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Knotting Matters

Newsletter of the

The logo is a circular emblem. In the center is a detailed illustration of a reef knot (square knot). The words "INTERNATIONAL" and "TYERS" are written along the top inner edge of the circle, and "GUILD OF KNOT" is written along the bottom inner edge.

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Knotting Matters

**Newsletter of the
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Knot Tyers**

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Cover design by Stuart Grainger



*Relaxing after the knot tyer's
supper*

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Notes from the Secretary's Blotter

The sun is shining at last. It seems to have been raining here since last October, when the town centre of Uckfield was under four feet of water. That happened two days before our October meeting in Beverwijk, and it has taken all this time for the town to recover, the last of the shops reopening in the last few days.

What with that, and the fact that Sylvia and I have been forced by circumstance to live apart for nearly two years, I jumped at the chance to go to Botswana with my son for a couple of weeks earlier this year. What a wonderful experience, - we stayed with some friends in Francistown, near the Zimbabwe border, and we camped out in the bush for seven nights. Naturally, no visit to Africa is complete without being chased by elephants fortunately our aged truck managed to outrun it, - but you never know quite what's around the corner. What fascinated me was our bushman guide, who, having washed his clothes in the river, promptly made himself a washing line by picking the leaves of a convenient plant, and tying them together, using what looked like a sheet bend. This was pulled tight around two suitable trees, and made off with a round turn and two or three half hitches.

The snag with any holiday is that when you come home, there is a mountain of correspondence to deal with. And then

there was the computer. That has been slowing down for some time, but with the volume of emails waiting for me, it simply died.

The computer has now been replaced, and I have caught up with the backlog (I think), but some of you may have had to wait quite a long time for any response from me for about a three-month period, earlier this year. My apologies to those who were affected, but hopefully all is now back to normal.

I did manage to get to the AGM at Fareham, or was it Farnham? I get the two mixed up. Here the retiring members of the Council, including myself, were all returned for a further three-year tour of duty. This was not because they were thought to be so outstanding in their performance as Trustees, but simply because there were no other names put forward. Since the Constitution was altered, by asking for two weeks notice for a nomination, the election process at the AGM has been simplified. It is now so simple, that there hasn't been an election for several years. Them means that you appear to be stuck with the Council you have got, for better or worse, apparently indefinitely. We would like to think that we are doing the best for the Guild, but without the stimulation of an election (and here in the UK we have been stimulated by the General Election), the

Council could stagnate.

What I have been asked to do, is give notice that of those council members due to retire in 2002, at least two will not be standing for re election, hence we are looking for at least two replacements, and in order to achieve an election, we must make at least three, preferably four nominations. How about it?

As for the secretary's role, I am looking to devolve some of the more time consuming duties, and so you may well see a change in the distribution of KM, and possibly the collection of subscriptions. Watch this space. Incidentally, I now have an electronic credit card machine (until now I have hand-written every credit card voucher). This machine allows me to accept a much wider range of credit cards, and also debit cards, including, Mastercard, Visa, Switch, Delta, JOB, Electron, and Solo. That reminds me, when I ask for the 'name on the card', I mean the name of the account, not Visa etc. I have a number of credit card details that I am unable to use, as I am unable to identify who has sent it to me, and all I joined for was to learn a few knots, and now I am not allowed to pick up a piece of string.

Nigel Harding

Col's Comment

Recently I attended a camp with my local Scout Group on a site near Birmingham, as a helper. I had been asked to run a pioneering session, the remainder of my time was spent generally assisting the leaders and camp staff.

Early on I was approached with the request, "Can you find some way to hang this up in the kitchen tent?" The object in question was a roll of paper towel similar to a large toilet roll, but the requirement was to draw the towel from the centre of the roll. A fairly straightforward task achieved with the aid of a Jury Masthead knot, much to the surprise of the chef, an ex-navy man.

Later, I was asked if I could repair a pair of spectacles belonging to one of the boys. The screw had been lost from the frames and the lens had fallen out. A temporary repair was effected with whipping twine and a Surgeon's knot, enough to enable the lad to use his glasses until the end of the camp.

"Is there nothing you can't do with knots?" they asked. "Yes, plenty, but knowing a few knots certainly helps."

Growing up with knots has helped me over the years with an immense amount of tasks and having a piece of string or rope handy has often got me out of a tricky situation even if only on a temporary basis. I wonder how other members of the public would fare in this day and age of gadgets and fastenings?

A new feature appears with this issue of Knotting Matters, it is a Portrait of a

Branch. The aim of these articles are for the branches of the Guild to say a little about how they were first founded, what they get up to and who are the personalities within the branch. I have asked the Pacific-Americas Branch to kick off this feature with a bit about themselves. There is no particular reason behind this; it's just that I was writing to Joe Schmidbauer when the idea crossed my mind. So please don't be offended if your branch was started earlier, I don't know when particular branches were founded anyway. Before you decide to put pen to paper and write in about your branch, to keep the article current I shall be dropping a line to the branch contact or Secretary, as I require it. I hope you enjoy this feature.

I was asked recently why some articles had not appeared in the edition

immediately following their submission. The bulk of Knotting Matters is made up well before the deadline dates that appear on page one. This leaves me with a few pages to finish of letters, branch news and the Secretary's Blotter etc. I have to do it this way to keep up with the production schedule and get it to the printers in the week following the deadline.

In addition, I attempt to have a broad selection of articles within the 48 pages, so there is something to interest everyone. I hope I am successful in this, and I do not plan to do bumper editions. All submissions are acknowledged and nearly every one is used. If I cannot use it, I will tell you. So if you have submitted a piece and it has been acknowledged and not appeared in print yet, please be patient. If you have taken the trouble to write it, then I will take the trouble to print it.



Your editor enjoying a quiet drink with Charlie Tyrell at T.S. Swiftsure

Letter from a President

My local branch of the I.G.K.T. meets in The National Motor Boat Museum in the Wat Tyler Country Park and all Essex Parks were closed during the recent epidemic of bovine 'foot and mouth' disease. Fortunately, the Kent branch from the other side of the Thames estuary issued a much-appreciated invitation to join in their meetings, and this gave me the chance to visit another Group. The meeting was very well attended and with talks on lanyard making and basic macramé, there was a lot of learning and knot tying taking place.

June brought an all too short visit from Charles Holmes (President of the Texas branch IGKT) and his wife, Deborah. We managed to squeeze in a visit to Des Pawson, whose Rope work Museum should be on every members list of places to visit, as well as visit one or two local beauty spots. I had hoped to renew our friendship at the NAB meeting in Texas but found it impossible to make any definite plans until the present round of visits to consultants is over. I hope to renew normal service by the end of August or September.

Feedback on the subject of membership growth in the U.K. suggests three possible avenues of exploration.

First, we need to explore all ways by which the public can be exposed to ropework. Most people are unaware of the range and beauty of our craft and are in

no position to judge whether or not it is "their thing".

Second we need to encourage any interest that is aroused by offering courses in as many aspects of knotting as possible. These courses should include modules that can be used by members in their own homes, for many members are unable to attend meetings. We are, in the U.K., a registered educational charity, and although education is one of the basic aims of our Guild it is not as yet, one of our strongest points.

Third we need to encourage the formation of local "branches", for it is in meeting together that enthusiasm can be engendered, new members extend their abilities and old dogs, (like me), learn new tricks. It doesn't matter if the branch is a formally recognised one or if it is a few members meeting in the corner of a bar, what counts is the fun and the chance to swap knowledge.

Brian Field

ROPE ENDS

'New knots are often flashes in the pan; they founder on circumstances that tradition long ago anticipated . . . old knots never die; they just wait for us to come to our senses.'

Brion Toss, The Rigger's Locker - USA, 1992

T.S. Swiftsure - the AGM

from our Midland's Stringer

The weather forecast promised a fine weekend (a typically English viewpoint) and the amount of traffic on the road from people anxious to get away for a break confirmed these expectations. The first port of call on arriving at TS Swiftsure - nestling between Farnham and Aldershot - was the galley for a well-earned cup of coffee. Suitably refreshed I made my way to meet friends old and new among the members who had managed to arrive earlier than me.

Ken Yalden as usual was organising everyone as a good chairman does. The Sea cadets would be arriving shortly for their usual evening meeting and he was making sure that there was sufficient knot tyers ready to instruct. After their parade, they broke into small groups and worked their way around the various bases laid on for them. This part of the evening proved an unqualified success and they went away having learned at least one new skill.

After a supper of hot dogs, it was time to repair to the wardroom for a pint and a chat. In ones and twos, members drifted off to get their heads down for the night.

Saturday dawned with the smell of bacon and eggs drifting from the galley. As more members arrived the numbers in

the main hall swelled, so did the level of conversation. More displays were laid out and friendships renewed.

Bang on the stroke of eleven, the chairman called the meeting to order. This was the formal part of the weekend and our president, Brian Field welcomed members from as far afield as France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and even Scotland. Ken Yalden outlined the domestic arrangements for the weekend and then passed over to Hon Sec. Nigel. One of the first things he had to report was that Frank Harris had suffered a stroke. While this is shocking news, Frank is reported to be well on the way to recovery and we are all looking forward to seeing him again at the October meeting. The three retiring members of the council had all agreed to stand again. As there were no new nominations for the posts, there was no requirement for an election. Nigel reported that there were now 1144 members of the Guild with more overseas members than UK ones.

Next up was Lynda Turley to give an outline of the accounts. The Guild was financially viable and she was thanked for her sterling efforts in administering the Guilds finances.

Dave Walker gave an outline of the October meeting that is to be held at the



Charlie Tyrrell entertains the Sea Cadets

Ellesmere Port Boat Museum on October 13th. He said that preparations were well in hand and there would also be activities on the Sunday morning.

Ken went on to tell about the next AGM which would be the Guild's twentieth birthday. There will be five days of public shows and trips to various venues for knot tyers that attend. Fareham Council has also adopted our birthday as part of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebration. Ken asked for ideas of things that members would like to do during the week's event. He also asked each member to make a macramé square (A5 size - the same as this magazine page) and a bellrope to be displayed at Fareham for six months following the birthday. Des Pawson pointed out to the meeting that as members we have a duty to support this event and also suggested that the council consider ways of supporting some

members financially to attend the event.

A few questions then came from the floor and this was followed by the traditional "Portrait of a Knot Tyer", where two members answer three questions. How they got interested in knot tying, how they heard about the Guild and what other interests do they have.

First up was Ken 'Jim' Hawkins of Norfolk. Jim explained that his uncle awakened his interest in knot tying when he was a child. The Scouts and then the Navy followed this. On board ship a Petty officer showed him a copy of Ashley and that developed his enthusiasm. Jim found out about the Guild by mistake, when he bought a copy of Stuart Grainger's Creative Ropecraft and found the address of the Guild. His main interest was practical but now he is into bellropes. Jim's other interest is corn dolly making which is closely related to knotting.



