

# Knotting Matters

Newsletter of the

INTERNATIONAL  
GUILD OF KNOT  
TYERS

# KNOTTING MATTERS

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS

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PRESIDENT - Jan VOS

Issue #30

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## *GUILD ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES RENEWABLE 1ST. JANUARY:*

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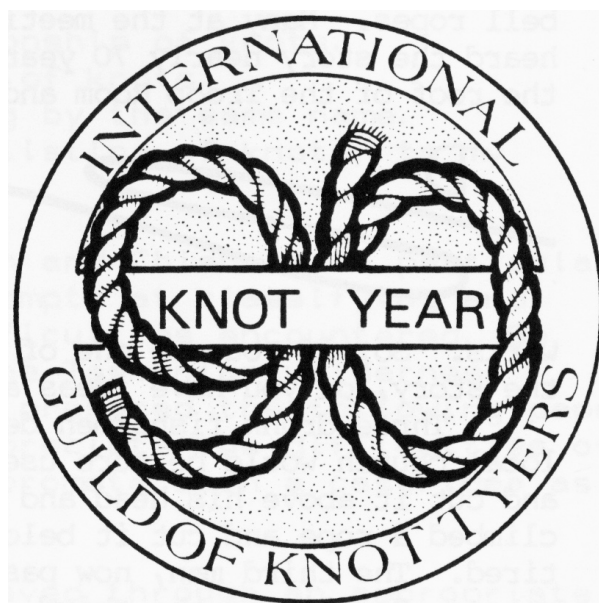
## EDITORIAL

There is a saying that a person claiming 25 years experience has, more probably, one year of experience that is 25 years old.

I do not always agree.

Knot Year 1990 should provide us all with that vital year one; be it in display and presentation, be it in tying a star knot, be it befriending and knotting with a guild member on another continent or across the border - county or state.

Enjoy it!



## 1990 IGKT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1990 AGM of the guild will take place on Saturday May 19th at T.S. STEADFAST, Kingston on Thames, near London.

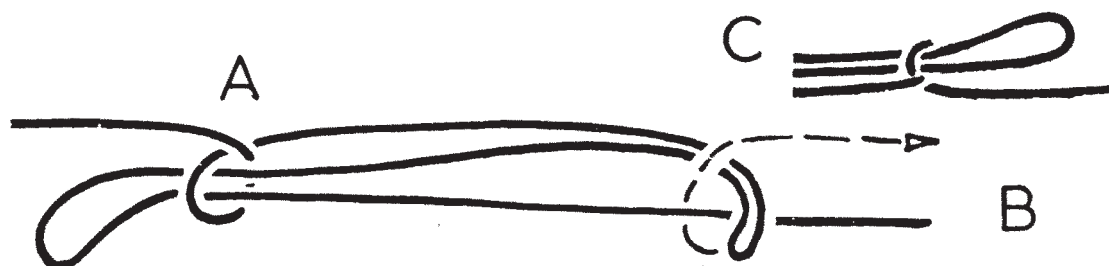
IN DEFENCE OF THE SHEEPSHANK

Percy W. Blandford

At the October 1989 meeting, Ken Yalden said the sheepshank was useless, I said it was for stealing church bell ropes, and it was the weakest effort by many of the contestants in the 'Six Knot Challenge'. So what?

The sheepshank is primarily intended for shortening a rope when you cannot get at the ends. If you can use an end, you may as well shorten the rope there. Many of the contestants in the challenge used an end to make a sheepshank. Several used the three-loop method, which is fine as a trick, but little use in practice.

If you want the rope to finish under tension you must gather the rope into a long double loop, put on one half hitch (A), then use the loop at the other end to force a half hitch into the other standing part (B,C).



A more important use, that many books omit, is strengthening a weak point. If the rope has become chafed and that part is put in the middle, the parts each side will support it (D,E); even to the extent of a completely parted rope - hence the yarn about stealing bell ropes. Many at the meeting had not heard it. When I first heard the story nearly 70 years ago as a Scout, we tied a rope in the roof of the Troop Room and a boy climbed and proved the idea works. So, if you are one of the few readers who have never heard the story, or you have ideas about stealing bell ropes, here it is:



Three drunk fishermen decided the ropes on the bells in the local church would be more use on their boats. One climbed a rope and cut it above his head and dropped to his death. The second climbed a rope and cut it below his feet, then fell when he became tired. The third man, now passably sober, was not content with two ropes. He climbed the third, hung with one hand while making a sheepshank with his teeth and other hand. He cut the middle piece and climbed down carefully, then shook the rope to upset the knot.

A sheepshank holds well under steady tension, but will soon come apart if the rope is alternately taut and slack, unless the end loops are seized to the standing parts. It is simpler and stronger to put lever or marline spike hitches over the loop ends instead of half hitches. I have heard the result called a dogshank.

## NAPOLEON & JACQUARD by Geoffrey Budworth

A while ago someone asked me if I knew who it was Napoleon either ennobled or rewarded for tying a certain knot. I had to say at the time: "No, I don't."

I have now chanced upon part of the likely answer. Napoleon met Joseph-Marie Charles JACQUARD. He was the French silk weaver (1752-1834) and mechanic who in 1801 invented the 'Jacquard Loom' that, using perforated cards, could weave complex patterns automatically. Silk-workers at Lyon, where Jacquard was born, smashed his machines; but by 1812 there were 11,000 in use and the design was adopted worldwide.

Jacquard also invented a machine to make fishnets. Napoleon, having seen this, is reported to have asked Jacquard: "Are you the man who can do what God Almighty cannot - tie a knot in a taut string?"

Jacquard diplomatically replied: "I can do not what God cannot, but what god has taught me to do."

Well, there you have it. I know no more.

## CATALOGUE OF KNOTS AND ROPEWORK by F. C. Brown

Like many before me I have been struck by:

- 1) The obvious family relationship of knots.
- 2) The peculiar multi-naming of knots.
- 3) The variety of knots going by the same name.
- 4) The lack of a systematic listing of knots, to my knowledge.

Through correspondence, Messrs Budworth and Chisnall in particular, and reading I have learned of some attempts at classifying and coding, and I fully appreciate the difficulties encountered. So, while babysitting a goldmine deep in the Tasmanian wilderness recently, I racked my brain and I have prepared the following paper for the guild to consider. You will appreciate the difficulties of a truly isolated member attempting to promote such a case/idea as outlined in the paper.

The funding of the project may be achieved through an appropriate institution, or possibly an appropriate industry.

Frank Brown

22 June '89

61 Kellatie Road  
Rosny  
Tasmania  
AUSTRALIA 7018



INTERNATIONAL CATALOGUE OF KNOTS  
AND  
ROPE WORK

INTRODUCTION

Any person who takes an interest in the field of knots and rope work, is soon confronted with some quaint and often puzzling anomalies. One knot may have several names, or one name may apply to different knots. As expertise and knowledge grow, one is confronted with the subtleties of left and right handed versions of the 'same' knot, plus the extra niceties of slips and tucks. To me, this fact of rope work is fascinating, lending the charm of history and legend to the subject.

However, as a scientist by trade, I have this instilled need to label and classify everything, so as to have the objects in the work positively and unambiguously identified. I am thus proposing that the Guild consider the publication of the International Catalogue of Knots and Rope Work.

The proposed catalogue would become a central reference work, providing authoritative, unambiguous identification of knots, bends, hitches, plaits, sinnets, splices, whippings, lashings and any rope systems. It should include information on method(s) of tying, uses and contra-indications, alternative names, historical facts, safety data and reference material. Apart from the academic aspect of the work, the catalogue would be of value in a variety of fields, e.g. forensics, instruction (riggers), contract specifications and legislation/regulations. In addition it would be of interest to a couple of hundred Guild members and several thousand libraries.

The creation and maintenance of the catalogue is seen as being a logical and achievable function of the Guild, utilising the unique pool of specialised knowledge of the membership. In addition, the project would provide another 'raison d'être' if such is needed. At this time, the steering/editorial committee should be located in the U.K. due to the concentration of members and resources there. However, remotely placed members could contribute by being correspondent committee members. This arrangement would verify the use of the term 'International' in the title.

The end product is seen as being in two forms. The primary product would be a series of computer floppy discs containing the described information, and capable of being read on home-type computers. Selection of an appropriate system would be an early requirement of the committee, as well as obtaining the services of a programmer with the necessary appreciation. The secondary product would be a bound hard copy of the computerised data. Updating of the information would be a necessary continuing function of the committee.

