

Basic advice for reading secretary hand

1. paleography is NOT an exact science
2. forgot what modern letters look like, and forget how to spell
3. OED is your best friend (it includes archaic spellings and obsolete words)
4. attention to detail, including punctuation, is paramount
5. every individual has an individual, inconsistent, hand, and when hurried or incapacitated, the hand degenerates
6. think of *how* the letters are formed—work out the directions of the pen strokes (the duct) and lifts—and try to reproduce those strokes in your mind (the pliancy of the quill pen means that lighter, thinner strokes are usually upstrokes and thicker strokes are usually downstrokes)
7. compile your own alphabet from letters in the manuscript, focusing especially on letters with unique ascenders, descenders, loops, bowls, spurs, etc.
8. minuscules and majuscules are often used inconsistently
9. watch out for interference from letters in the lines above and below the line you are working on
10. if you are not sure of a word, write the letters you know, and put dots or x's to indicate the illegible bits (and return to them later)

Editorial conventions for class (semi-diplomatic) transcriptions

Each transcription should begin with repository name, manuscript shelfmark, page or folio number, and a brief statement of editorial conventions (if diverging from the conventions below). Make the statement as concise and clear as possible.

If you are transcribing in MS Word, make sure that automatic spell-check and automatic capitalization at the beginning of lines are switched off. Always transcribe consistently and unambiguously in your notes, to avoid heartache and frustration later.

- Original spelling (including *u/v* and *i/j*, and *ff* for *F*), punctuation, capitalization, lineation, and indentation are maintained.
- Superscript letters are silently lowered.
- Abbreviations are expanded with the supplied letters italicized (except for forms of address (Mr, Mrs) and symbols for money (*l*, *s*, *d*). The orthography of the scribe is observed when supplying letters.
- Thorns are replaced with italicized *th*, and terminal *-es* graphs with *-es*.
- Brevigraphs such as ampersands (& and &c.) are preserved.
- Cancelled words are ~~struck through~~.
- Interlineal insertions remain superscript, and are marked by a caret symbol (^) if present.
- Indecipherable or obliterated words appear in square brackets with dots representing the number of letters thought to be missing [b....es].
- Accidental obliterations, flourishes, and line fillers are not represented in the transcription, but can be noted in a general description or textual note.
- Any other special feature requiring comment, such as a change in hand, ink, size of script, can also be mentioned in a textual note.

a a a a a a a a a a a a a

b b b b c c c c c c c c c c

d d d d e e e e e e e e e e

f f f f g g g g g g g g

h h h h i i i i (in) in

k k k k l l l l l l l l

m m m m n n n n n n o o o o

p p p p (xp) p p q q q q

r r r r r r r r r r r r r r

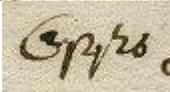
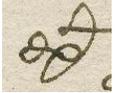
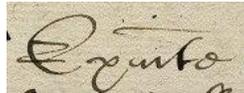
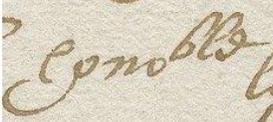
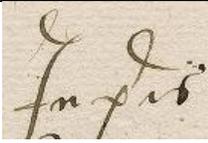
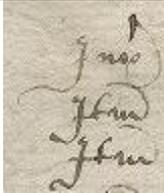
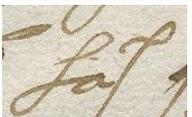
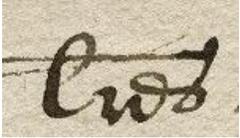
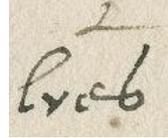
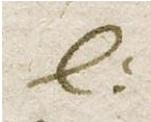
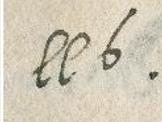
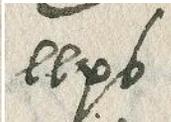
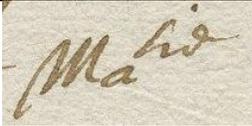
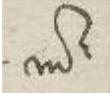
s s s s t t t t t t t t