Are Des Pawson and Jeff Wyatt kneeling at the altar of Ashley?

Next up was Gordon Hauslip from Pitlochry in Scotland. Gordon first became interested in knotting when he was researching for a particular knot and his wife bought him a copy of Cyrus Day's *Knots and Splices*. He found out about the Guild aboard the Cutty Sark at Greenwich. Gordon started off on practical knots and then moved on to decorative knots. His other hobbies include fly-fishing in which he ties his own trout flies.

David Walker gave the meeting a few points to think about on the future of the Guild. This created some debate, including suggestions for employing professionals to do some of the administrative work, hiring an office, separating the Guild into areas and creating a job description for the Hon. Secretary. Fred Carrington suggested to the meeting that those surviving members from the inaugural meeting on the Discovery back in 1983 should be made life members. Those particular members present rejected this idea.

The formal part of the meeting was concluded and following an excellent

lunch laid on by the Sea Cadets, the afternoon was spent in free association, chatting and learning.

During the evening a splendid knot tyers supper was enjoyed by some fifty members who stayed for a meal.

Sunday was a change from previous years in as much that Ken Yalden had arranged for a number of knot tyers to instruct on specific subjects in workshop sessions. These were advertised on a board the day before and people were invited to put their names down for any session they were interested in. The event proved a great success, with the following sessions, Willeke van der Ham teaching bellropes, Colin Grundy - splicing, Albert Southerden - hitches, Harold Scott - wirework, 'Spud' Murphy/Bernard Cutbush - bottle covering, Europa Chang - lacework, Bill Meakin - Turk's head mats and Catherine Goldstone - macramé.

Eventually mid-day came and the time to draw to a close a most successful and enjoyable weekend of knotting. See you at the next one.





*Above - Geoffrey Budworth at a book signing session.
Below - Bill Meakin tutors on a Sunday Workshop.*



CHAS. L. SPENCER

a potted biography

by Geoffrey Budworth

Colonel Charles Louis Spencer was author of *Knots, Splices & Fancy Work*, originally published (Glasgow, Scotland) by Brown, Son & Ferguson, Ltd. in 1934. For many of us in the UK, it was our first advanced knot book.

He was born a Glaswegian in 1870, son of John Spencer, and educated at Kelvinside Academy, then College Chaptal, in Paris, France. Serving with distinction in the 1914-1918 First World War, he was mentioned three times in despatches, and in 1918 awarded the D.S.O. (Distinguished Service Order). He was further honoured in 1919 with a C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire).

Volume IV of the reference book *Who Was Who* (1941-1950, 4th edition) lists his membership of the Junior United Services Club, the Caledonian Club and the New Western Club (Glasgow). His recreation was yachting, a pursuit in which he also made a creditable contribution, and in the late 1930s he was vice-Commodore of the Clyde Cruising Club.

IGKT member Captain Allan McDowall related (see KM 43, page 7) how, as a very young boy, he once met Colonel and Mrs. Spencer. The embarrassed couple had unintentionally run aground off the south coast of England, in a large German schooner, on

the local oyster beds of an Isle of Wight creek. Allan and his mother were sailing close-by in a dinghy and, when the sky dumped a heavy downpour of rain which threatened to waterlog their old and leaking boat, the Spencers invited the bedraggled pair aboard their own ginn-palace of a craft to warm and dry off. There the conversation must have come around to knot tying, because Mrs. Spencer taught him how to tie a Monkey's Fist.

Although Charles Spencer's book was based upon the earlier 1907 work *Knots, Bends, Splices* by Captain J. Netherclift Jutsum, of Cardiff, Wales, it grew - through various reprints - to become a classic of its kind. A later edition, revised by Percy W. Blandford IGKT, is still obtainable today.

Spencer died, aged 78, on 2nd May 1948.

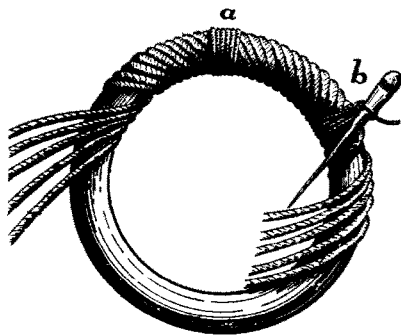
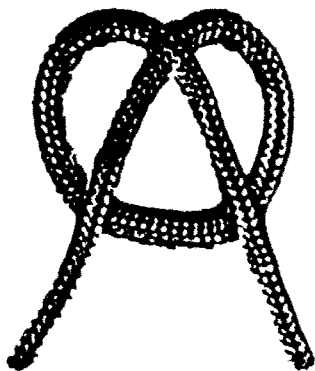


Fig. 241.

Spanish Bowline

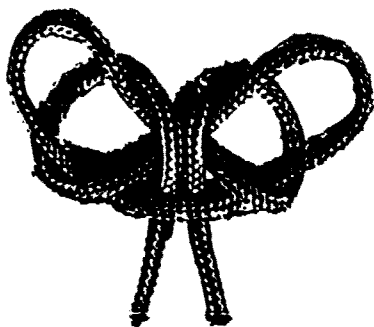
by John Halifax



1. Form an inverted bight with both the ends hanging down and on the same side.



2. Now take both ends underneath the bight and lead them upward behind the basic form.



3. Next turn both ends downwards between the two top bights and through and out of the bottom triangular bight.



4. Hey Presto! A quicker and easier Spanish Bowline.

Is this a new method? To check it is the same, make it the traditional way and undo it by removing the two ends.

How to: “Untie Knots”

by Willeke van der Ham

When showing and teaching knots and how to tie them I am often asked for the name of the book I am using. ‘What kind of book are you looking for?’ I ask. The answer is: ‘How to untie knots.’ I am sure many guild members know at least as much about this as I do but for the rest, here is how I untie knots and tangles in string or cord, the kind that happen when working with long lengths, or loosely wound thin stuff.

Basically, use patience. Single loop knots can be undone by opening the body of the knot. This is easiest done when you can actually see the knot and its structure, so use your reading or magnifying glasses. If it really is a simple loop knot it might be a slip knot but better not pull hard because the knots which seem to be slip knots but are fixed loops (like the middle man hitch or the alpine butterfly,) in thin stuff are the knots which require scissors.

Sometimes knots are so complicated that they are just tangles, consisting of string wound around itself and having a couple loop knots as an extra. Grasp the middle of the tangle and shake softly. Repeat this a few times. If you see any progress pull carefully on the outsides of the tangle and repeat the whole process. When you see the tangle coming undone, start winding the string from one end. Go till you get to a knot or the leftover bit of the tangle and start on the other end till that is also wound. Start with shaking

again, holding the wound ends in your hand.

There are tangles that do not react to shaking, try pulling carefully and never with any force. Once started shaking might help. If the tangle is really stubborn the only way to win is to undo the knot by pulling the string out. Locate one end, follow it back through the tangle without moving it, depending on the diameter and coarseness from 3 cm to 10 cm (1" to 4") pull a bight there, and enlarging the bight pull the end out. Repeat until all the string is free at last. If the string behaves well you might be able to take larger lengths at a time but be careful and experiment with small steps. From 3 cm to 5, 8, 10 and so on. Beware, once you start using this method the first method will be hindered because by undoing one knot you often make several new ones.

This will also work on lengths of rope but often you will need more people because of size and weight. Knots in rope, cord or string that have been under stress, or have been drawn real tight and/or have been left a long time. Also knots in natural rope that is wet, especially when wetted after tying.

Consider the rope, is it worth being untied? Because these knots do sometimes damage the rope and it very annoying to spent a couple of hours to get that knot out only to find that your rope has been damaged beyond use. If the rope is wet there is another consideration. Do you

need to untie it now? Another time when the rope is dry again, untying might be easier, and another day you might have more patience making the task simpler.

If you decide to tackle the job make sure you have the right tools handy and put away those which will surely be damaged on the job. If you do not own a marlinespike or heavy metal pricker use a cheap screwdriver or whatever blunt pointed object you can find that can take a big force without bending it. If you use screwdrivers, it can be handy to have several sizes near you. Do not use your wooden, Swedish or Gripfid. These are not built to withstand the forces you are going to apply, I found out the hard way, tools being returned bent out of shape after being borrowed.

First, take all tension off the rope if possible. With knots tied (in rope) around something, start with the side that is not tight. Push the ends sticking out of the knots slowly into the knot. (Twisting the rope so that the diameter gets smaller.) Knead the knot and push again. If this fails, use your blunt pointed object. Stick the point between one rope and another, never between the different strands of one rope. Try to find a place near to where the rope has been crossing under only one other part of the knot. Try to loosen the rope a bit and repeat the pushing and kneading. You may have to repeat this sequence several times. Take care not to damage the strands of your rope or the tool you are using.

If you need to untie a set of knots, like you find when pioneering with Scouts, make sure you attack the outmost knot, i.e. the one that was made last. I found

that for the Scouts there is no difference between the beginning and the end of a rope. I insist on untying from the end because even when you are able to undo the starting knot it will not help you much, since undoing the rest is much harder from this end. But if the last knot is a real bitch then working the line loose from the beginning often is an option.

With multi-strand knots you invert from the way the knot is made. The last stage in tying such a knot is always tightening. So start with working some slack in each strand in turn, first only one tuck, later you might be able to do a set of tucks. Once you have worked some slack in the knot you can start undoing the knot, also just one tuck at a time. But here you have the choice between doing all the strands in turn or taking on strand out completely.

Whatever the size of rope, string, yarn or strands you are trying to untie be careful not to make kinks in your line, or if you have to make kinks as is often the case, do not put too much stress on them, this ruins your rope and makes your whole effort of untying a waste of time.

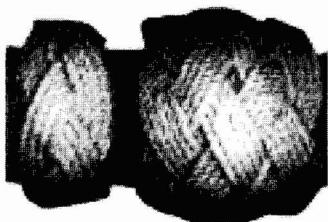
Another problem you will recognise is how to untie shoelaces! Mainly because the child wants those things off her or his feet now, and not when mummy is done. If it is a nasty knot and the shoe will come off without untying do just that. It might start a bad habit but I never met anybody who did not every now and again took shoes off with the laces still in their bows. The second best is to put the child to playing or eating a sweet in such a position that you can really see what you are doing. The actual untying is not different from

many other knots. Apply patience and a little poking and try to work some slack into the actual knot. Untying becomes harder in old and damaged laces so if they are in a bad condition and you have replacements, take the scissors. By the way, fat round laces do not so often get into impossible knots. It are the soft flat laces that I myself always find hard to get untied, even when in the perfect bows.

I wish you a lot of patience, (my mother always told me to go to the shop and buy a kilo of patience when I tried to do a task like untying as a youngster, she was just not able to tell me which shop would sell it,) and a lot of pride when you have managed to succeed.