## FORMAT

1. Cat No. . . . . .
2. Name(s) . . . . .
3. Description . . . . .
4. Diagram/Illustration



Obverse

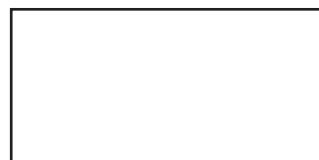
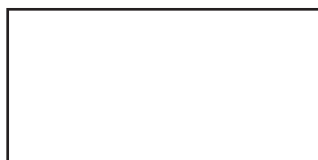
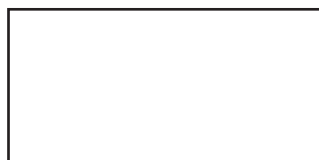
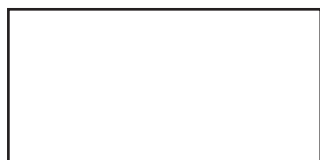


Reverse



Dressed

5. Method(s) of Tying . . . . .
- . . . . .
- . . . . .



6. Uses and Contra-indications . . . . .
- . . . . .
- . . . . .

7. Strength . . . . .

8. No. of Crosses . . . . .

9. Relevant Information . . . . .
- . . . . .
- . . . . .

10. References . . . . .
- . . . . .
- . . . . .

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### 1. Catalogue Number

This number is the core element of the catalogue. It is by use of the number that any knot can be absolutely identified, and thus the system employed in generating the number must be selected with considerable care. I believe that the selected system must be flexible and 'open-ended' so that any knots developed in the future can be assigned a logical position in the catalogue along with its identifying number.

A number of options are open for consideration in selecting a numbering system. The first is a simple sequential listing of one to infinity, with perhaps some ordering of knot 'families' e.g. 1-100 for simple, one rope knots, stoppers etc, 101-500 for hitches, 501-1000 for bends. Knots that are not included in the initial catalogue could be assigned 'spare' numbers within the group, or supplementary letters used i.e. 10a, 10b etc.

Another option would be to use some form of coding wherein the catalogue number not only identified the knot, but also provided some form of description. I am personally in favour of this option, and am presently working on such a coding form.

### 2. Name

The variety of names which have arisen in the craft is both fascinating and slightly troublesome. It is certainly a colourful aspect of rope work and as such should be preserved. More importantly, an authoritative statement that one knot is exactly the same as another e.g. Reef = Square (USA), is an obvious function of the catalogue. An obvious difficulty arises with regard to languages other than English, but I would maintain that English is the nearest thing to an international tongue at this time.

### 3. Description

This section would provide some difficulties, mainly due to the need to use technical, esoteric language. Some form of glossary would be required, defining and describing the terms used. The use of key words to assist in identification could possibly be used in this section also, particularly if the catalogue is computer based.

### 4. Diagram/Illustration

This section would naturally compliment 'the above section, and with 'a picture worth a thousand words', the merit of the section is self evident. I would presume that line diagrams would be the most likely technique, but I am not aware of the capabilities/requirements for putting this sort of information into computers. The inclusion of a diagram(s) of the dressed down knot may not prove to be practical for line diagram, and only achievable by more sophisticated artwork or photography.

## 5. METHOD(S) OF TYING

Similar problems arise with this section as described above. However, the value of the section to enthusiasts, instructors etc is self evident. Again, technical terms relating to rope handling in constructing the various knots, would need to be included in the glossary

## 6. USES AND CONTRA-INDICATORS

This section would list the common or notable uses and users of the particular knot. Care should be taken in actually recommending any knot for a use because of possible legal/ethical situations. However, advice on non-use should be acceptable and should include notes on the nature of the material where practical i.e. "This knot should not be used with polyethylene type rope without appropriate safeguards!"

## 7. STRENGTH

An alternative title may be preferred for this section, but it is meant to include some indication of reduction in safe working loads when the particular knot is used. It could also include information of tendency to slip or lock.

## 8. NO. OF CROSSES

This relates to the identification system developed by Geoff Budworth. The method, possibly coupled with Rob Chisnall's classification system should provide a good method of knot identification.

## 9. RELEVANT INFORMATION

This would be a general interest section which could include esoteric trivia, historical data and recorded observations.

## 10. REFERENCES

This section should record the source of the information supplied for the particular knot.

## SUMMARY

The above is the product of considerable thought, discussion and investigation. We have categories for stars, chemicals and books which codify millions of entities. A few thousand rope constructions should be slightly easier to list.

The proposed format is unlikely to be suitable for all the identification areas of rope work, but could readily act as a starting model.

This paper sets out a possible scheme for the creation of a valuable, useful document, or so I believe. A considerable amount of work will be required to design, publish and maintain the document, but good planning and organisation should produce something of considerable merit and be a source of pride to it's contributors.



## NOT CLOVES OF GARLIC?

I wonder how many of our members are aware of the possible fate which could await them? Or will they be warned in time by the late Hillaire Belloc's account of the dreadful end of Henry King!

*The chief; defect of Henry King  
Was chewing little bits of string,  
Until one day they went and tied  
Themselves in ugly knots inside.  
Physicians of the utmost fame  
Were called at once, but when they came  
They answered (as they took their fees)  
There is no cure for this disease,  
Henry will soon be dead  
His parents stood around his bed  
Bemoaning his untimely death,  
When Henry with his latest breath  
Cried "Oh my friends, be warned by me  
That breakfast, supper, dinner, tea  
Are all the Human frame requires".  
With that, the wretched child expires!*

You have been warned.

Sincerely

Eric Franklin  
2nd Sept 1989

63 Aylward Road  
Merton Park  
London  
SW20 9AJ

## BOOK REVIEW

KNOTCRAFT by Stuart Grainger

ISBN 0 9515506 0 8

An International Guild of Knot Tyers Publication

This neat 80 page A5 book is a compilation of three earlier successful IGKT titles with new material added on carrick mats and turksheads.

A "Must" for those who appreciate Stuart Grainger's clear knot drawings and concise explanations yet are missing one or more of the following titles from their library:

An Introduction to Knot Tying and Fancywork  
Some Splices and Lanyard Knots  
Solly's Single Strand Star and Variations on the Theme

Recommended retail price Â£3.24; Available to IGKT members for Â£2.92, including postage and packing. from the guild supplies secretary Barry DarkIns.

## NOBLE KNOTTERS OF WELLINGBOROUGH

In the spring of '89 Mr Fred Carrington and Mr Albert Burton were approached by the Sea Ranger Association to spend a few hours at their Water Activity weekend at Milton Keynes to demonstrate knotting. Messrs Carrington and Burton nobly accepted the challenge. Perhaps it was not made clear that Sea Rangers are a voluntary organisation for girls interested in all things nautical. However knotting is not such an exciting prospect when all manner of boats are available!



On Saturday 8th July the Noble Knotters arrived with boxes of goodies, displays, books and built in skill and enthusiasm. The displays were colourful, neat and eye catching. The Sea Rangers were enchanted. Their enthusiasm grew so much that the noble knotters were asked to return on Sunday. By the time I found them they were tired but happy men! They had been *eaten out of house and home* not a shred of cord or thread left. Yet still questions were being asked and demonstrations being demanded.

Thank you Fred and Albert for engendering such interest and giving so generously -your time, patience and knot board trophies.

Hopefully the Sea Ranger Association's own *Olive Richardson Knot Trophy*, reproduced here and to be awarded next year, will draw some interesting entries from the youngsters. All through your efforts.

Jill Jenner

5th Sept '89

*Some IGKT members will recall the late Miss Olive Richardson. Her design for a decorative lanyard was published in the first edition of Knotting Matters.*

## ROPES AND KNOTS ON A KUWAIT "BOOM"

12 Inch Rope	Amer Mouli
10 Inch.Rope	Amar Cherki
5 Inch Rope	Braidur

A lanyard for lashing or bending a sail to a yard is called a *darr* or *durur*. An anchor warp is *sangal*. A rope or line is known by the common term *anghan*.

Clove hitch	Tarbiyeh
Splice	Adhiyeh
Eyesplice	Yazul

*"The Dhow"* - Clifford W Hawkins, Nautical Pub. Co. 1977.

