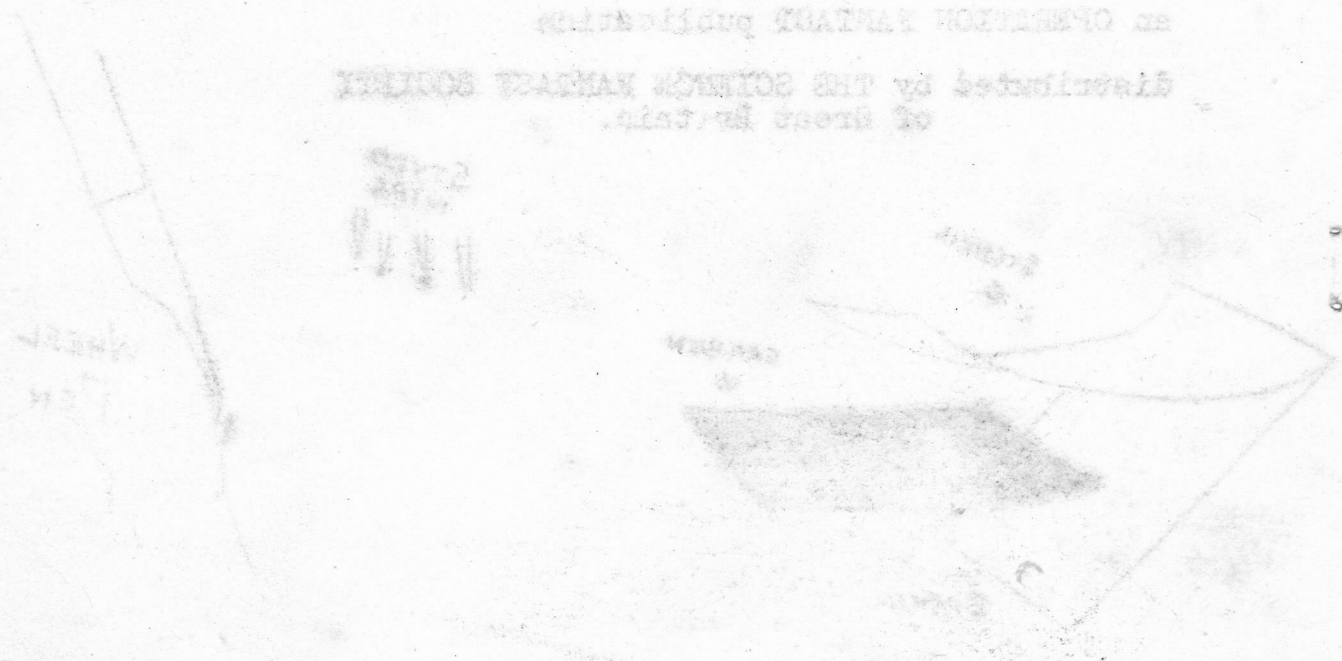
General Cultivation

University Magazine and No. 1.

an OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK

Disseminated by THE SCIENTIFIC HANDBOOK SOCIETY
of Great Britain.

1912
1913
1914



HINTS ON STENCIL CUTTING

by John Newman
and Ken F. Slater.

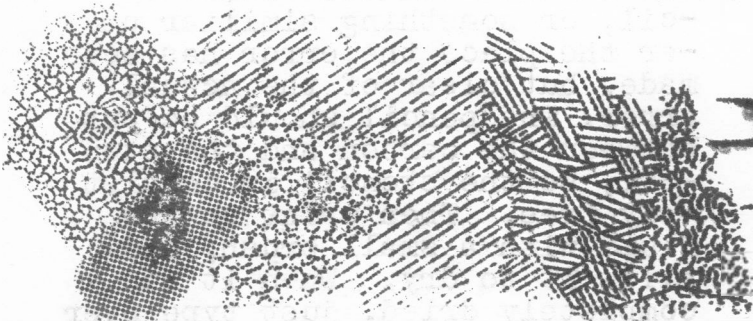


Let me open the ball, says Ken, by first of all announcing that neither John nor I are experts. We too, are open to be taught, if anyone has better ideas. But we have had a little practise, and think that we can claim to be capable of writing some advice, which we sub-title 'STENCIL CUTTING FOR BEGINNERS'.

John now takes over:

Do you want to print your own magazine; illustrate stories; help others produce a national amateur magazine? If NOT, read no further, for this article is intended for the enthusiastic fan, one who is willing to co-operate with other fans. Co-operation should enable us to produce a magazine which will allow fans in all parts of the British Isles and the World to keep in contact with one another, through the sharing of a common interest; to extend the appreciation of imaginative literature.

