



Bede's 'Finger Alphabet'

Bede in 8th century Northumbria, came up with a basic substitution cipher, of numbers to represent Greek or Roman letters, but then combined it with hand shapes used in finger counting. So, the secret message in Latin 'CAUTE AGE' [Watch out!] could be spelled out by signing numbers 3,1,20,19,5 1,7,5, using the Greek alphabet.

A	B	Γ	Δ	E	Ζ	H	Θ	I	K	Λ	M	N	Ξ	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20	30	40	50	60
Ο	Π	Ρ	Σ	Τ	Υ	Φ	Χ	Ψ	Ω	↑				
70	80	90	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900			

Sources:

- Bede, and Wallis, Faith [trans.] *The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1999) pp. 9-13
- Bragg, Lois "Visual-Kinetic Communication in Europe Before 1600: A Survey of Sign Lexicons and Finger Alphabets Prior to the Rise of Deaf Education" *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 2:1 (1997) pp. 1-25
- 15th century illustration, from Pacioli's *Summa de arithmetica*.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bede_finger_alphabet.jpg

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