## EXPANDED CENTRE-PIECE DESIGNS from Neil Hood

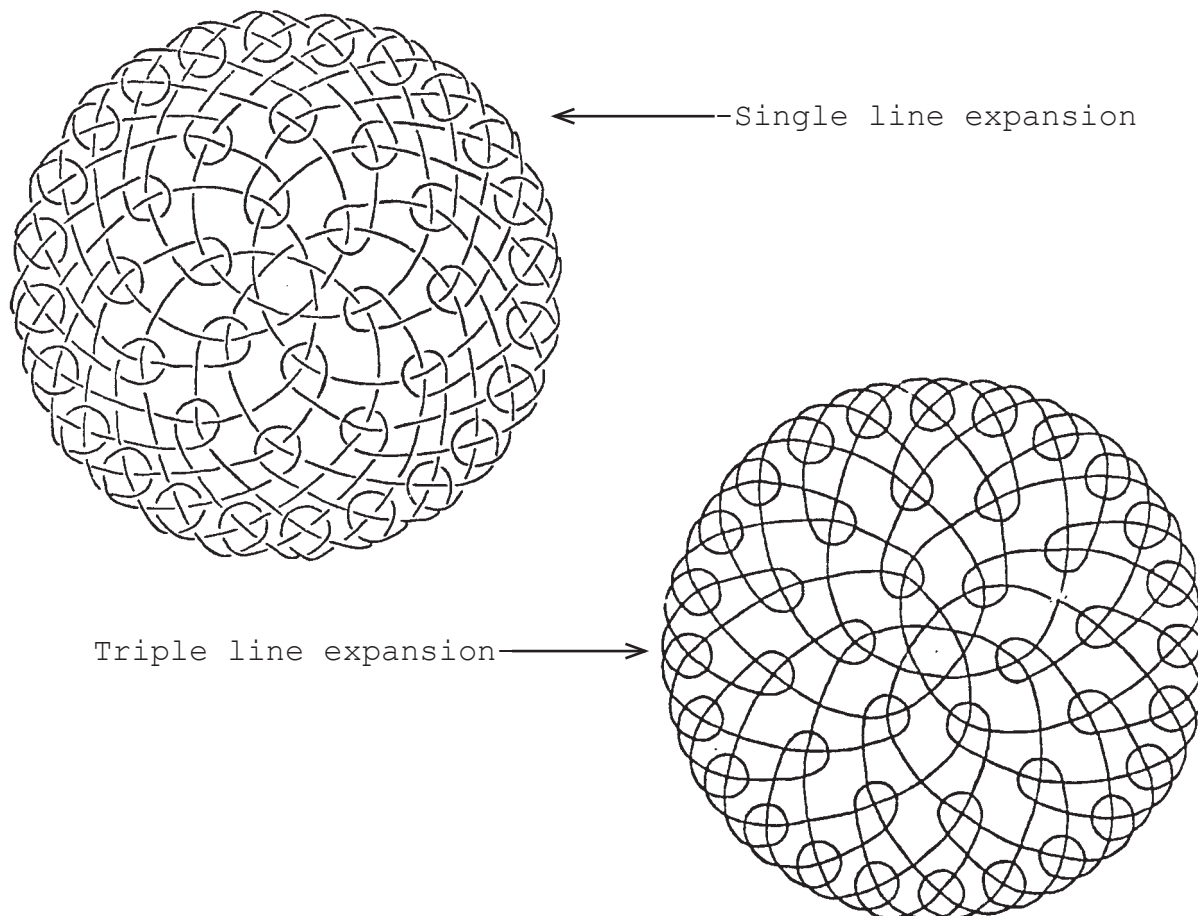
The mats below are two of the several possible expansions of the celtic centre piece design shown in *The Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Ropework* by Raoul. Graumont and John Hensel - plate 140, figure 42. The G & H mat has 12 outer interlocked bights, whereas those below have 24.

The mat design at the Lower right is tied with three separate lengths of cord that interlock and closely resembles the 24 bight mat published In Kaj Lund's "*Matter og Rosetter*" (1968). Kaj Lund also shows variations with six, 12 and 48(!) outer bights. There were also a couple of celtic mats published in the first edition of "Knotting Matters" - five and eight outer bight versions.

The design at the upper left, however, is a single line expansion; that is it can be tied with a single length of cord.

A guide to the length of cord needed is that the single line expansion requires about sixty metres of three millimetre diameter solid core braided line to tie the mat tripled.

This diameter cordage will result in a completed mat of about twenty five centimetres in diameter. So expand the diagrams to thirty centimetres diameter at least for use as a guide.



A generous dash of patience is required to complete the mats.

## DUTCH DIAMOND KNOT 'VARIATION

An Idea of Kees Tuk, Developed by Your President - Jan Vos.

Five of the IGKT members in Holland made the eight hour crossing to Great Britain for the General Meeting at Portsmouth, April 1989. I had to be there, because I was a nominated candidate for the Guild's next president. During the sea crossing we discussed the possibilities with knots. Long after the three other members had gone to bed Kees Tuk and I were still talking knots.

At home, Kees had been trying a new type of coloured rope. One of the results was a keyring where he had made close together a left-and a right-handed Full Matthew Walker. For fun I said it was a pity he had not made it as one whole knot, as I thought it might be possible. We discussed some possibilities and because of the time we went to bed too.

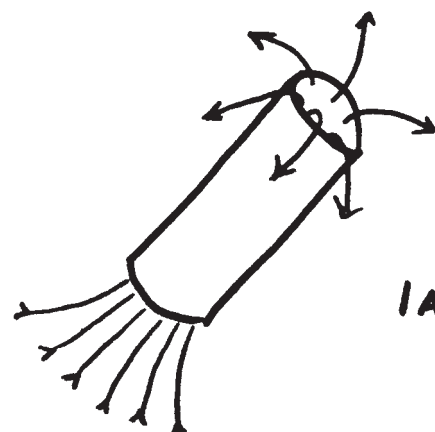
About two weeks after the interesting meeting at which I was installed as president I received a phone call from Kees Tuk. He told me he had made the knot we discussed on the boat, whereas I did some homework on making extreme Diamond knots - with interesting results.

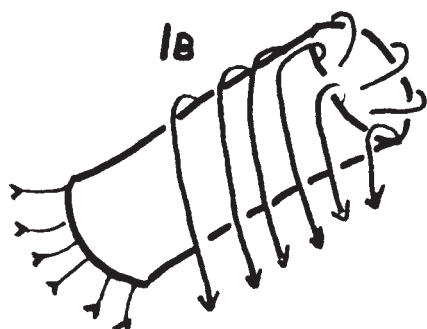
The two Full Matthew Walker knots close together reminded me of one of the larger diamond knots. I took six strands and made at first an over three/under three structure of a Full Matthew Walker. (See Ashley #749 and my diagram 2A below.) But I found that the overlap was not big enough. Then I tried an over six/under six structure. This was already rather satisfying - see figure 2B.

Still the strands did not make a full turn of 360 degrees in proper Full Matthew Walker fashion. Perhaps an over twelve/under twelve structure in six strands would help? Doing this the common way (in my left hand) resulted in a good lower part for the knot, but the upper part stayed too open because it lacked six strands - with twelve strands you would have no problem of course! The trick was how to tighten this six strand version.

Now I needed the help of a cardboard tube - an empty toilet paper roll. Follow the instructions in the next three diagrams, 1A, 1B & 1C.

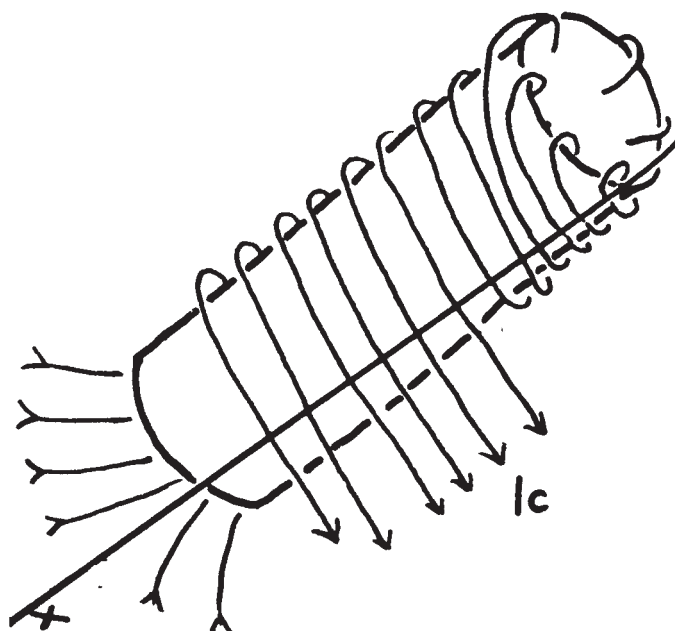
Pass the six strands up through the tube and spread them evenly as they emerge at the top.





Twist the six strands down and round to the right - this is anticlockwise looking down onto the top of the tube.

Twist them another full turn. At each point on the tube you must be able to count down twelve diagonal sloping strands - see the line X - X. (It may help to draw a vertical Line along the Length of the tube beforehand. Some pins may also help too, to keep control over the strands at the top and bottom - Ed.)