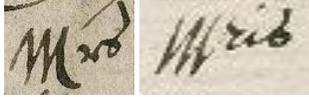
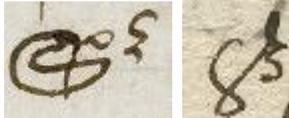
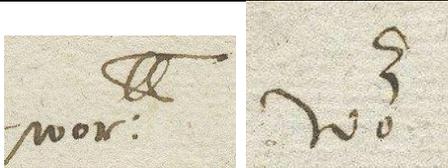
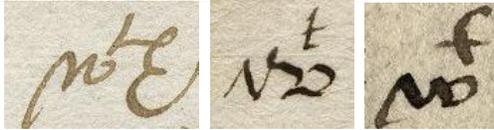
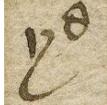
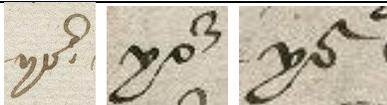
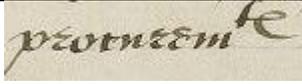
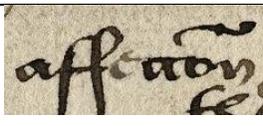
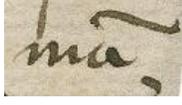
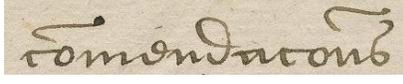
u u u v v v v w w w w w w w w

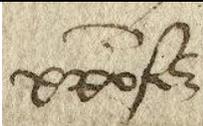
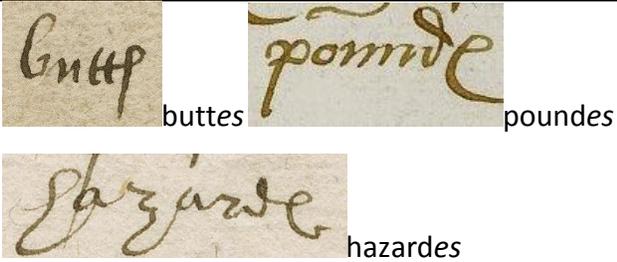
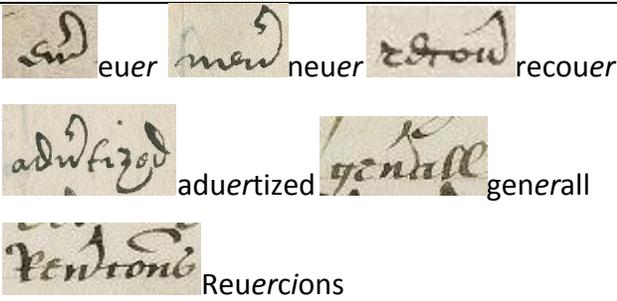
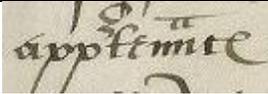
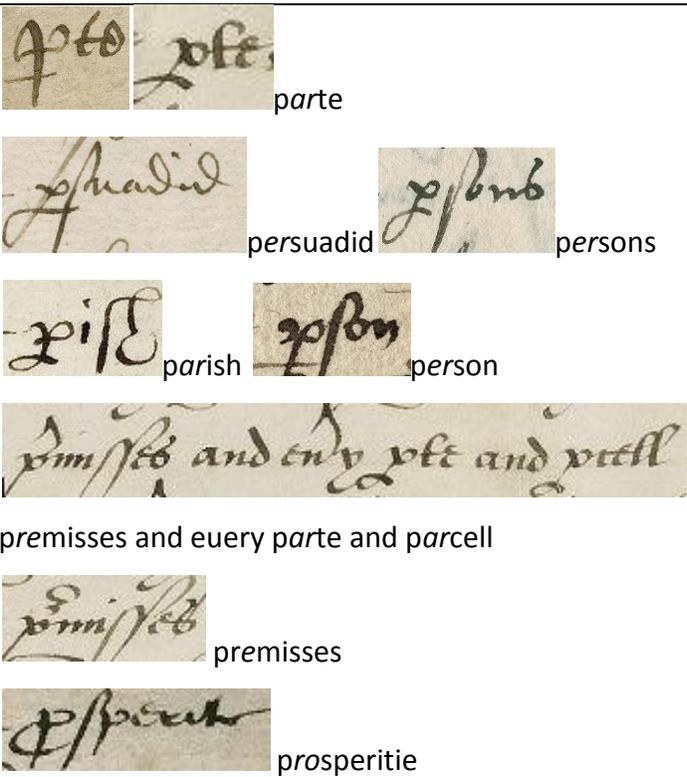
x x x y y y y z z z z