“Mousing” a Turk’s Head Knot

by James L. Doyle



A “Mouse” or “Mousing” is a knob that is raised. To raise your Turk’s head symmetrically and firmly with a mouse, apply a 3 lead by 5 bight Turk’s head knot (left).

Then apply on the centre of the 3L x 5B Turk’s head knot a 6 lead by 5 bight Turk’s head with five strands. This method gives the Turk’s head knot a raised knob-like appearance (right).

Knotmaster Series No. 10

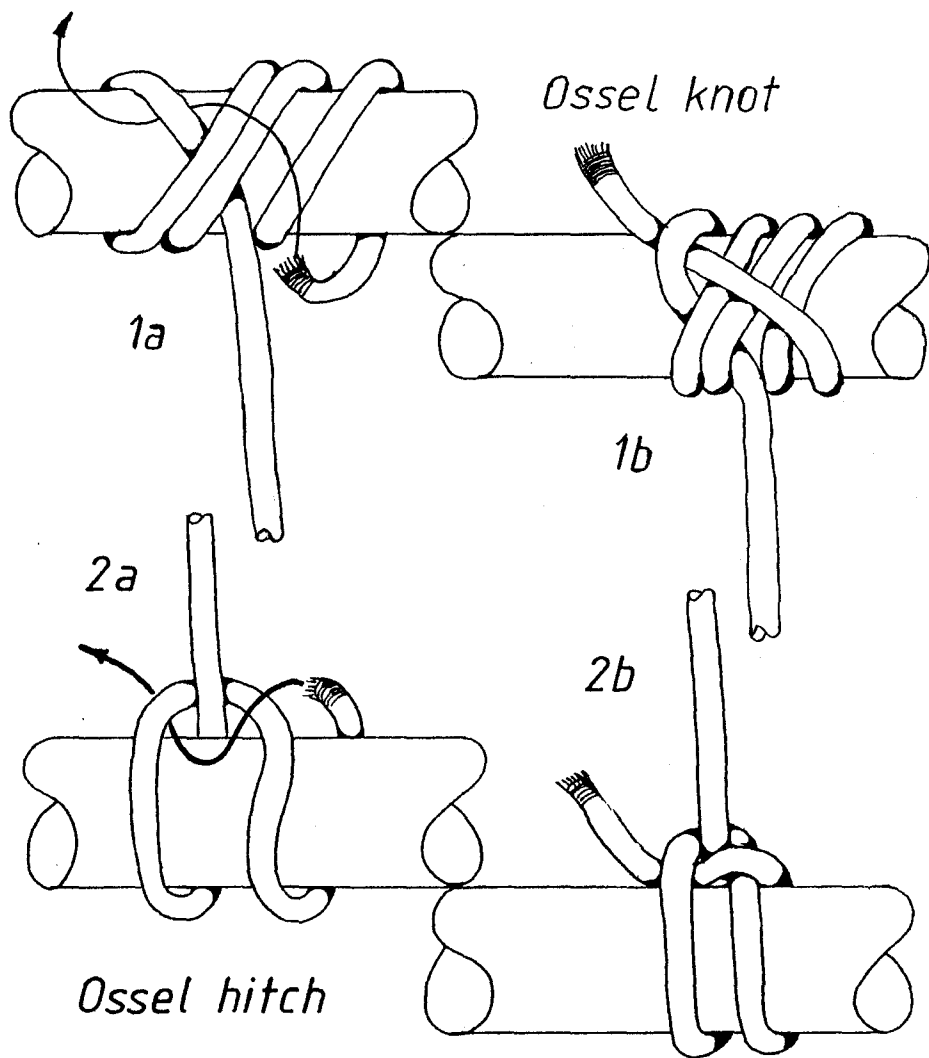
*“Knotting ventured,
knotting gained.”*

1 - Ossel knot

‘Ossel’ was the Scottish fisherman’s word for a gill net (Cornish: orsel) and this knot is a sea-going one. A tougher alternative to the rolling hitch, it will withstand tugging and pulling about in all directions. Wrap and tuck as shown (fig. 1a), tightening before loading (fig. 1b).

2 - Ossel hitch

This slim knot, also with a sea-fishing background, is a secure alternative to the clove hitch. Wrap and tuck as shown (fig. 2a) and then carefully tighten before loading (fig. 2b).



The Monkey's Fist

by Thomas Simpson

Reading Sten Johansson's 'cry for help', concerning the monkey's fist, in KM62 (page 21) and again in KM66 (page 30), I was surprised to read that it hadn't been sighted in print before 1935. Without ever giving it any thought, I was under the impression that it had been around since the 19th century.

As this article is attempting to answer Sten's points in KM62, read his letter before reading this one.

The four main libraries in the Tyne and Wear area (where I live) all have a large nautical content, as this is one of the main maritime areas in the UK. I have searched through hundreds of books' indexes, or skim-read the books where no index was included. Checked the indexes of the *Mariner's Mirror* (quarterly periodical of the Society of Nautical Research) from its start in 1911. I selectively searched through the *Nautical Magazine* (monthly since 1838) - no overall index! I am familiar with the magazine and aware of its negligible knotting content.

Despite all this activity I have managed to find only one item before 1935. An entry, not in a nautical book, but in an English dictionary. Mind not just any dictionary, but the recognised definitive English dictionary *The Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition) of twenty volumes. The reference is in volume IX (page 1006). It refers to a written entry in

Gershom Bradford's *Glossary of Sea Terms*, New York (1927); "Monkey's fist - a complicated knot with weight enclosed, used at the end of a heaving line". I have found a 1954 edition of this book (which the date obviously excludes). It is a dictionary type book with neither instructions nor illustration.

My local libraries have copies of Cyrus Day's *The Art of Knotting and Splicing* (four printings, 1947-1986) - no copies of his *Sailors' Knots*. According to Day's preface, this is an updated version of his *Sailors' Knots* - with twelve years of added research.

Cyrus Day was an academic and a skilled bibliographer, his interest in historical knot data is immediately evident. He mentions hundreds of sources throughout the text, sometimes three or four on a page and from the most obscure publications. Most of the knots are historically sourced. He also has a bibliography of 220 knotting books and publications at the end of the book.

On the monkey's fist page (page numbers differ between editions), the main knot, the monkey's fist, has no mention of origin, yet the two minor knots on this page (the doughnut knot and the particular heaving line knot) are immediately sourced to Ashley (1925).

From the overall text and attempting to read between the lines, all I can deduce

is that Day never saw a monkey's fist in any publication. All I can surmise is that he must have sighted an actual 'working' heaving line with a monkey's fist attached. He may have been told that it had been in use for a number of years. Depending on circumstances, it could take an indeterminate number of years from its introduction to finally appearing in print. This may have accounted for his caution in not commenting on its origins. He gave the knot a prominent presentation in the book.

Day didn't fall into the trap of repeating Ashley's comments about E.N. Little's *Logbook Notes* being the source of the monkey's fist. He and Ashley knew or corresponded with each other, so he probably questioned Ashley about Little.

Ashley does make a brief mention of his 'fragmentary' notes at the top of page 8 in *The Ashley Book of Knots*. With the benefit of hindsight, it's regrettable he didn't use the same proviso that he used in the forward of *The Yankee Whaler* (1926 & 1938); "Generally when I have quoted I have named my authority, but frequently when I have quoted from notes this has not been possible. These notes were made over a considerable period of years, and often I failed to make attributions. Sometimes it has been necessary to quote from memory, but I have not consciously indulged in unverified statements".

Graumont and Hensel were both ex-seamen and didn't necessarily require a book to have knowledge of a monkey's fist. Mind, at least six of the twelve examples in their *Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Ropework* require a vivid

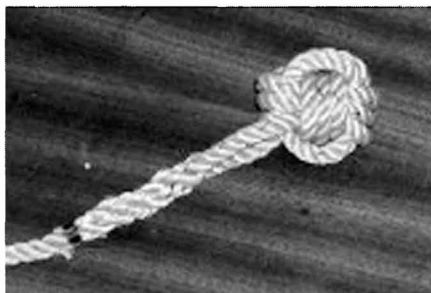
imagination to be recognised as monkey's fists. Although the knot listed as a monkey's paw is a true monkey's fist

Sten mentions that in the Italian *Ashley Book of Knots* the monkey's fist is called *Sacchetto* (small bag). The translator appears to be confused with another type of heaving line weight. Very occasionally ships use a small stitched canvas bag/sachet - packed tightly with sand (not lead shot); it is about 5 inches long x 2.5 inches diameter, a brass eyelet is punched into one end of the canvas to effect connection to the heaving line.

Among interested parties there is an unspoken weight limit on weighted heaving line knots. If a shoreside docking party is unhappy with a particular heaving line weight, they will attract the attention of the ship's crew and in an exaggerated ritualistic manner, cut off the heaving line weight and commit it to the dock or river bottom.

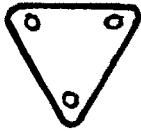
In nautical English the word monkey (meaning small) was sometimes used in sailing ships, but this interpretation never carried over into the steamships.

When considering the possessive forms of monkey, they appear visually understandable - five examples come to mind.



Monkey's Face

A metal triangular plate (9 inches diameter x 1 inch thick). It had a hole in each corner. The derrick topping lift span, chain preventer, and bull rope, shackled into each corner. It held a derrick at any required fixed height, whilst working cargo.



Monkey's Breakfast

At sea - a particularly untidy piece of work could be said to "Look like a monkey's breakfast".

Monkey's Piss

Lime Juice!

Monkey's tail

A purposely seized bight in a rope. Same as a kink in a monkey's tail. See Ashley #534 - the heaving line page.

Monkey's Fist

In the past, heaving lines were usually made from 12 or 15 thread, tarred ratline, 1.25 inches circumference (10mm diameter), very dark brown in colour. During my time in the Merchant Service, particularly the early years, monkeys were popular pets on board ships. I can assure the reader that the tarred strands of ratline looked just like a monkey's fingers.

I'd be surprised if any relevant information turned up in E.H. Osborn's *Rope Work*. This was a 40 page publication, emanating from a small farming town called Sauk Centre (population 3,700) in central Minnesota - 95 miles NW of Minneapolis. The contents were surely of an agricultural nature.

Day's outstanding bibliographical knowledge is very intimidating and doesn't leave much hope for lesser mortals to turn up any worthwhile information. One possible line of enquiry worth following is to check out nautical books with a long printing history that have a current monkey's fist entry, then attempt to track back through earlier printings to see when the monkey's fist disappeared.

One such book is the *Admiralty Manual of Seamanship*, recent printings contain the monkey's fist, and the 1937 printing doesn't. I don't know when it first appeared in the manual - although this is of secondary importance.

Other options include first hand factual accounts by seamen, fictional nautical stories by seamen etc. Material in this area is very thin on the ground, as very few fo'c'sle seamen have committed pen to paper.