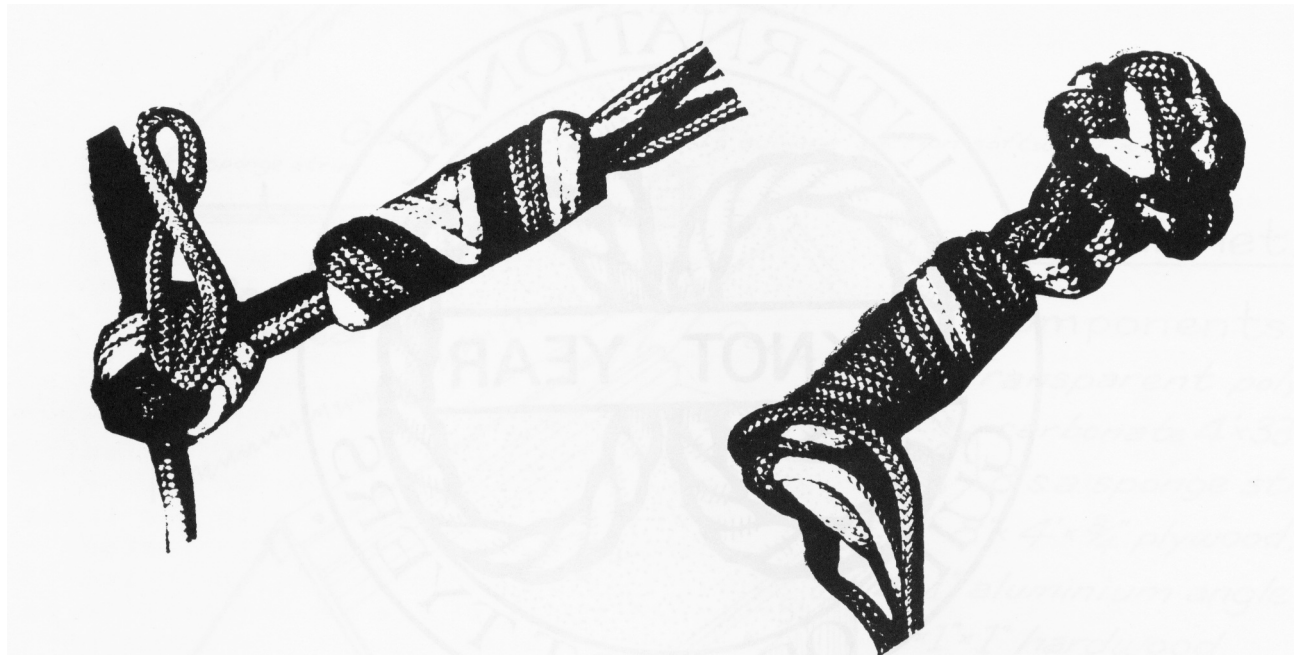
All 6 strands should now have made two full 360 degree turns round the tube. With each strand turn up diagonally towards the right...first over 12 strands...then under 12 strands.

Watch out. This knot is difficult to draw up. As Clifford Ashley found with his work on herringbone textured diamond knots, the knot requires considerable gentling before it will lie fair. I suggest you draw taut on your first toilet roll so that the strands lie close to each other. Then try to reduce the diameter of your toilet roll, either by cutting it or by putting another cardboard roll inside. Draw taut, working from the middle to both ends. Repeat if necessary. When small enough remove the roll and draw taut again.

The result is beautiful - each strand makes a perfect turn. For comparison, below are the three results. From the left, Ashley #749, the over six/under six knot and the (new?) Dutch-Diamond variation.







With the remaining ends I fashioned a keyring with a Cauliflower knot (Ashley #901) - figure 3. The knot is also very distinguished around other sinnets, bellropes and handles. In these objects the toilet roll is replaced by the sinnet and you make the two full turns around the sinnet.

Best Wishes

Jan Vos  
21 June '89

Dr Kuyperlaan 54  
1272 HS HUIZEN  
The Netherlands

## BRANCH NEWS - Notes from Round and About.

EAST ANGLIA branch has now had two meetings, at Boreham in Essex and Ipswich in Suffolk. Their contact is Nigel Harding, 48 Willow Cres., Hatfield Peverel, Chelmsford, CM3 2LJ - 0425 380607.

LONDON & SOUTH EAST branch is holding a workshop weekend In March. Unfortunately it is already oversubscribed. Watch this space for news of how they get on.

NORTH WEST of England do not have a branch at present. Recent members Pauline and Ron Long would like to make more contacts near to home - with a view to starting a branch. Their address is: 12 Allen Rd., Weston Point, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 4HX.

MIDLANDS branch has not met, other than at its shows, since 1986! May we have a volunteer, please, to find a room, pick a day and let us know? Enough of us in the area will turn up to ensure a good meeting.



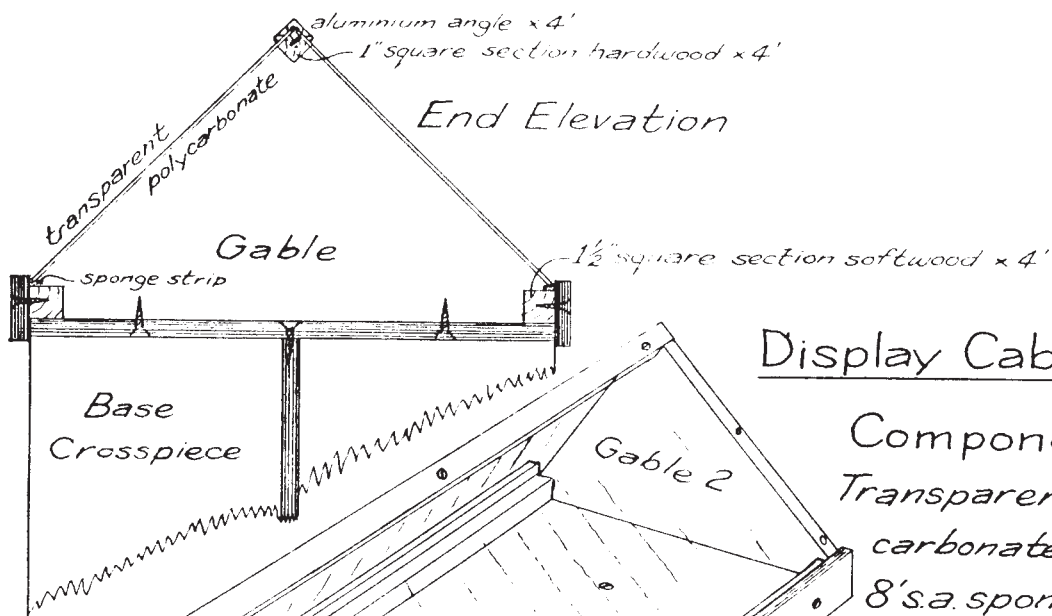
The International Guild of Knot Tyers *KNOT YEAR 90* celebrations and shows will take all manner of forms in lots of different places. Many will be static displays: in the foyer of your local cinema or theatre; in the window of your bank or building society (else you'll close the account); at your yacht club; at your local museum or art gallery; in the local council offices; in your front garden; in your local lending library; in your neighborhood school.

There will be times when the knots cannot be closely supervised. Moreover, the organisation to whom you want to lend your display will probably agree much more readily if the presentation is in keeping with their own high standards. Museums may have a spare glass display case available. Window displays also should present few problems - a cloth draped over cardboard boxes; a couple of guild logos; the names and phone numbers of the secretary or members to contact in the area.

On the opposite page are plans by Stuart Grainger for a free standing covered display case that will show your handiwork to very good effect. At present the Guild has three of these cases - two are already in prominent use for the *Pop Maths Roadshow* until October, by courtesy of IGKT member Professor Ronnie Brown - see page 18.

Otherwise think about making your own. You may not need the base, preferring to fix it to a table.