Of all the methods of producing a magazine with alimited circulation, mimeography or duplication is by far the cheapest. This involves the cutting of stencils from which the print is made. A stencil of this type consists of a thin sheet of long-fibred paper, coated or soaked in a soft wax.



SINISTER BARRIER!

B.I.

When the wax is cut or damaged, ink can then be forced through, thereby producing an image on an underlying sheet of paper.

Various grades of stencils are available for special purposes. If we consider stencil cutting on a typewriter we find that there are two main types; the standard type for a normal machine, and a softer stencil for the noiseless machine. The latter stencil can be far more easily damaged and must be treated even more carefully than the standard stencil, and none of them will bear much rough handling. The stencils usually have a heavy 'backing-sheet' of thick texture, which should not be removed until after cutting, as the use of this sheet does add to the clearness of the letters, when cutting.

The normal method of typing is to place a sheet of carbon paper between the stencil and the backing sheet, so that the carbon face is directly against the stencil. In other words, the reverse way to which you would put it if you desired to make a copy.

The typing should be firm but not too heavy, as in the latter case it is possible to cut letters like 'o' completely out of the stencil, or to make the cut too defined, with the result that it is possible for thin ink to run and smudge. It is best to use a machine on which the type-face is even, and not too much worn, and the type face should be carefully cleaned before use. Failing a typewriter brush, an old toothbrush is very good for this purpose. Brush firmly across the type of the machine, in all directions, to remove all accumulations of ink and paper fibres, but do not press heavily, or else you may twist the type.

Stencils are usually marked for various paper sizes, but don't forget to leave a margin on either side of the typing. Never type ~~right~~ up to the lines defining the size of the paper. Don't forget to put the lever governing the type ribbon into the 'stencil' slot before you start. This is normally marked with an 'S' or a white dot. If your machine is a portable, without a lever for disconnecting the ribbon, it is best to remove the reels, and take the ribbon right off. If you try and cut through the ribbon, your letters will be thick, and not particularly clear, even if they ~~get out at all~~.

To produce a clean, neatly finished work, the material should first be typed out, spacing to allow for even edges. You will note that Ken Slater never, or rarely troubles to do this, with the result that his lines always vary. But if you can spare the time, the added neatness is well worth the additional effort.

Errors can be corrected by the use of the various correcting fluids available. These are usually solutions of a plastic material in a volatile solvent, plenty of red dye being added to make it look nice. Nail varnish is an excellent substitute. When you make an error, turn the stencil up in the machine, but NOT out of the machine. Place a pencil, or something similar under the place the error has been made, but clear of the actual error. The pencil should be put between the carbon and the stencil, so the stencil is completely free. Then paint on the fluid with a small brush, and allow it to dry. When it has completely dried, just type over the place again, only do it cor-

rectly this time. It is possible to paint on the fluid without raising the stencil from the carbon, but in this case the fluid may cause the carbon to stick to the stencil, and may mean when you attempt to detach the two, the stencil will have a blob of carbon on it, which will prevent the ink coming thru.

If a space of several words or sentences has overrun the typing area, this can be blocked out with some such tape as cello-tape.

And now Ken takes over for a few additional notes:

When typing and pictorial items are to appear on the same page, it is best to mark out lightly on the stencil, with a soft lead pencil, the area for the picture, and then to type before you draw. Pressure of the rollers tends to press the wax back into the cuts with the result that parts of your picture may not 'come out' - they have been squeezed out!

The same applies to the type, when possible, never run a typed area through the machine again.

Another use to which cello-tape may be put, is the joining of sections of stencils. This is of special importance to those folk who wish to produce a fanzine in the half-foolscap size.

Back to John for the opening lesson on art work.

Art work and illustrations can be reproduced with greater ease than might be expected. As most British stencils are semi-transparent it is extremely simple to make tracings of outlines. There are two main ways of cutting a stencil for art-work:

1) The surface is scratched with a stylus or sharp instrument such as a knife so that the

ink can penetrate. This gives line drawings, and it is not possible to get fine shading effects. (An example is Terry Jeeves little cartoon on page 1, SINISTER BARRIER.) A hard surface is the best backing for such work, and the stencil should not be cut completely through, as sections of the illustration may have a disconcerting tendency to drop out.

If, however, the lines are not cut deep enough the resulting effort will be patchy. This method can give good results but it has severe limitations. So much depends upon the experience of the artist.