I personally have no problems about where the monkey's fist came from - I go along with Ashley and believe it's directly related to the knob knot and small Turk's head (see Ashley chapter 29).

Long before the arrival of the monkey's fist, a very small minority of seamen ('knotting aficionados') would have been using knob knots as

personalised knots on heaving lines, and today these personalised knob knots are still used on heaving lines, long after the arrival of the monkey's fist. It is a seaman's way of expressing his knotting skills. Eventually, in the course of experimenting, one or more of these 'knotting aficionados' would have happened upon the monkey's fist's construction. Its ease of rotational construction surely clinched its eventual status as the leading heaving line knot.

During my time at sea I used a Mauretania knot (a Turk's head derivative) as my personalised heaving line knot. As to when it came on the scene - improvements often arrive out of a sense of need and necessity. One possible explanation is that with the arrival of the large Atlantic liners at the beginning of the 20th century, a far better 'carrying' heaving line was required to reach the quayside from the high forecandle heads of these new large liners. This may have prompted the arrival of the monkey's fist.

Up until this time ships had a low elevation, often flush decked and of small tonnage. Their decks were hardly any higher than the quaysides they approached. Their optimum line throwing distance was a lot less than that required by the new high decked liners.

Although my searches can't be called 'all-encompassing', confined as they are to my local sources. I have never the less, seen enough to convince me, that Cyrus Day was the first knot tyer to explain and illustrate the monkey's fist in print.

Cyrus Lawrence Day (1900-1968) a native New Yorker was a professor at the

University of Delaware. His academic background increases the possibility that his private papers are in safekeeping. An 'in depth' biography would make a creditable addition to the guild's information bank. He has an entry in *Who Was Who in America* (volume V).

More Knotty Limericks

From Geoffrey Budworth

A reckless rock-climber named Watt
Chose an insecure life-support knot.
When it failed, as he fell
To his death, he yelled, 'Hell!
That's a knot that one ought to boycott'.

From Maurice Smith

There was a Guild member named Ken
Who tied fancy knots now and then
His splices were tight
His plaits a delight
And the judge gave him nine out of ten

From Les Scanlon

An adventurous couple newly wed,
The wife begged to be tied to the bed
But soon got disappointed
When his knots prematurely came
disjointed
That she ran off with a Guild member
instead.

More Early Cord Making Tools.

by Richard Hopkins

In K.M. 69 I wrote about a device that the Maya used for cord making and asked if anyone could add information about the tool.

Geoffrey Budworth kindly sent me an article from the *Handbook of Seaman's Ropework* by Sam Svenson - originally published in Swedish in 1940 but now available in English. A tool is shown very similar to the Maya item and described as being very rare. It was used to spin short lengths of two-ply yarn.

A length of yarn was fixed at one end and the other end tied to the hook on the tool. This was then whirled round until the yarn had been twisted tightly. It was then doubled and twisted in the opposite direction to give a usable twine.

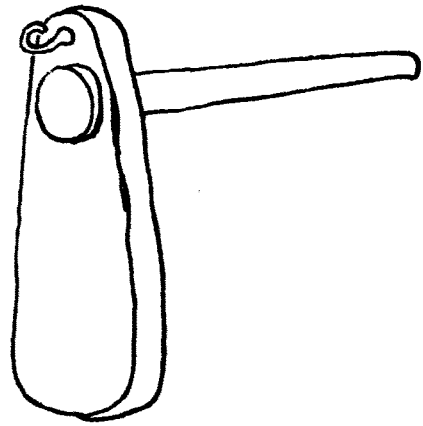
More recently, looking for something completely different, I found a reference in *Ancient Egyptians - Their Life and Customs* by J Gardner Wilkinson, to an illustration in a tomb at Thebes, of the time of Thotmes III (around 1450 BC). Here, thongs of leather were being twisted and it is reasonable to think that cord might have been made in the same manner.

The ends of the thongs were inserted into a hollow tube where they were somehow secured. From the side of the tube a bar stuck out with a heavy weight on its outer end. The operator whirled the tube around, the weight acting like a flywheel, and walked backwards. The tube

was attached to his waistband through a simple swivel so he could use his body weight to maintain tension on the thongs. An assistant payed out the thongs and kept the separate strands from becoming tangled. The illustration does not show how the assistant's end was secured neither can it indicate if the cord was then given a reverse twist to lock the strands.

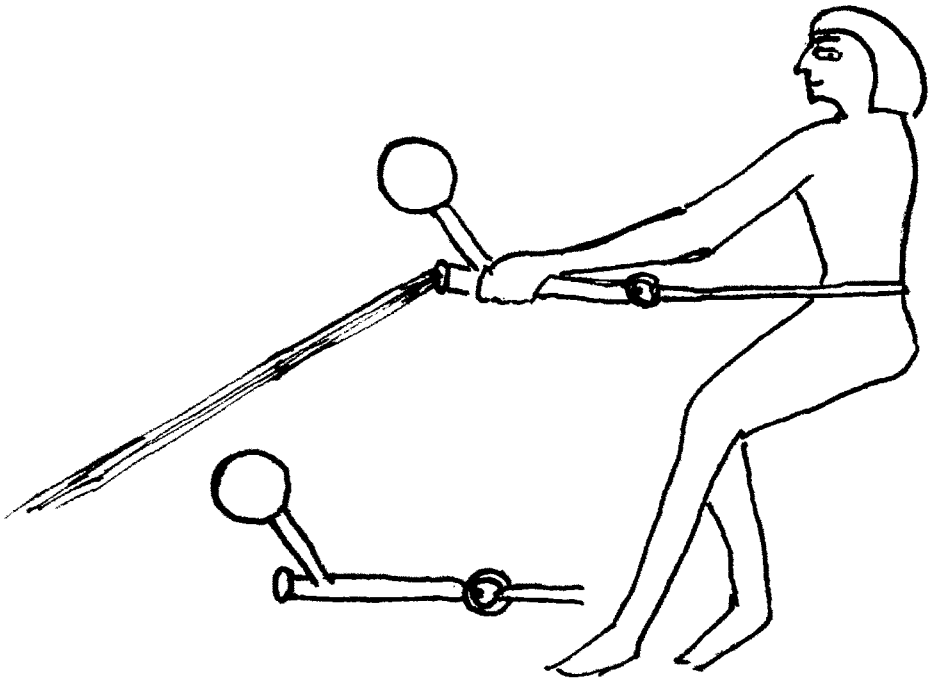
This suggests that the idea has, in fact, been around, not just for a few hundred years but for 3400 years or more, in different parts of the world, and I believe there must be other examples of this tool still to be recorded. If any reader knows of other examples, I would be delighted to hear of them.

In frivolous mood I wondered if the side handled baton of the police could be adapted to this task, and tried to imagine the reaction, both official and unofficial, to experiments designed to widen the application of the sword to ploughshares idea.



Sam Svenson's tool

An early tomb painting





Knot Gallery



Above - Dragonfly Knot by Jack Keene

Left - An oar crutch cover in hitching on an old whaler in the Whale Museum, Canical, Madeira. (photo - Gordon Perry)

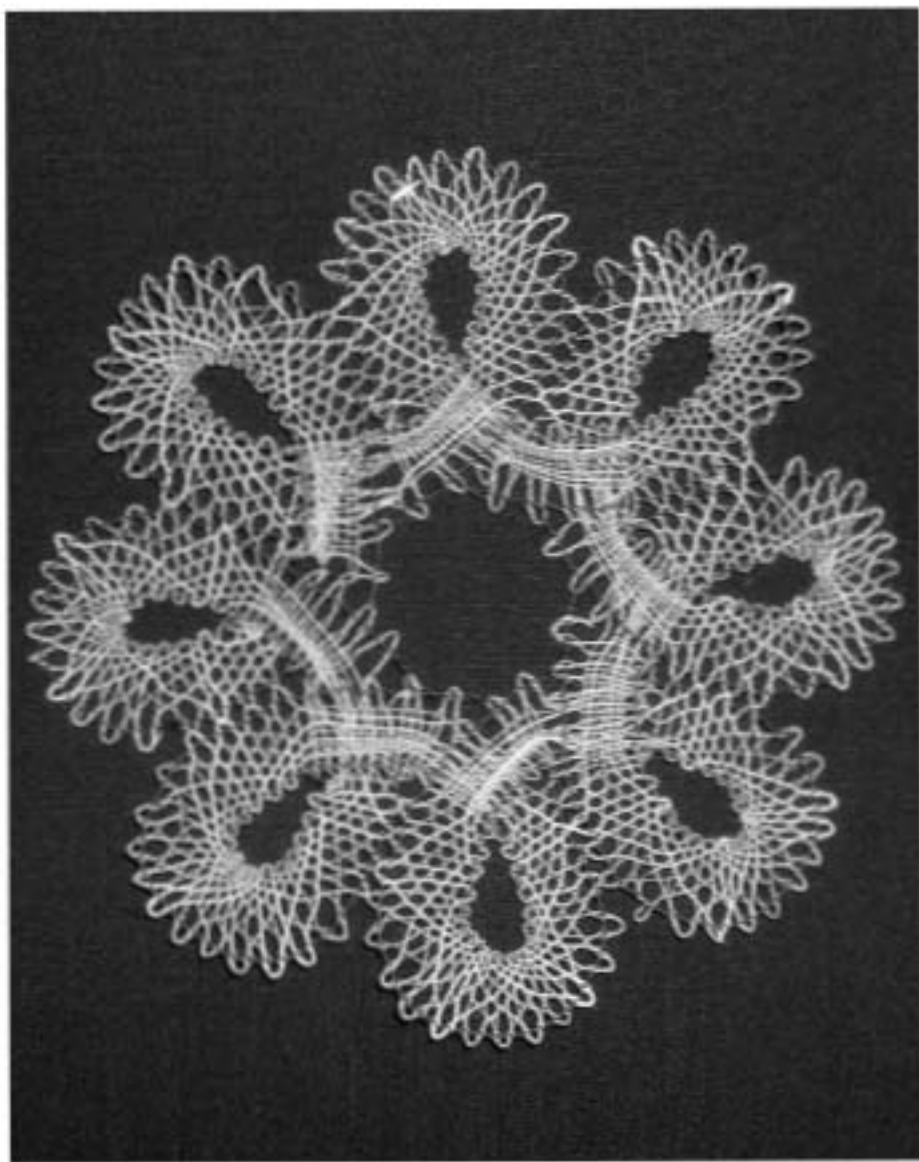


*Chalice in Cotton Fishing Line by
Joquim Paulo Escudeiro*

*Facing page - Superb decorated
picture frame by Bernard Cutbush*







Above - Intricate lacework by Europa Chang Dawson

Right - An attractive bellrope by Richard Hodge



The Three Lead by Six Bight Turk's Head Knot Tied in the Hand and Other Ways

by Jesse Coleman

The three lead by six bight Turk's Head Knot may be the easiest multi-strand THK to tie. It is tied with three separate cords and may be very colorful. It is rather a short THK, with only three leads. The "barber pole" pattern that is seen on many multi-strand THK's is absent in this knot.