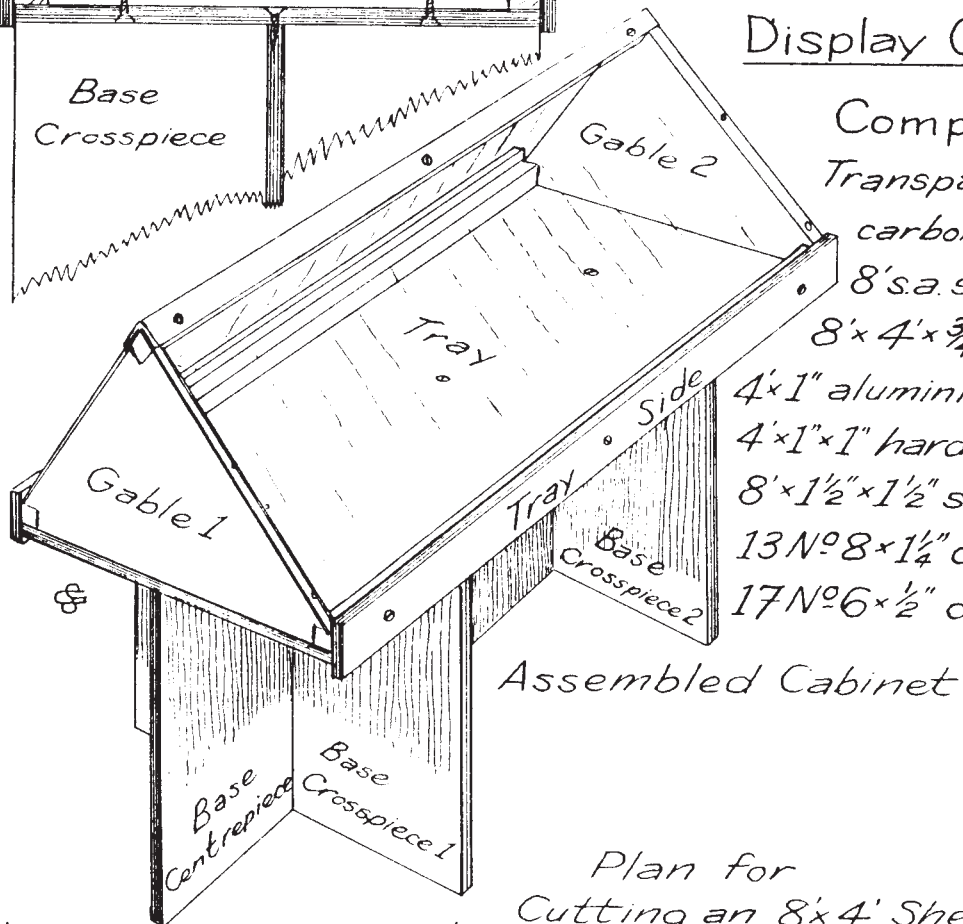
Shown on this page, the Knot Year 90 Logo is also one of Stuart Grainger's designs. Photocopied and highlighted in the guild's adopted colours of blue and gold, this 'roundel' will add that last professional touch to your display - it makes all the difference.



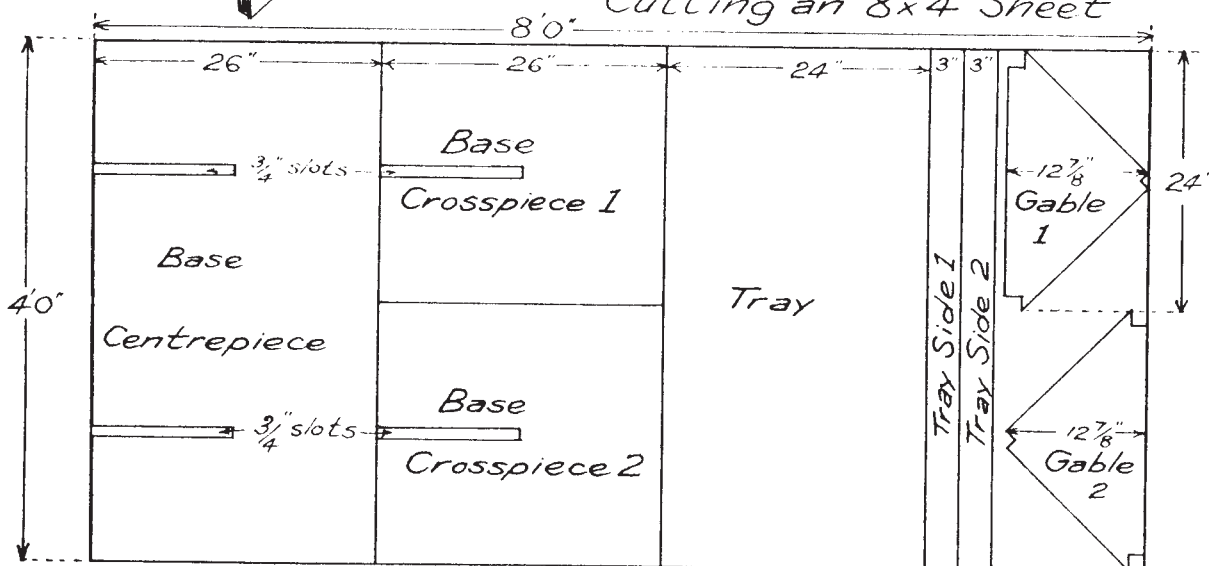
## Display Cabinet.

### Components:

Transparent polycarbonate  $4 \times 33 \frac{3}{4}$ ",  
 8's.s. sponge strip,  
 $8 \times 4 \times \frac{3}{4}$ " plywood,  
 $4 \times 1$ " aluminium angle,  
 $4 \times 1 \times 1$ " hardwood,  
 $8 \times 1 \frac{1}{2} \times 1 \frac{1}{2}$ " softwood,  
 13 N°  $8 \times 1 \frac{1}{4}$ " csk. screws,  
 17 N°  $6 \times \frac{1}{2}$ " csk. screws.



### *Plan for Cutting an 8'x4' Sheet*



## LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

Dear Robert,

About the Chinese knot described by Anon on page 5, KM 28, I was at first unsure how to start. I was unfamiliar with the rule of the road expression (eventually the penny dropped) and was confused by the first figure which, if a normal clove hitch, is tied round a horizontal core whereas most horses of my acquaintance have vertical tails.



It would have helped if the blobs on the first diagram had been joined by the appropriate dotted Lines. I wondered for a while if what was meant was as shown opposite on a vertical core. So I tied the thing and came up with a doubly slipped constrictor knot, with the loops coming out perpendicular to the tail, instead of the doubly slipped strangle knot with the loops coming out parallel, as in the article. So I had two butterfly bindings for the price of one!

In KM 28 you asked for comments. Here are a few, mostly concerning KM in general, not just your part in it.

The appearance of KM 28 is very scrappy, with several different typefaces and, much worse, many different layouts. A large part of this seems to be due to using your correspondents' submissions unchanged, without retyping. This is, of course, a valuable means of reducing the load on the volunteer editor. I strongly suggest that you lay down standards which could be met by just about any typewriter. Correspondents could also be asked to give more thought to the layout of figures so that there is a good balance between figures and text. If anyone can't draw could they try the photocopy method mentioned in KM 23, pp 11-12? I admit I haven't tried it myself, but the results in KM 23 looked good enough for many purposes.

To come back to knots in KM 28, Dan Lehman's knot on p 24 may well be new, though I'm not too sure where or whether a noose, albeit a stiff one, should be used in a child's swing. On the other hand I would expect something close to Steve Finch's knots on p 11 to exist somewhere, though applications for them, specially the second, must be rare.

Regards,

Charles Warner  
Autumn 1989

'Glenellen'  
Hume Highway  
Yanderra, 2574  
Australia

## QUOTATION

BRUNEL can be said to have originated a new regional craft and one highly suited to the men of western England with their long maritime tradition. Highly skilled bridge gangs examined each wooden viaduct four times a year and when repairs or replacements were necessary they would lower themselves from the decks in bowline loops, swinging dizzily, perhaps one hundred feet or more above the ground. Until the turn of the century a large number of these gangs each consisting of 14 men, a chargeman and two lookouts were kept constantly at work. But by 1931 only three timber viaducts remained. When they were replaced soon after, the last surviving gang was disbanded and a special skill which had become traditional was no longer required.

*Biography of Isambard Kingdom Brunel* - L T C Rolt 1957 Pub Longmans Green.

## OBITUARY

In October we learnt of the death of Mrs Merida Backhouse of Kings Norton, Birmingham.

Merida joined the guild in September 1985 and visited Charlton House for the Knotting Extravaganza, having tied some of the knots on display. We also met Merida at the Black Country Museum AGM and at the Midlands Branch.

The guild secretary, Frank Harris, has expressed our condolence to her husband, Roger.

## A SECRETARY NEVER FORGETS

A few years back Frank Harris suggested that the guild could compile a comprehensive directory of rope and twine manufacturers and stockists simply by each member looking through their telephone directory - Yellow Pages, Thomson or business section - and letting him know. So far he has received few replies.

As a reminder, perhaps to let us atone for our slow response, Frank would also now like to know:

Where are the worthwhile knot displays (museums, pubs...) in your area?

When and where are the established boat shows or other gatherings of practised knot tyers in your region?



## POP MATHS ROADSHOW by Celia Hoyles

Quoted from The Times Educational Supplement, 6 Oct '89.

...The next thing that caught my eye was the exhibition of knots from the University of Bangor. The first exhibits feature some containers and objects made by knotting, contributed by the International Guild of Knot Tyers, with posters setting out the relationship between mathematics and knots. With a friend, I tied and untied knots, tried to classify them, represent them by colouring. We were challenged to identify the invariants of a knot so they could be distinguished from each other. How do you "add" knots? What is a "prime number" knot?