2) The second method is not to cut the stencil from the top, but to press it against a surface which penetrates or crushes the stencil. In the simplest instance, a stencil is laid on a hard surface, such as a smooth block of wood, a sheet of cellophane laid on top of the stencil, and the lines drawn by using a stylus on top of the cellophane. Quite a lot of pressure must be used, and the lines produced are fairly thick, but it is not so easy to tear the stencil as when the stylus is used directly on the surface.

This method works far better when a special writing plate is used. This consists of either a brass plate with a lot of serrations across its surface, or a similar plate to which is glued a cloth with very coarse raised threads.

This plate is placed under the stencil, and pressure applied to places to be cut, by a stylus with a rounded end, and the serrations then appear as

dots in the drawing or line. Part of the work in this booklet has been done by this method.

If you find it impossible to obtain such a plate, or you are not able to afford these tools, extremely effective results can be obtained by use of a set of files - both wood or metal cutting, the former giving a coarse shading effect, & the latter finer shading, naturally varying according to the 'cut' of the file.

Many ingenious ways of utilising such tools may be discovered, by experiment. Work of this nature is not done by the use of a stylus, but by using a smooth piece of wood, about the size of a pencil with the end smooth into a hemisphere. An irregular shading effect can be obtained by the use of a sheet of emery or sand or glass paper.

And here Ken now comes back again to give a little information about more 'specialised' tools.

The 'GESTETNER' range of tools for stencil work is by far the largest, although some difficulty may be experienced in obtaining these items. Folk wishing to get Gestetner tools will be well advised to write to the London address of the firm, stating their requirements, and asking for a quotation. The address is given on the last page of this booklet.

Tools available :- There are two main types of 'plates' for working on. These are the

'Tracing Frame', which consists of a ground glass sheet fitted to stand on a table like an easel, and which as its name implies, may be used for tracing artwork onto the stencil, and then, with the attachment of a zinc plate, for cutting the work; and the ordinary 'writing plate' described earlier in this article. The latter are fairly cheap, the silk type costing approximately 15/-, and the zinc one costing 8/-.

Wheel-pens, in a very large range, are a great asset. The possession of one or two wheel-pens can make things much easier. The average price of these is in the region of 12/- each, and they can be obtained to cut all sorts of different dotted lines, fine, broad, dot-dash, and if you want them, to draw double lines.

They are also made with the wheels set at varying angles, to fit the various ways people will hold the instrument.

The ordinary stylus, either with a pointed or 'ball' tip, costs 2/8d, and for simple line drawing, or normal shading work, is ideal. The ball tipped type is made in various sizes, and the average worker will find that Nos 79 and 81 (the smallest & largest) will suit him admirably.

Also in the range of tools available from Gestetner are the 'Tint Plates'. These are small three inch plates which give you 12 different types of cut. The patch of shade at the foot of page 1 show some examples, and the drawing above, on this page, has been produced by one of these plates. Different types



of plate can be used together, to produce more complex art-work. The final drawing is an example of this. These plates cost about 3/- each.

A few more tips on prices might be useful here - Stencils cost from 8d to 1/- each, dependant upon the quality. It is best, if you intend to do much work in stencils, to buy them by the quire, at which rate you will normally get a reduction in price. Sometimes as high as 20% !! So although it may mean that if you are going to buy say, 48 stencils, they cost U 30/-, you will easily see that you save money by doing this in preference to buying the same number in half-dozens each week and paying 9d each for them.

48 times 9d (I think) is 36/- !

Paper - again, it is much cheaper to buy five or six reams at a time, than to buy one ream today, and another one next pay day. On an average, a ream of paper will cost about 8/-; if U purchase it in bulk, it may go down as low as 5/- a ream. A ream, by the way, is 480 sheets, but you will usually find it has 500 ! Just one of those things.

But I think that we have told you all the more important bits now, and it is up to you to get started, if you feel the desire.

Perhaps just an odd note on the duplicator may be in order -

I shan't bother to describe the various types of machine - just one or two important points.

Duplicating is a dirty job. The ink has a habit of coming off all over the place. Try and keep your machine clean. If you don't you are liable to find that ink is suddenly appearing on perfect virgin sheets of paper, before you have even had a chance to put them thru the contraption.

Ink can be obtained in various grades. If your stencils are cut 'deep', use a thick ink. If they are only lightly cut, use a some-what thinner one.

If the ink is slow drying, use 'slip sheets' - this means, put a spare piece of paper between each printed sheet as it comes from the machine. This prevents the ink from the face of one sheet coming off onto the back of the next. The same slip sheets can be used over and over again.

Well, that is all. If you are in difficulties, consult John or I, we will do our best to help.



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J.N.
K.F.S.