The rule of the greatest common divisor states: "The number of cords needed to tie a THK is the greatest common divisor of the number of bights and the number of leads in the knot." The number of bights in this knot is six and is evenly divisible by the integers 1, 2, 3 and 6. The number of leads is three and is evenly divisible by the integers 1 and 3. The largest number in both of these two sets of numbers (1,2,3,6 and 1,3) is three. Therefore, three cords are required to tie this knot.

The 3L X 6B THK Tied in the Hand

Any coloured cords may be used, but let's call them red, white and blue, the colours of several national flags. Use fairly long cords and take about 20 cm of the red and white cords and loosely tie them into two loops. These two loops are to be placed over the fingers. The third cord will be woven between these two loops.

To begin, lay the loop of red cord over the forefinger and little finger as shown in figure 1. Next, lay the loop of white

cord over the thumb and ring finger, and over the red cord as shown in figure 2.

The blue cord starts at the bottom of the palm and weaves the usual over and under pattern used in all Turk's Head Knots (figure 3). The blue cord continues around the ring finger and back to the starting point, completing the third loop. Each of the three cords in this knot must follow an over and under pattern as they go from the outside of the knot to the inside and back again. The finished knot is shown in figure 4.

At this point, the knot may doubled, removed from the hand and completed in the usual manner.

The 3L X 6B THK Tied as a Mat

To tie this knot in mat form, start with the same three coloured cords as before and again tie two of them (the red and white ones) in loops. Lay the red loop on the mat in a long thin oval as in figure 5. Lay the loop of white cord over it as shown in figure 6. Next, weave the blue cord through the first two cords as shown in figure 7. The completed knot is shown in figure 8.

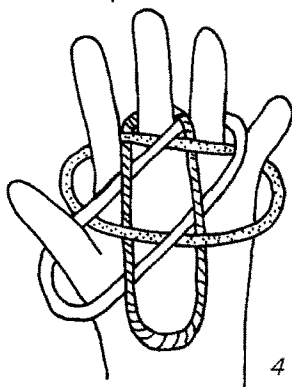
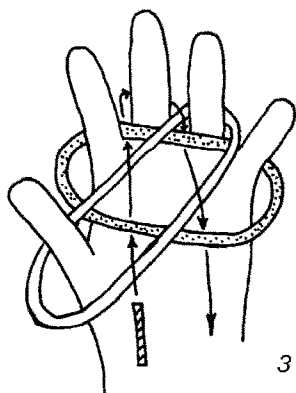
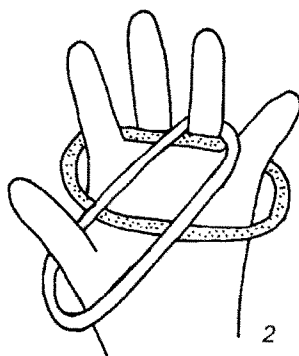
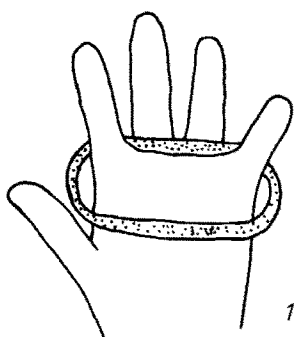
The 3L X 6B THK Tied on a Stick or Rod

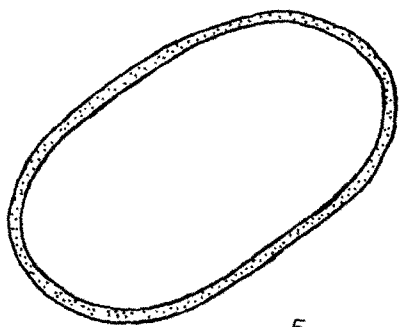
Figure 9 shows a stick or rod with a single (red, of course) loop of cord around it. A second cord (the white one) is wound around the stick and over the first cord as shown in figure 10. The third or blue cord

is woven through the first two cords as shown in figure 11. The completed knot is shown in figure 12.

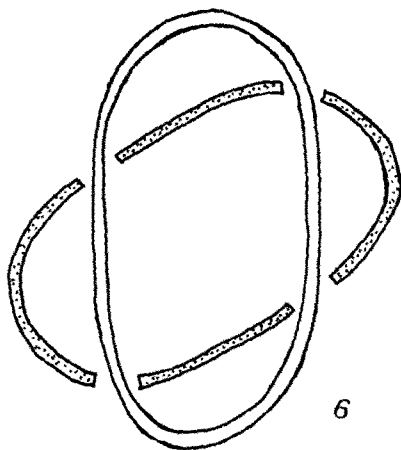
When tying multi-strand THK's, it is best to use cords that are the same

diameter, stiffness and firmness. If one of the cords is noticeably stiffer or larger than the other, then the resulting THK may not be as attractive as possible. This is not a problem in single strand THK's.

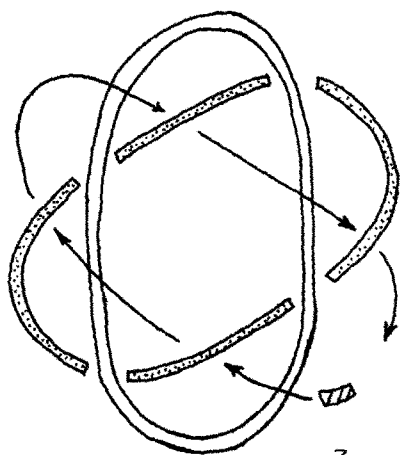




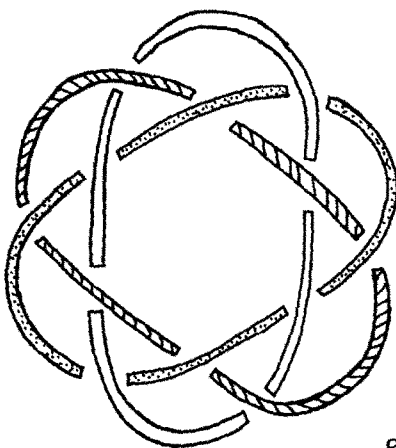
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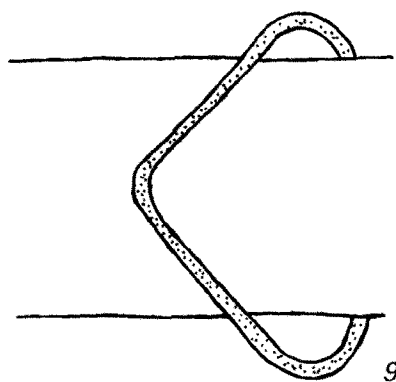
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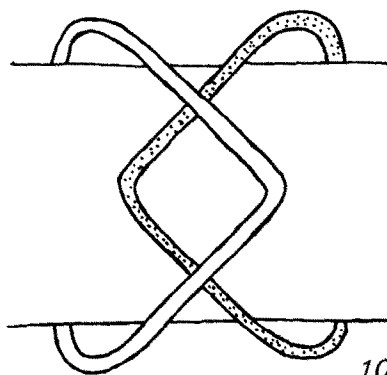
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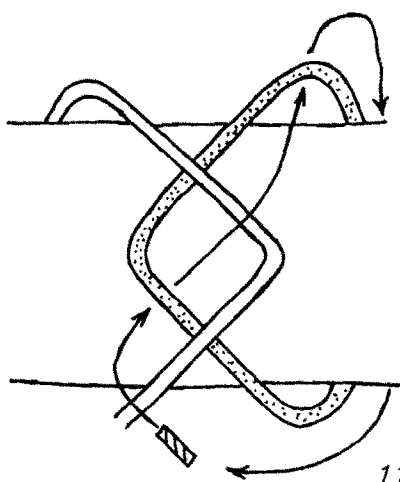
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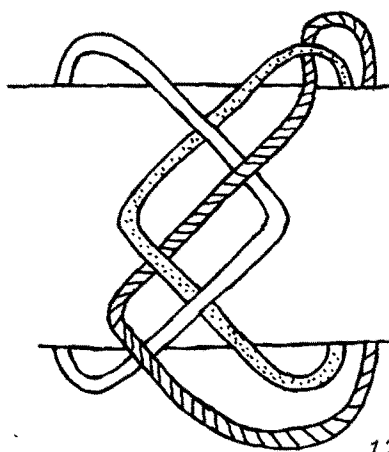
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10



11



12

Captain Kaj Lund

by Ronnie Gustavsson & Sven Erik Andersson

A great man with a low profile. Well known to many of us thanks to his books on macramé and cordage work.

Kaj Lund was born in 1911 at Svendborg in Denmark, a shipping town with many sailing ships. So it was natural that he learnt to sail early. He yearned for the Great Seas and first shipped on board a three-masted schooner. Later he sailed in other ships, among them the three-masted barque the “Suzanne” (ex “Kylemore”), at that time Denmark’s largest sailing vessel. Here he learned all that a seaman in a sailing ship ought to know.

After his time under sail, having done the qualification period for applying to be admitted into the School of Navigation, he passed his examinations for Mate’s and Captain’s certificates. There then followed service in the Navy.

Later he was employed in the salvage company Svitzer. For a few years he worked in the Mediterranean, and on the Atlantic coast, stationed at Gibraltar, Tangier and Casablanca. The work consisted in salvaging wrecked and disabled vessels.

After his time with Svitzer, he entered the Danish shipowning company Lauritzen, where he was attached to their special department for maritime education.

He then transferred to the Danish

Merchant Marine Welfare Board. There he built up the Danish Seamen’s Service from scratch.

“The start was made after a few years, when I had become head of the Merchant Marine Welfare Office. In that capacity my main concern was with the seamen’s leisure time. My first task was to assist the sailors in forming associations for spare time activities. The second was to convince the sailors that they possessed something that was lacking for people ashore.

I worked a great deal with photography, in order to demonstrate that seamen had motifs which people at home did not have. But there was another thing, too. One of the seamen’s specialities was to make bottled-ships. So in the course of a few years there appeared articles on bottle-ships in the little periodical the *Horisont* (Horizon), which I started.

Then there was this business of Fancy Work. I began with some articles on macramé. This was in the early 1950’s. I got in touch with a vocational teacher, F. Brandt-Møller by name, who had made himself familiar with macramé. I persuaded him to write a few articles on belts and the like. He was an excellent tyer, but not so good at expressing himself in writing. So I took down what he said. But then I had to grasp what he meant: the matter must be made clear, plain for everyone to understand.