The posters then pointed out that the trefoil is the simplest knot. Why is it that the mirror image of the trefoil can never be manipulated to get back to the original? Finally there is an interesting section on applications of knots which relate to the physical properties of DNA.

*Celia Hoyles is professor of mathematics education at the Institute of Education, University of London, and co-presenter of ITV's Fun and Games series.*

### WHERE YOU CAN SEE THE POP MATHS ROADSHOW

Following its launch at Leeds in September 1989, venues to be visited in 1990 include: Jodrell Bank, Cheshire (until 14 Jan); Institute of Education, London (16 Jan-9 Feb); Southampton University (13-28 Feb); St Andrew's College of Education, Glasgow (7-16 March); Elgin Academy (20-29 March); Edinburgh Science Festival (1-17 Apr); Aberdeen University (18 Apr-3 May); Liverpool University (4-20 May); Gateshead (8-17 June); Sheffield City Polytechnic (18-28 June); Cambridge University (7-14 July); East of England Show, Peterborough (16-20 July); Science Museum, London (23 July-5 Sept); Stockport Local Education Authority (8-17 Sept); Birmingham City Council (20 Sept-2 Oct).

Other dates may be added, including Northern Ireland, Nottingham, Exeter, Basingstoke and others. Details available from Jill Nelson at The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AG.

## QUOTATION

I then bound the handle of the knife with a length of twine to the end of an oar so I could harpoon the first fish which came near enough. Almost anything will serve as a lashing - a necktie, shoe laces, a belt or strands of rope; a castaway would always have something of the sort.

*The Bombard Story* - Dr Alain Bombard's account of his pioneering solo crossing of the Atlantic ocean in a rubber dinghy, translated by Brian Connell, pub Andre Deutsch Ltd 1953.

## LETTER From MALVERN

Dear Robert,

The English Language is forever a puzzle; there is always a logic to its curiosities but seldom a simple rule. The English of America, India, Indonesia, Scotland and England differ but remain comprehensible between those of goodwill. The problem raised by Brijes Day in Knotting Matters #28, page 10, is a case in point. Those who live with knots know what they mean and the quaint useage promotes camaraderie. However, Mr Day is right to ask whether there are principles by which to differentiate a knot and a hitch. As an answer perhaps you might reprint the following note by Warburton Baden Powell who was a Q.C. and brother of the founder of the Scout movement. It originally appeared in an excellent book called *Sea Scouting and Seamanship for Boys* published in 1924.

*'Bends' and 'Hitches' are the terms used for fastening a rope to a rope or to anything. Probably the most correct definition would be that 'bend' is the act and 'hitch' the mode of acting. A 'knot' is a stopper at the end of a rope or placed somewhere upon it, such as a 'Turk's Head', 'man rope', 'wall', 'crown', 'Matthew Walker', 'blood'. A Bowline is really a bend and a hitch but from constant wrong writing commonly called a 'knot'; you bend two hawsers together to get a greater length by making two bowlines. So also the two ends of reef points on a sail are fastened together by a 'reef bend' commonly called a 'reef knot'.*

*'Bend and Hitch' - an example of this is.... You want to get a hawser on a vessel for towing; it is done by a heaving line; a good length of the hawser must be free to make fast to the bitts or bollards; so about five fathoms up the hawser you 'bend on' the heaving line by a 'rolling hitch'.*

*However, though it is well to be correct in knowledge, it is better to be able to decide in a moment what is the best mode of fastening rope no matter whether it be correctly described as knot, bend or hitch.*

*Generally I would put it thus - a 'knot' is a permanent connection; a 'bend' is an undoable connection of rope to rope; a 'hitch' is an undoable make fast of rope to something else.*

50 Priory Rd., Malvern,  
Worcestershire,  
WR14 3DB

Lester G Copestake

## DEFINITION

A WINK, according to the Torquay Museum in Devonshire, England, is a handheld rotating gadget used in the old days to twist up straw rope for farming.

## HOW TOOLS ARE LOST by Des Pawson.

I have been interested in tying knots since the age of eight.

Tools to help knotting are difficult to find. My earliest tools comprised of a pocket knife, a home-made fid and a marlinespike made from a skewer (that I still have). Whilst tying Turk's Heads in boring school lessons, I would resort to a pencil to work the knot tight.

Having been fully captivated by the Ashley Book of Knots at about 12, I realised the full scope of tools available. Clifford Ashley was a bit of a tool collector himself and illustrated a fine range of sailors' tools. The sources of ropeworking tools were, even then, so rare that I understood that even something new was almost a museum piece.

I discovered William Good & Son, Chandlers, close by The Monument in the City (of London), and there purchased my first sailmaker's palm; as I now know exactly like the one in the Sheffield List circa 1820. (More recently I purchased an old one stamped with "Good's" name, although I am certain not actually made by them.) Later I bought some knife needles (the like of which I have not seen elsewhere). These I was told were for sewing up very heavy tarpaulins.

As the years went by I searched for chandlers in all parts of England and Europe and tried to find if they had any new ropeworking tools that I did not have. In this way I purchased the "Dutch Plate" palm in Concarneau, Brittany, still my favourite palm. Chandleries, Ship's stores and Fishermen's Co-operatives were my source of fast-disappearing tools.

I was well and truly hooked on knotting books as well; building all the time a library that now stands at 500 plus, in many languages.

Over the years I have found many second hand tools that few people could identify or know how they were used, e. g. serving mallets, 'heaving mallets, seam rubbers.

Davey & Co of London provided me with a few tools made by William Smith & Son of Redditch: a stitch heaver and stabber, as well as their own patent serving mallet; all now discontinued. By making my quest for knotty things very public, occasionally I have had the good fortune to have priceless items offered me; you can imagine my pleasure when ordering a pint to be offered a selection of wire splicing tools - "as we thought you might be interested".

Wanting more money to buy knot books and knotting tools, I set about selling my knotted objects - bellropes, keyrings etc. I even swapped four bellropes for two serving mallets to a customer who, 15 years later, still buys bellropes from me. Trading as Footrope Knots, I now supply knotted objects as well as materials, books and tools of my trade.

I started buying from William Smith & Son a range of sailmakers' palms, gradually building a larger and larger selection. I bought marlinespikes from France, Denmark and wherever I could, happily supplying other knotters and ropeworkers.

Last year I reordered a whole selection of palms etc from Smiths. They said I would have to wait as their palm maker was sick (they usually take six months anyway). Six months later I phoned; the palm maker had a brain tumour... but not to worry, palms on the way. But when they arrived...horrors...my favourite Dutch plate palm was nothing like they had supplied before, and the roping palms were wrong! I finally found that their supplier of plates had gone bankrupt and they could not afford to retool just for one style of palm, and "did it matter? They had not had any other complaints". I was determined to carry on supplying but...yes, you have it, I had failed to keep an example of their palm for my own collection. I had let history slip from my hands, and am now forced to take my own twenty year old palm apart to try and get fresh castings made, and keep alive an old but first-rate tool.

Please learn from my mistake, the history of tools is in your hands, even today.

## LETTER FROM WALES

Dear Mr Harris,

Many thanks for the latest copy of Knotting Matters.

I am writing for information. Do you or any of the IGKT members know of a secure knot or lashing that can be attached to a sphere? It is something I have thought of in the past but never taken any further until now.

It so happened that the other day I watched some people try to load a rather large round boulder into the back of a lorry - the type that has one of those small hydraulic cranes on them. They had enough rope to tie up the Queen Mary, but every time they took the strain the rope slipped off. In the end they rolled the boulder to one side and left it. I felt this was just the situation where a member of the IGKT should step forward and say "Allow me!"

This person, however, was just as ignorant. So, should there be a next time, I would like to be able to "Allow me!"

Yours sincerely,

Joe Pratt.

16 Nov '89

120 Clyne Court  
Sketty Park  
Sketty  
Swansea  
SA2 8HZ

## WHERE IS LEE BOO'S BURIAL PLACE? asks Cy Canute

Somewhere in London's dockland, but whether north or south of the Thames I do not know, is the grave of Lee Boo who tied knots. So did his father. We were shown a glimpse of his gravestone by Lady Lucinda Lambton, the astute yet very whimsical English architectural photographer, in one programme of her popular T.V. documentary series.

Lee Boo was second son of King Abba Thulle of the Palau Islands which are in the Pacific Ocean just north of the Equator and 500 miles or so east of the Philipines. British Captain Wilson and his crew stayed there after the loss of their ship, and, when they had built another (the *Morse*), Lee Boo sailed with them on what was planned to be - for him - a return journey lasting 30 months, or perhaps 6 months longer.