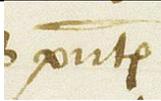
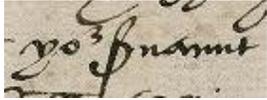
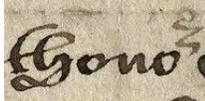
A		B	
C		D	
E		F	
G		H	
I, J		K	
L		M	
N			
O		P	
Q		R	
S		T	
U, V		W	
X		Y	
Z			

Common abbreviations

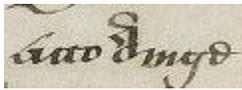
A^o	Anno	
Esq.	Esquire	 Esquires
Ex^t, Exaite	Examinant	  Examinante
Ho:, hono^{ble}	Honorable	 honorable
Imp, inp	Imprimis, in primis (in the first place)	 In primis
Itm, it	Item	 Inprimis, Item, Item
La:, La^p	Lady; Ladyship	 
Ire, Ires	lettre, lettres	 
L:, Lo, L^d, L^p Lls, Llps, Lopps	Lord or Lordship Lords or Lordships	  
Ma^{ty}, Ma^{tie}	Maiesty, Maiestie	
M^r	Master or Mister	 
m^d, mem.	memorandum	

M ^{rs} , M ^{ris}	Mistress	
o ^r	our	
p ^d	paid	
s ^r	Sir	
wor ^{ll} , wo ^r	Worshipful, worship	
w ^{ch}	which	
w th , w ^t	with	
y ^e	the	
y ^m	them	
y ^t	that	
yo ^r , y ^r	your	
-m ^t	-ment	 procurementes
-cōn,-sōn, -tōn	-cion, -sion, tion	 affection
~ above m, n, or vowel	add an m or n	 man  commendacions

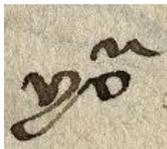
&c.	et cetera, or etc.	
xp	used for Christ (Greek <i>chi</i> & <i>rho</i> , the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ)	 Christofer
-es graph	looped down stroke at end of word, signifying an -es	
-er graph	hook-shaped upstroke, usually for -er but could also be used for ar/or/re	
-ur graph	superscript r, often at end of word	
“special” p	pre-, pro-, par-, per-, depending on style and use	

pnt[-es graph]	presentes (often found in bargain and sale documents)	 presentes
"special" s	ser- or sir	 your seruaunt
"the" elisions	e is dropped	 thonor, or "the honor"

Sometimes something looks like an abbreviation, but actually isn't. It may contain a superfluous tittle or a letter that has been superscripted for no apparent reason.

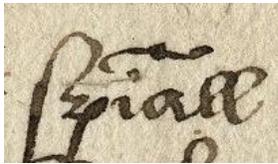


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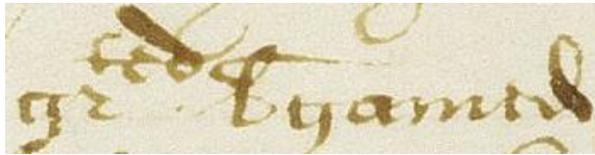


you

Sometimes a word is abbreviated, but not according to any of the rules above.



speciall



granted bargained