These articles were collected in the first *Knyttebogen* (The Macramé Book). The book caught on to such extent that I decided to continue on the track. We now arranged a few competitions and exhibitions of sailor's hobby work and received a great many contributions. Before I sent the works back to the participants, I analysed and took pictures of the pieces. And then I wrote a book about them, *Knytte Modeller og Knytte idéer* (Macramé, Models and Ideas).

The analysis made it clear to me that there was a need for a basic book on macramé. So *Knyttebog for Begyndere* (Macramé for Beginners) appeared, and while I wrote that book I learnt to tie macramé properly. When I had completed the book for beginners I realised that there was an old tradition which was revived. These were the same things as they produced at the turn of the century 1900. There was a surge of interest in macramé

at that time.

It then occurred to me that there were so many possibilities in macramé that I started writing a whole series of small books in the form of specialised pamphlets intended for beginners in the ages 7 to 70. This became the series called *Lay Noget* (Make Something!).

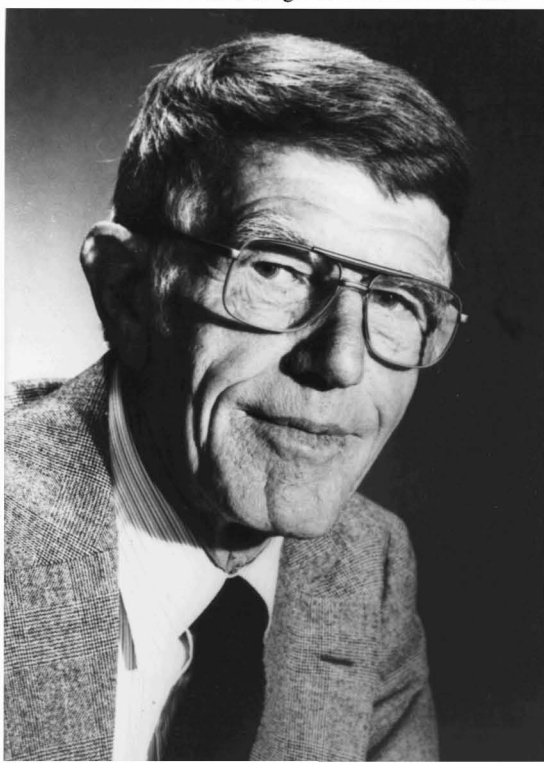
The books *Måtter og Rosetter* (Mats and Rosettes) and *Tovværks Kunst* (Artistic Rope Work) concerned real Fancy Rope Work. This was my own experiment with cordage. But the technique is different, more based on braiding and ropework methods. Macramé, on the other hand, is properly a form of Fancy Work.

A part of Fancy Work is in English square knotting, or international macramé of Arabic origin. And this word has assumed an extended meaning internationally to cover all Fancy Work done with small stuff. Macramé is a small part which can be used for innumerable types of decorative work, e.g. needle hitching and sennits.

Later on I wrote a few books about other things. *Bælter af Garn og Tov* (Belts of Cord and Twine) treated the tying of belts where I had mixed in some cordage work. *Knyttede Tasker* (Macramé Bags) was about the tying of bags, something which, of course had always been going on.

I found that there was a need for a modern book on professional cordage work, and this became *Knob og Splejs* (Knot and Splice).

I have fallen in love with the knot



known as Turk's Head or the Turkish Pearl. It is the only absolutely symmetrical knot that can be made with the one part only. The Turk's Head cannot only be made as a knot, but it can be flattened out into a rosette, transformed into a tube or a ring, or be expanded in various ways, even to form a drop. The Turk's Head offers so many possibilities as to give sufficient material for a whole book on the subject."

In addition to many articles in newspapers and periodicals, and a number of translations, Captain Lund is also the author of some thirty books on maritime history.

He also belongs to the Association of Wooden Ship. "Nobody can be an expert in that crowd," says Kaj Lund. "I have become humble over the years. I thought I knew most things until I discovered that there were fifty different Dutch types of vessels using the same rigging."

Many Happy Returns, Kaj Lund!
And Warmest Thanks for the pleasure you have spread by letting us share your knowledge and wisdom.

Literature

Knyttbogen, (The Macramé Book) with F. Brandt-Møller 1958

Knytte Modeller og Knytte Ideer (Macramé, Models and Ideas) 1968

Måtter og Rosetter (Mats and Rosettes) 1968

Knyttbog for Begyndere (Macramé for Beginners) 1969

Tovværks Kunst¹ (Fancy Rope Work) 1969

Knob og Splejs² (Knot and Splice) 1970

Bælter af Gain og Tov (Belt's of Cord and Twine) 1971

Knyttede Tasker (Macramé, Bags) 1972

Knytte Opskrifter (Notes on Macramé) 1972.
(Continuation of Models and Ideas)

The "Lav Noget" Series 1973-1976

Knyt (Tie!)

Knyt Stjerner (Tie Stars)

Knyt Juleting, (Tie Christmas Decorations))

Knyt Kurve (Tie Baskets)

Knyt Punge (Tie Pouches)

Knyt Farvekombinationer (Tie Colour Combinations)

Knyt Bredt (Tie Broad)

Knyt med Halvstik (Tie with Clove Hitch)

Knyt Rundt (Tie Round)

¹ Translated into German.

² Translated into Dutch, German, Norwegian and Swedish.

No books have been translated into English. The prospective English publishers wanted to secure the copyright for the American market as well, which the Danish publishers did not agree to.



20th Birthday Celebration Souvenir Mug



These cobalt blue Jacobean style mugs, with the Guilds logo picked out in 22 carat gold, are being made by the Coalport Pottery Museum. As such, they will not only bear the authentic Coalport insignia, but also the Ironbridge logo, on its base.

Five hundred of these 'collectors item' mugs have been ordered for sale at the Birthday Celebrations in Fareham next May, however, a small quantity will be available on a first come first serve basis for delivery in time for Christmas 2001, price £7.95 plus post and packing. Contact - Nigel Harding for details

Portrait of a Branch

The Pacific Americas Branch

by Lindsey Philpott & Joe Schmidbauer

I saw in the 1996/7 Membership Handbook that Lindsey Philpott was newly listed as the local contact for Southern California. I had a previous interest in trying to start a local Guild Branch but nothing much came of it. So I wrote Lindsey a letter saying I would be interested in helping him getting something going anyway. Lindsey rang me up few days later to tell me that there was an organising meeting for a future Branch of the Guild and would I be interested in joining?

That first meeting was held at the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro, California. Some fifteen people showed up to talk knots and get the group going. It was a fun and lively time. In the end, Darrell McNurlan volunteered to be President, Lindsey Philpott became the Treasurer and Joe Schmidbauer took the job as Secretary.

Several months of planning and discussion followed this initial meeting on how to best set up the Branch. At times it felt like it would never get off the ground. Finally, on Friday June 27th 1997, the Pacific Americas Branch of the International Guild of Knot Tyers was formally established with the signing of the Bylaws and election of Officers. [The IGKT Council officially ratified the PAB in September 1997.] We celebrated the next day by holding our 1st Annual Knot

Display and Demonstration on the front lawn of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. Everyone brought a knotted sample to share and knot tips to trade. The Branch had unveiled their new "Travelling Knot Board" as a showpiece for future shows and lectures.

Since then the Branch has grown to some 70 members. We stretch from Alaska to Southern California and we have members in most of the Western States. There is a sprinkling from the Eastern States. We also have a member in Venezuela!

We hold meetings at the Los Angeles Maritime Institute (which is next door to the Museum) on the second Tuesday of the month. The gatherings are very interesting and informative. One of the highlights was a lecture by Brion Toss in 1998: "From Spun Yarn to Spectra - How Knots Keep Pace with Technology." We also had the current Guild President, Brian Field, flown out as our guest in June of 2000. He was kind enough to give pleasant talk about "Magic, Medicine, Monkey's Fists & Marlinspikes: A Brief Look a 200 Years of Knotting."

Branch members also do outreach to local Scout Troops and Yacht Clubs. We also do a display and demonstration at the yearly Tall Ships Festival in Dana Point Harbor here in Southern California.



Here is a picture from our very first AGM in June 1998. This is on the front lawn of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro, California.

From left to right is:

Erin Rittenhouse, Sean Vattuone, Darrell McNurlan, Lindsey Philpott, Tom Gergen and Joe Schmidbauer

Second row standing is: Mark Sherman, President of the International String Figures Association.

CAN YOU HELP?

I am looking for digital photographs of knot work from around the world to make a montage at the IGKT 20th birthday exhibition. I will put these on CD and produce, a slide show of "The World Tied with KNOTS". Now for the practical bit, your photographs can be in PC format Jpeg or Gif images. Can you please send them to me singly (my download is very slow) as an E-mail to howard@hdenyer.fsnet.co.uk or by floppy disk or CD to:

Howard Denyer,
19 Broad Street,
Guildford,
Surrey GU3 3AQ.
ENGLAND.

More on the History of Knot Boards

By Joaquim Paulo Escudeiro

Des Pawson's article (KM70) raises some interesting questions. It seems to be correct because there is written evidence for it. In the book, Official Catalogue of Objects, sent to the Industrial Portuguese Exhibition held at Porto City (*Catalogo Official dos Objectos Enviados A' Exposição Industrial Portuguesa, Cordenado Por Jose' Candido Correia, Lisboa 1888*) we find that 500 objects belonging to the Lisbon Admiralty Naval School were sent for exhibition.

The following significant words are found. First: Single Study Objects (p19, Objectos de Estudo), there are all sorts of large items held on a single floor. For example - sheers (p19, Obj. No. 57, Cabrilha). Then the word "table" with master model of the school... (p22, Obj. No. A32 Mesa com modelo de um mastro para a escola...) and, Table for rigging study for the school ... (p27, Obj. No. B1 Mesa para Estudo de aparelho, destinada para a escola...).

Next, Frigate model for the study of rigging (p7, Obj. No. 30 Modelo de uma fragata para estudo de aparelho...) and, Ship Head Nose for the Study of rigging with the bowsprit and the foremast (p17, Obj. No. 48, Proa de navio para o estudo de aparelho com gurupes e mastro de traquete...). Also, Transverse section of armoured ... (p18, Obj. No. 11, Seção

transversal no couraçado...).

So the study systems are - single objects of study, tables, models, sections, as the first used.

But more interesting is that in the book we find - a cupboard with the following models for study, (p9, Obj. No. 46, Um armario contendo os seguintes modelos para estudo...). In this cupboard classified as a single object, there were 121 works! So I think that these should be the miniatures, and fixed on wood because if it was otherwise they would not have transported them as an individual unit, being still a large cupboard to go from Lisbon to Porto City in those days! Moreover some works are repeated elsewhere as single objects, as for example another tackle (p23, Obj. No. A40, Estralheira).