So, before he left, his father tied a line with 30 knots close together, a long space, then 6 more knots. By untying one knot every moon, he would use this knot calendar to keep track of the passing of time until his son came home.

At sea Lee Boo tried unsuccessfully by means of knots on a line to memorise the names of all the ships they met; but he soon recognised that European writing was better and started to learn the alphabet from Captain Wilson. He also asked to go to school in England, where he later died of smallpox.

Will someone in the London and South-East Branch trace Lee Boo's burial place for us? There can't be too many churchyards within a few miles radius of Wapping. We should take a photograph of the spot for the Guild's archives; and wouldn't it be a nice excuse for a branch outing to view the actual spot together?

## QUOTATION

...and the entire ship's company mustered on the upper deck in two lines...armed with 'nettles', which were lengths of cord knotted every four inches." - in preparation for *running the gantlope*, later corrupted into running the gauntlet, a marginally more humane form of punishment for seamen introduced by the Admiralty in the 1740's and 1750's

In "quotes" from *THE BRITISH SAILOR - A Social History of the Lower Deck* - Peter Kemp 1970

## BOOK REVIEW

MAKING SOLID SENNITS by George Aldridge.

An A4 privately published pamphlet of 8 sides - it explains IGKT member George Aldridge's original knee-held table for making solid sennits, applying formulas given in "Ashley".

Available from the IGKT Supplies Secretary, Barry Darkins, price £2.50 with part going to guild funds.



## STEALING ATTENTION

At most of the displays of knotting given by the Midlands Branch some visitors are initially reluctant to approach. They stand back, refusing to step nearer than a few paces, perhaps fearing the enthusiasm in the happy group of knot tyers - perhaps a little embarrassed about wanting to ask a simple question.

Yet most will soon spot a remarkable knotted object on the table. It has intrigued us all at some time, in one form or another. And it links the folklore of knots with that of the sea.

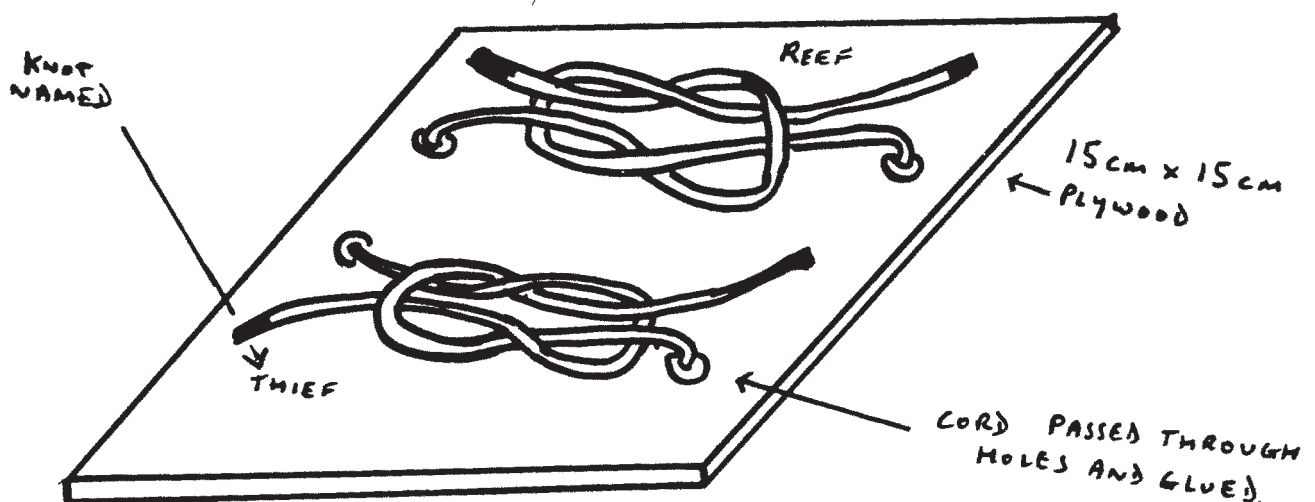
"Er...excuse me? What's the difference between a reef knot and a thief knot?" asks the passerby quietly.

"Try looking more closely at the ends", say I, "you may notice..." - *"that its just been turned over."* a second less puzzled visitor will butt in. "There's a little more to it than that." I continue.

So our conversation will develop. The well known tales of sailors tying up their kitbags with thief knots may be told...to identify lightfingered landsfolk. I prefer London Branch member Audrey Aldridge's logical version of the legend. She suggests that as novice sailors first joining the ship would have been taught only the reef knot, the trap was set for them.

The strands of your patter could run differently. I more often drift onto the Granny..."I like my granny",...and the whatknot (or granny thief/grief)..."not this treacherous knot though, it looks like granny but if you pull the ends just so - the knot rolls undone". I know the line is not original, but it never seems to pale.

The main point, I suppose, is that a simple knotted object which most casual visitors will recognise isn't seen as a threat. Nor is it potentially harassing. Unlike an over eager knotting enthusiast it breaks the ice in a very friendly way.



RLJ.

## LETTER FROM CHESHIRE

Mill Lane Cottage  
Adlington  
Macclesfield  
Cheshire, SK10 4LF

Dear Mr Jackson,

21st October 1989

I always enjoy "Knotting Matters", but two items in particular caught my attention in issue 29 (October 1989).

The background is that I have been researching three East India Company ships named *Macclesfield* in the early 18th century. While this is an interesting study in itself, a lot of indirect information comes to light in the course of the search. This naturally includes details of contemporary shipbuilding and sea-life generally.

The extract from Anson's journal reminded me of the extent to which *twice laid cordage* turns up. This doesn't sound much, said quickly, but think of the effort involved in actually doing this - in a refit on some distant shore -and it does show up quite often in the journals. Also in this situation splicing the anchor cables, when these have got worn or broken.

I happened to find a list of dockyard stores made about 1707 or 1708 which included types, numbers and the condition of sails on hand, also a good deal of this *twice laid cordage*, so I would guess that on lay-up, much rope must have needed remaking, on a regular basis.

Secondly, the "Cornel" wood. This turns up at about the same period and was recommended by William Sutherland\* for use as *Trennals* (fastening pegs) for the hull members. In one or other of his classic works on shipbuilding this was mentioned, but he talks of "Cornel Holly".

Best Wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Michael Drynan

\*Wm Sutherland:  
"Shipbuilder's Assistant" 1711  
"Britain's Glory" 1727

## ANSWER

The solution to the loops puzzle on page 21 of Knotting Matters #29, October 1989, is unfortunately not available. Perhaps you could compare notes with members nearby to let your editor have a likely answer?

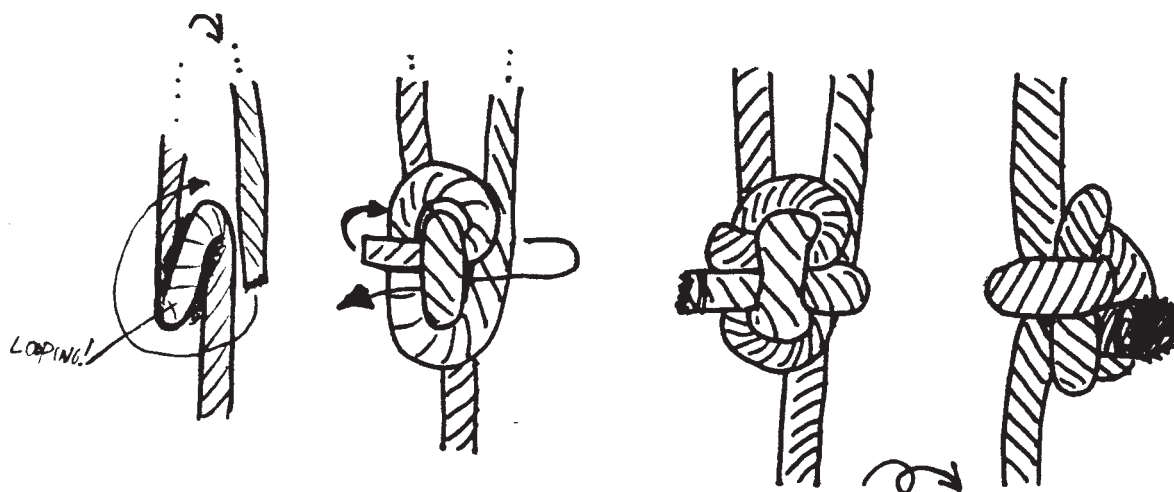
## NEW (?) KNOTS FROM BELGIUM

Kobierczynski Jurgen, from the village of Diepenbeek near Hasselt, has sent sketches of two knots he discovered for himself recently. Has anybody seen them before?

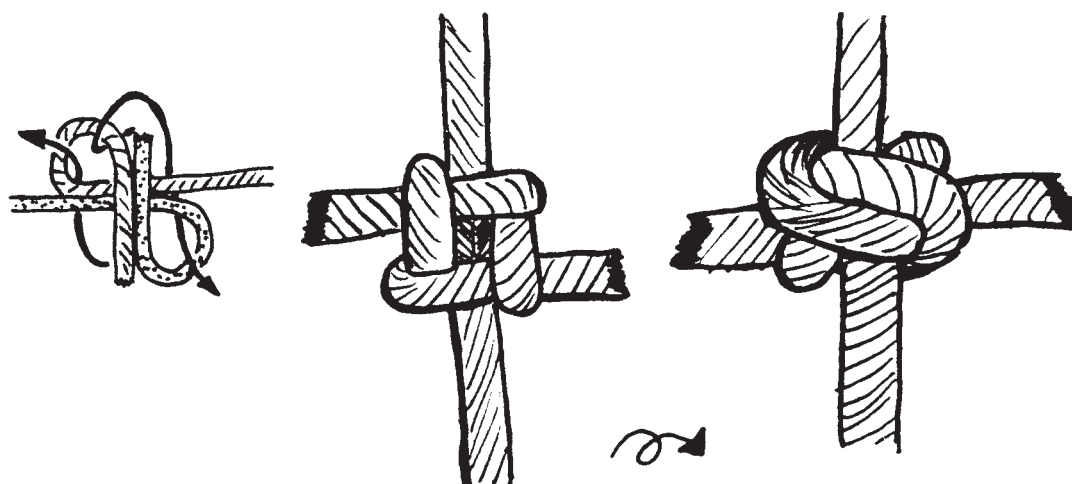
The loop knot must be drawn up VERY CAREFULLY to achieve its roughly stable form. Notice the knot's apparent asymmetry, yet the load passes in a straight line through the knot. Is anyone willing to test it please - the knot could be useful - but what for?

Mr Jurgen's bend is quite pretty, being a cross between a Hunter/Rigger bend on one face and a square knot on the other. Has this knot been documented before?

NEUSHOORNKNOOP - 10 Aug '89



REIGERKNOOP (It looks Like a VIERKANTKNOOP. It's likely that it exists) - 4 Aug '89



N.B. Mr Jurgen speaks Dutch, so the names of his knots are Dutch!

## INDEX TO ISSUES 26, 27, 28 &amp; 29

ITEM	ISSUE	PAGE
Acronym26	20	
Albion Knot - Witch Hitch?	26	5
Apraphul	27	3
Barfleur 1692	26	5
Becket Hitches, by Steve C Finch	28	11
Bends, #60 and #60', by Dan Lehman	29	22
Boas Bowline, by Geoffrey Budworth	27	9
Book Review      The Alternative Knot Book	29	3
Book of Ties	26	14
Braiding - Regular Knots	27	8
Symbolism - Knotted sculptures	29	5
Butterfly Knot, by Lester Copestake	26	2
Canal Boat String Ties	2	6
Cartoons      Brilliant, but will it work?	27	19
Indian Bowline trick	26	14
Colin (Jones) demonstrates at Bewdley	29	13
Cavandoli, by Cy Canute (S.B.'Venta')	27	19
Celtic Design Music, via Walter Norton M.D.	26	20
Climbers (Ropework for), from Brian Lamb	29	23
Commandoes or Confident Kids,		
by Tony Fisher	29	20
Council Members 1989/90	28	4
Danger - Knots(wo)man at Work!	26	13
Daniel Harness Loop, by Roger Carter	26	4
Editorial      Looking for an Editor	26	1
Geoff's Farewell	27	1
Robert's First	28	1
Christmas Card	29	1
Editorial      Caveats	28	24
Woe (Annual Subs)	29	24
Errors in 'Ashley' Neil Hood	28	7
Euphemism	26	4
Exhibitions of Members Knotting		
Dutch Branch, Katendrecht	28	14
Gloucester Waterways Museum	28	19
Fancywork      Picture Frames	26	21
Water Jar	27	6
Table Lamp	27	7
Fastrap, Knot less binder	26	16
Flying the Figure of Eight, by Harry Asher	26	10
Frank (Harris) ties up the loose ends	28	19
Fun on the Water, by, Percy Blandford	27	15
Globe Knot, by Tom Solly	27	2
Index - 'K. M.' 1988 <22, 23, 24 & 25)	26	22
Invention, Accident or Observation,		
by John Smith	28	20
Knots in China	28	5
Letters      Harry Asher	26	17
A.P.(Tony) Bloomer	28	6
Roger Carter	26	17
Roger Carter	28	17

## INDEX...Continued

ITEM		ISSUE	PAGE
Letters	A.T. (Tony) Conder,	29	15
	Cecil Curtis	29	19
	John Darby	28	10
	Brijes Day	28	10
	Howard Denyer	27	22
	Tony Fisher	29	4
	Eric Franklin	26	18
	Stuart Grainger	26	17
	Neil Hood	28	7
	Nick Humphries	29	2
	M. 'King' de Koning	27	23
	Mark Nash-Williams	27	21
	Taco Nolf	26	19
	Dick Roming	26	18
	Dan Sperling	27	22
	St Albans Museums	29	18
	Brian Stammers	27	21
	Ivan L Thurlow	27	23
	John Turner	28	23
	Mike Williams	28	18
Loop Knot,	by Dan Lehman	26	19
Make It Possible		27	12
Mat, Do it Yourself,			
	by T.C.M.Slijkerman	26	3
Mat, Endeavour,	by Charles Thomason	26	24
Mat, Extending the Tangira,			
	by M. 'King' de Koning	27	13
Mat, Maldon,	by Brian Field	28	8
Necktie Knots, from YOUR EDITOR (GB)		26	8
Obituary	Vic Findley	28	4
	John Fletcher	26	9
	John Potter	28	22
President	Geoffrey Bows Out	28	3
	Jan Vos Installed	28	2
Press Release	Braiding - Regular Knots	27	4
Puzzle	loops	29	21
Quotations	Henry Adams	28	6
	Nancy Banks-Smith	27	22
	Russell Braddon	29	13
	George V Burrows	28	22
	Charles Caleb Colton	28	21
	Hamlets Mill	29	19
	Ken Loran	29	16
	A.G.Schaaake & al	27	3
	Logan Pearsall Smith	26	9
	Richard Walter	29	18
	Lawrence Wright	28	13
	William Willis	29	2
Rainy Day Finds, from Jan Hoefnagel		26	15
Recipe Books		29	17
Rope Ladder, by D.Claud Miggiano		28	13



## INDEX...Continued

ITEM	ISSUE	PAGE
Ropewalk, The Holton Village	27	24
Seizing Bend by Harry Asher	29	14
Sewing Palms Various types	29	var.
Size of Despair, by W. K. V. Gale	28	17
Scottish Knots, 3D in stone	28	9
Shop Talk Guild Badges	27	13
Paying the Guild	27	13
Stern Fender S/S Neptune	29	16
Toggle Knot, Oct 22 '78, by Dan Lehman	28	24
Trambles, by Desmond Mandeville		
Coming Soon	26	3
Granny into Reef and Vice Versa (1)	27	15
Granny into Reef and Vice Versa <II)	29	6
Turks' Heads, by Brian Field	26	6
Up...and Away, with Cy Canute	26	5
What's 'is Name?	26	16

## EDITORIAL

### DEADLINES FOR "KNOTTING MATTERS"

I try to finish the magazine about six weeks before the cover date to allow time for Frank Harris to print and post your copies of KM, though it's usually nearer a month. So if you have any urgent items, such as dates of meetings or events, or queries, or (im)pertinent replies you may like to bear the following rough calendar in mind.

#### EDITION OF "KM"

April  
July  
October  
January

#### "DEADLINE"

Mid-February  
Mid-May  
Mid-August  
Mid-November

### SKETCHES OF KNOTS & PHOTOCOPYING KNOTS

Any of your letters and articles containing half decent drawings are almost certain to appear in KM. If, like me, you can't draw too well you may like to have a go at photocopying knots. Charles Warner refers to the technique on page 16 and the article from your president, Jan Vos, includes examples on pages 12 and 13. The technique has also been used successfully in earlier editions of KM.

Could I suggest, please, that you take two or three copies of each knot or batch of knots - one being 'medium' shade, one darker and one somewhere in between. Don't worry about the dark over-exposed patches around the edge, I will trim those off with a very sharp new blade. The reason for a darker copy - some detail will be lost when my 'cut and glue' efforts are printed - the lighter shows me the finished effect.