In this cupboard the works are divided into: four blocks (cadernais), 11 strapped blocks (moitões), three snatch blocks (patescas), six topsail buntlines rib (lebres), one sister block (polé), three stirrup (andorinhos), two plump block (sapatas), two truck (borlas), four blocks? (caçoilos), six deadeyes (bigotas), 11 tackling (talhame), two coach whip (rabos de raposa), five launching drags (boças), 16 rope end knots (pinhas), five knots (nós), five turns (voltas), six splices (costuras), three sennits (gaxetas), two pointings (rabichos), three strops

The Origin of Nylon

The request in *Knotting Matters* 71 by Graham MacLachlan for the true meaning and origin of the word 'Nylon' caused a flurry of activity.

The material itself came about as the result of a programme of pure research launched by the chemical company Du Pont in 1927. The company hired a 31 year old Harvard instructor Wallace Hume Carothers to lead a team of scientists and technicians to study the subject of polymerisation. The first nylon fibre was drawn on February 28th 1935, from a batch of polymer known as 6-6, so called because its constituent molecules, hexamethylenediamine and adipic acid, each had six carbon atoms. The new fibre was announced to the public in October 1938.

Early on, the fibre from polymer 6-6 was recognised as a replacement for silk in the women's hosiery industry. During 1930, the sale of silk for American women's stockings earned Japanese exporters about \$70m. The alternative, 'artificial silk' or rayon, exuded second-rate cheapness, it was vital therefore that they had a new word for a new substance.

Although first adopted as a substitute for silk, during WWII it was soon realised that nylon's properties of strength, resilience and resistance to mildew and salt water made it superior to silk for many wartime applications. Nylon was used for parachutes, glider tow ropes, bomber tyre cord, in self-sealing fuel tanks for aircraft, flak jackets, clothing for the humid jungles of the Pacific theatre and even moulded machine-gun parts.

Percy Blandford (Stratford-upon-Avon, England) recalls:

I was in the Royal Air Force during World War II and towards the end of the war I was with a unit training Army glider pilots for the invasion of Europe. We were using hemp towropes, which were only allowed a limited life. Then we received what must have been some of the first Nylon ropes in England. They were given an almost limitless life, but their stretch was almost unbelievable. A tug aircraft would go tearing across the airfield; while the military glider loaded with troops stayed put for a long time, then after the rope had almost doubled in length, it started to move and took off.

I was told then that the American firm Du Pont invented the material and patented it in New York (NY) and London (LON). They put these initials together as its name. Now, let's hear the other stories. Of course we could always ask Du Pont!

Neil Coates (Rose bay, Tasmania) and Thomas Simpson (South Shields, England) submitted this entry from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, (2nd edition) Volume X, p618:

"There is no evidence to support the derivations frequently given for this word in popular sources. Cf. [compare] the following quotation.

1940, *Women's Wear Daily*, 9 February [page] 22 the du Pont letter, written by John W. Eckelberry covers the general status of nylon as follows: "The word is a generic word coined by du Pont Co. It is not a registered name or trade mark. ... We wish to emphasise ... that the letters

n-y-l-o-n have absolutely no significance, etymologically or otherwise ... Because the names of two textile fibres in common use—namely ‘cotton’ and ‘rayon’, end with the letters ‘on’ ... it was felt that a word ending in ‘on’ might be desirable. A number of words ... were rejected because it was found they were not sufficiently distinct from words found in the dictionary, or in lists of classified trademarks. After much deliberation, the term ‘nylon’ was finally adopted.”

Len Cusack (Hobart, Tasmania) submitted the following information from *American Plastic - A Cultural History* by Jeffrey L. Meikle, Rutgers University Press:

“The issue of naming the synthetic fibre that researchers were calling Rayon 66 (for lack of anything better) first surfaced in January 1936. B. M. May of Du Pont Rayon Company questioned “whether it is wise or unwise to denominate it rayon.” He suggested that “to call it something else might be better” because it was superior to anything “Comprehended under the word ‘rayon’.”

In December 1937 a call went out to upper-level executives throughout the company to conceive a name with which to present Fiber 66 to the world. A list of more than four hundred suggestions ranging from Adalon to Yarnamid revealed a variety of baptismal motives. Responding to the list, Vice President Walter S. Carpenter, Jr., offered variations on the company name with Duponese and Pontella. President Lammot du Pont, on the other hand, avoided reference to the company and preferred Neosheen, Durasheen, and Delawear, the latter his own pun. Nylon, the eventual choice, did not appear on the list.

How the company abandoned such extravagant names as Duponese and Delawear in favor of the neutral generic nylon is unclear. Several improbable explanations surfaced later. One rumour, repeated as late as 1982 derived that name from New York (NY) and London (LON), wrongly claimed as sites of nylon’s simultaneous discovery. The most persistent rumour asserted that Du Pont intended nylon as an acronym for the contorted challenge to the Japanese silk monopoly: “Now You Lousy Old Nipponese!”

An in-house memo first revealed this choice in October 1938 about two weeks before Du Pont publicly announced the new synthetic fiber. The memo stated simply that “the word nylon has been adopted for the base material heretofore designated a ‘66.’” Since “nylon” would be used “in a generic sense,” it would be “unnecessary to capitalise it, put quotation marks around it or otherwise create any impression that it is anything but a common noun.” And since no definition of this “common noun” existed, the memo provided one: “Nylon is the generic name for all materials defined scientifically as synthetic fiber-forming polymeric amides having a protein-like chemical structure; derivable from coal, air and water, or other substances, and characterised by extreme toughness and strength and the peculiar ability to be formed into fibers and into various shapes such as bristles, sheets, etc.”

So there we have it. As Graham suggested, through Knotting Matters we have finally got to the bottom of how the name nylon came about. It just goes to show that someone somewhere can unearth the truth.

Branch Lines

Solent Branch

The Solent Branch held their second meeting on Tuesday 24th April at the Royal Naval Association in Gosport, kindly arranged by Jim Walsh. There were 19 members present with two apologies for absence. Don Bellamy opened the meeting with a welcome, especially to the three new members that had been recruited at a recent event in Portsmouth Naval Base. The Branch have been involved in several events during the summer, including, Fareham's Saturday by the Sea on 26th May, The Queen Elizabeth Country Park Fair, on 7th and 8th July, The Earl of Southampton's Show at Titchfield Abbey on 21st July and The International Festival of the Sea, at Portsmouth Naval Base, over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Bob Pearce has a talk to give to the Park Gate WI, while Nick Wilde has been invited to talk to the members of the Lymington Town Yacht Club.

Terry Meaden, was the "Profile of a Knot Tyer" victim. Terry explained how he went from the Royal Navy to the Merchant Marine and came ashore to teach navigation at the Fijian University. "Prof" Terry is now "our man" in HMS Warrior 1865. Jack Bell spoke about his experiences with the Spanish Ring Knot, praising Ron Edward's book "Knots Useful and Ornamental" which explains

in a nutshell what Jack has spent 20 years trying to solve. Chris Pain brought some netting from the roof lining of an old Rover car, which he is in the process of making a facsimile of to fit in the refurbished vehicle. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 26th June either at the RNA Gosport again or alternatively at the Fareham Fire Station.

Gordon Perry

Kent Branch

The typical knot tyer spends most of each year feeling as isolated as a lighthouse. So a gathering of Guild members organised by Derek Chipperfield, for Sunday 8th April 2001, at Chatham's historic dockyard beside the River Medway, once again proved a popular event. The 25 of us who attended, coming mainly from Kent and Essex (where their own meeting place is temporarily closed), included IGKT President Brian Field and Vice President Frank Harris. A few travelled further to arrive from Hampshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire,

In a room within the 19th century Admiral's House, generously lent to us by the dockyard's 'Friends' - following an initiative by Jill Jenner - we were treated to instructive demo's and displays of macramé (Geoffrey Budworth), fender-making (Derek), tying a cruciform Turk's Head in the hand (Frank), and lanyard design (Jill). More pleasurable still - as always - was the time available for companionable free association, and

exchange of ideas, as we consumed our own sandwich lunches and over numerous cups of coffee, tea and biscuits courtesy of the organisers.

Reported by our Stringer in the south-east

Pacific-Americas Branch

Joe had gone off on his annual vacations and asked me to drop a line or two about our recent events this year. Most recently I have completed another class of marlinespike seamanship. Tillie and Yvonne (Easton and Chang) have been seen again on television, talking about Chinese knots. We had a display at the KelpFest in Santa Monica for the Baykeeper organization, and exhibited a display for the Europa Festival of the “Red Balloon” for kids in San Pedro, in conjunction with MGM Studios. In June we had our annual exhibition and demonstration on the lawns of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. I visited the Friends of the English Regency. We looked forward to our display at the Toshiba Tallships Festival in Dana Point - more news on this later, also our Annual General Meeting in San Pedro.

Fair leads to all!

Lindsey Philpott

President, Pacific Americas Branch, IGKT

Surrey Branch Report

It was with great pleasure that we made Glad Findley our President at the Surrey Branch AGM. Glad was the founding

Chairman of the first branch of the IGKT, when she turned her macramé teaching group into the Surrey Branch, at first it consisted of all woman then slowly men joined and I hope helped to broaden the practical knotting base. Glad has served as Chairman and on the Committee and it's largely through her hard work that the Branch is successful today.

After the AGM we studied a video programme about trebuchets (a medieval device for propelling rocks at castles) and David Monk led a discussion on how we could make one of these devices. On a rather wet June Saturday a trebuchet was built at our local Scout campsite. This was about three meters high and after many fine-tuning shots we managed to throw a 0.7-kilogram rock 80 meters. Is this a Guild record?

We Were There!

We had a very successful Bank holiday weekend at the Crick Boat Show, which is one of the biggest inland waterway shows in Britain. Although not many of the Surrey branch travelled north we were very ably assisted by Ken Nelson, Colin Grundy, Bernard Cutbush and Bill Meakin our thanks to them. Apart from meeting many old friends we entertained the public with a display of knot work and occasionally made of a piece of rope. We were part of the children's passport scheme that involved the kids going to at least five different stalls this gave us the opportunity to teach at least one knot and give away many copies of the Surrey Six Knotting card to them and their parents.

Howard Denyer

Postbag

The views expressed in reader's letters do not necessarily reflect those of the Council. The Editor reserves the right to shorten any letter as necessary.

Grocer's Knot

In reply to Peter Coulthurst, KM 70 p47, I have seen about 35 years ago, this operation in a hardware store in Rome. Now I do it only with natural fibres (no synthetics). I wrap the twine around my left hand with two turns, after I make a bight where I pass the working end as shows in the drawing. I hold it all firm with the thumb, then I wrap the right hand with 2-3 turns and hold the twine firm with the thumb. The space between the hands is about 60cm. I bring the hands together and give a jerk and the twine break at the point A. If you are not sure wear gloves or make the wrap around a wooden board, a plank, a chair back, etc. It is possible cut twine of 1-2 mm diameter.

*Gino Pietrollini
Mentana, Italy*

Origin of a Knot

According to the information on the cover of the Ashley Book of Knots - Clifford Ashley spent 40 years gathering information of knots and their uses - and a further 11 years to put it into book form.

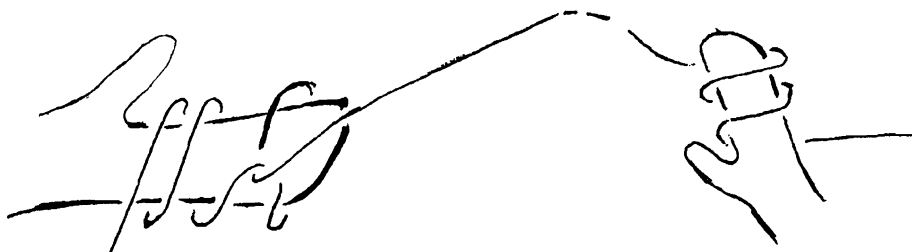
The book was first published in America in 1944, but who can say when he actually drew the Chinese button knot in question? I don't think we will ever know!

One thing I do know, I was in the States at the time (1944) loading timber in Philadelphia, but I didn't know about the book until 1948, when it was advertised in the UK daily press.

I saw it in Southampton on the first day it was on sale. The price was half a weeks pay for an AB, so I delayed my purchase until December 1949 and it was my Christmas present to me.

It was a very good buy - I've still got it - and have had many years of enjoyment and entertainment from it.

*Bob Stroud
Dover, UK*



Left Hand

Right Hand

Further on ‘Origin of a Knot’

I am replying to Mr. Sten Johansson’s question in his article “The Origin of a knot” published in Knotting Matters Issue 70. He asks if anyone has any ideas about the Chinese Button knot tied on the fingers and thumb.

I recently spent several years in Hong Kong where I “discovered” the ancient art of Chinese Decorative Knotting, and became thoroughly addicted to it as well! I learnt how to tie several different types of Button knots on the fingers, including the example illustrated in Mr. Johansson’s article, using an almost identical method. I am 100% sure that my Chinese teacher had never seen the *Ashley Book of Knots*, nor the *Finnish Book of Household Knowledge*! This is a Chinese traditional method handed down by Chinese women from generation to generation, and not recorded on paper until sometime in the 20th century.

I would imagine that Ms Ropponen and Mr Ashley had both at sometime independently seen those drawings in a book or paper on Chinese knotting.

Incidentally I will soon be publishing a book on Chinese knotting with Search Press. It will probably include the “finger” method of tying the button knots, as well as lots of other Chinese knots, with very clear step- by-step drawings and instructions, and projects for using each knot.

Suzen Millodot.
Tel Aviv, Israel

Drawing Knots

There are many different ways of drawing knots and directions for tying knots. I use freehand drawings and computer ‘tatted’ drawings in my handouts that I leave with groups after doing teaching.

However I now want to send articles to KM and I am not happy with the quality for publication. Please, would anyone who has either a good draw package for manipulating scanned in freehand drawings or for drawing ‘on the mouse’ as it were, contact me with the name and review of your favourite package.

My snail mail is in the book, but my e-mail is wizardcrafts@lboggs.fsnet.co.uk.
Waiting in knots.

Lonnie Boggs
Kidlington, UK

An Appreciation

A belated appreciation of the distinction bestowed on me at the start of the year.

I should like to thank (shades of the Oscars!) The Principle Officers, the Committee and Members, particularly those Members in the UK, USA and of course New Zealand, who conspired (I think that’s the word!) to bring this signal courtesy to fruition. Thank you one and all most sincerely.

I am, of course most conscious of the double honour afforded me, by my, being very first recipient of the Presidents Certificate of Honour which, with its 01-01-01 date, sits in a prominent place on our living room wall.

Also I should like to thank President

Field for getting up so early (0530 UK time I think) to talk to me by satellite telephone at the ceremony most ably organised by our NZ President Tony Fisher. Brian may like to know that Tony had organised a link of the phone (by some techno-magic) to a loud speaker system, and Brian's sepulchral tones echoed throughout the lower hold of our (80 ton lift) floating' crane headquarters! The small, but select group of guests were most impressed.

Once again thank you one and all.

Sincerely,

Roger Carter
Plimmerton, New Zealand

Get Knotting

If you see me walking down the street with a piece of string in my hand and a strange look on my face, do not dismiss me as a nutter. I'm not; I'm a knotter, nutting out a knot not ever before been knotted. Please do not tell me to get knotted. I had that small operation years ago.

David Blogg
Taradale, New Zealand

The Bowline Debate

The Name;

As Owen K. Nuttall rightly quotes, the bowline was the line leading from the bridles on the leading edge of a square sail to the bows of the vessel.

The object being to hold the sail firm when sailing on a wind, and to help prevent the sail fluttering and spilling the

wind, also to help prevent the sail being taken "aback" with the possible consequence of dismasting. Because the "Knot" which for identification purposes I will call #1916, because it's an easy number to remember, (and because Ashley uses it in conjunction with the bridles) was most used for the job.

Over the decades, the name was, as is often the case, transferred from the line to the knot. The English language at that time was not set in the concrete of dictionaries. Those few people, who could write (other than Clerics,) tended to spell words phonetically. So the BOLINS AND BOLINGS were, in fact the phonetic spellings of regional dialect, and accented pronunciations, which did in fact become set in the concrete of common usage, to the extent that today how one pronounces the word at sea? separates the Sailors from the Lubbers

The Knot;

Owen K. Nuttall's 'True Bowline', p29 KM67, is in fact an abomination first illustrated by that father of most arguments on knot names, the infamous Tom Bowling. This is the *nom de plume* of an as yet unidentified author/illustrator who published the first book in the English language devoted entirely to knotting. Unfortunately for enthusiasts of our subject, his dedication of the book to H R H Prince Alfred, a son of Queen Victoria and a Captain R N and it's acceptance, gave the book a respectability that it richly does not deserve. He shows a Reef Knot three different times under three different names for pities sake and the book has only 21 pages and three plates of illustrations.

Tom Bowling, incidentally was a character in a sea song written by the famous English composer/writer Charles Dibden (1745-1814) who amongst other accomplishments is said to have helped Naval recruiting considerably during the Napoleonic Wars with his patriotic songs to the extent that 'Tom Bowling' became the name for the 'ideal sailor'.

So with the Royal blessing, and the Archetypal Naval name, he couldn't go wrong. Therefore anyone else who fancied himself as a knoter couldn't go wrong either by copying good old 'Tom' who published in 1876. The first was Tom Burgess (as Owen quoted) who published in 1884. His book was then revised as recently as 1946 by Capt. J Irving who perpetuated the sin.

It takes but a moment's reflection to realise that Bowling's 'True Bowline' will take all the weight of any given job, on the seizing! Further, imagine if you will that you are out on the yardarm of the topsail in a gale, securing the bowline to the bridles. Are you going to mess about seizing the working end of the line through a figure of eight to the standing part, or will you quickly throw a #1916 into the line? That knot didn't get its name for nothing.

Further circumstantial evidence that #1916 is the TRUE BOWLINE can be sought by viewing illustrations of #1916 in the following books: Steele 1794, Darcy Lever 1819, Biddlecombe 1848, R. Henry Dana. 1879. All except Dana, prior to Bowling, and Burgess, and all illustrating the Ashley #1916.

I feel that there is little, if any question

that the True Bowline is in fact Ashley's #1916, i.e. "Out of the hole, round the tree and back down the hole. Dammit, it's a tradition!

Roger Carter
Plimmerton, New Zealand

Wicking?

Tricia Brown here in the USA and a friend of UK. I have a wonderful newfound cousin over there named Roy Fozard.

I am looking for patterns or information on tying decorative knots using wicking. It is like crochet.

Can you direct me to someone who can share this craft with me?

Tricia Brown
Via e-mail

A 'Mouse'

Is it possible I could look to you for an answer to a problem that has been bugging me for months.

Having seen references to a 'mouse' in past copies of Knotting Matters, I cannot for the life of me begin to imagine what a 'mouse' is.

Could you please enlighten me?

Des Wilson
Leeds, UK

Des - A mouse is a raised knob (Ashley #2768) or a raised knot. See the article on page 14 of this issue by James L. Doyle - Ed.

Knotting Diary

AGM's & 1/2 YEARLY MEETINGS

IGKT Half-yearly Meeting

Ellesmere Port, Cheshire

13th October 2001

Contact: David Walker

Tel: 01244 682117

E-mail: getknotted@appleonline.net

IGKT 20th AM & Birthday Celebrations

Fareham, Hampshire

20th - 25th May 2002

Contact Ken Yalden

Tel: 023 9257 8603

E-mail: kennethyalden@lineone.net

IGKT Half-yearly Meeting

Hanover International Hotel, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire

11th-13th October 2002

Contact: Bruce Turley

Tel: 0121 453 4124

E-mail: 106077.1156@compuserve.com

BRANCH MEETINGS

West Yorkshire Branch

18th September

Beulah Hotel, Tong Road, Farnley, Leeds

Contact David Pearson

Tel: 0113 2572689

East Anglian Branch

22nd September

Museum of East Anglian Life, Stowmarket,
Suffolk

Contact John Halifax

Tel: 01502 519123

West Country Knotters

29th September, 24th November

Scout HQ, Almondsbury, Gloucestershire at 1400

Contact: Derwent (Tug) Shipp

Tel: 01275 847438

EVENTS

Von Hundepints, Schweinsrücken und
Neunschwänziger Katz, Seemannsarbeiten
aus Tauwerk.

(Pointing, Cockscumbing and Cat o' Nine
tails and sailor's Ropework) by Karl Barethur
October - December

Koloniaalmuseum Veendam, Netherlands

'Spliterati 01'

West Ox Art Gallery, Town Hall, Bampton,
Oxfordshire

28th September - 21st October 2001

Contact: Jennie Parry, 21 St Philip's Road,
Leicester. LE5 5TR

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Much Ado About Knotting <i>history of the 1st 10 years of the Guild</i>	£2.50 *
The Knot Book	£3.99
Brian Field	
Breastplate Designs	£2.50
Concerning Crosses	£1.50
Eric Franklin	
Turkesheads the Traditional Way	£1.50 *
Nylon Novelties	£2.00 *
Stuart Grainger	
Knotcraft	£3.60 *
Ropefolk	£1.30
Turks Head Alternatives	£2.20 *
Creative Ropecraft	Hardback £9.95
Knotted Fabrics	Hardback <i>price includes UK postage</i> £9.00
John Halifax	
Something Different <i>with over 50 Button Knots</i>	£3.20 *
Harold Scott	
On Various Cruxiform Turks Heads	£2.50
Sliding Template Method for Designing Cruciform Turks-Heads Vol. 2	£3.00
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