

Knotting Matters

The magazine of the International Guild of Knot Tyers



Issue 91
June 2006

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Knotting Matters

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Knotting Matters

The Magazine of the International Guild of Knot Tyers

Issue 91 - June 2006

www.igkt.net

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Notes from the Secretary's Blotter - A Secretary's Farewell

As you can tell from the title, - this is to be the last of the Notes from the Secretary's Blotter, for, after fourteen years in the post, I have finally retired as the Honorary Secretary of the IGKT, - and even as I type this - I can hear the applause...

For those of you who were listening carefully, it was actually five years ago that I retired as Secretary, because at the time, despite having had dragged the Guild kicking and screaming into the twentieth century, I felt that I had run out of ideas, and that you needed a new person fired with enthusiasm, and full of fresh ideas to move you on into the twenty-first century. Sadly, such individuals have managed to maintain a very low profile, but the Council can be very persuasive, especially with their constrictor knots and cats of nine tails, and so a volunteer has now stepped forward. I am sure you are aware, a volunteer in the hand is worth several in the bush, so before he had chance to ask what was involved,

he was left holding the baby - but then I have been practicing that little manoeuvre for some time, just in case...

It is fourteen years ago that I was asked if I would take over from Frank Harris (who I am sure is up there - still keeping his eye on me). I would like to think that I have not let him down, and that I have presented the Guild with a professional and authoritative image to the world at large, and as a friendly and caring family to the membership. I have no doubt that my successors; both now and in the future, will continue to build on this.

Fourteen years, - what a difference those fourteen years have made. When I took on the role, I had just changed career from being a Field Engineer working with high voltage overhead lines, to the warmth and comfort the company's Control Room. There, in the middle of the Control Room was a PC - the only one in the office, and which was on a trolley and being shared between the twelve engineers on shift at any

one time. As I was the only one with an interest in such technology, the IGKT soon became its sole user. This enabled me to start using some basic office disciplines, which changed the face of the Guild. My first act was to write to existing members and ask for their subscriptions - Frank was appalled - but the income was desperately needed. It was not too long before the Guild bought its own computer, - but you would not believe the strength of the objections to email and the internet connection, which is now the principle source of communications with the Guild.

From this point there was no stopping me, and soon we had passed the 1000 member mark. Five years ago we reached 1200, - and that is we have stagnated, waiting for a fresh impetus to drive us forward.

Since I started, the job has grown with me, and the difficulty has been trying to find someone to take on my role. The solution has been to break down the role into its identifiable component parts, and look for volunteers to deal with each of those parts. Just in time for the AGM, David Walker offered his services as 'The Honorary

Secretary', and was duly elected by those members present. On your behalf, I would like to thank him for this brave act, and I would like to ask that you give him your best wishes and full support in his new post.

Meanwhile, what about the Membership Secretary? - Well actually, we are still looking - but don't you worry - as a temporary measure you are stuck with me until we have press ganged; identified a suitable victim; someone.

I would like to say what a privilege it has been to serve such a worthy group for so long. I have met and spoken to a great number of fascinating and learned individuals, and I have visited many locations and made a great number of friends, all of whom I hope to

keep in touch with over the years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank the membership for bestowing upon me the title and honour of 'Vice President' - which means that at all future meetings, I shall have nothing else to do but strut about trying to look important. I must also thank you for the beautiful flowers that were given to my wife Sylvia, - who has already organised 'jobs' to fill my newly acquired 'spare time', (what ever that may be).

As you may know, I work a very strange shift pattern that gives me very few weekends off during the year, but despite that I have managed to attend 29 consecutive General Meetings, and about 60 Council Meetings. I shall continue to do my best to get to as many General

Meetings as possible both in the UK and round the world, as I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can. In fact, I give you notice now, that once I retire from full time employment, which should be towards the end of next year, just try and keep me away.

In conclusion, I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as your secretary, however all good things must come to an end sometime, and I now ask that you give David as much help and support as you have given me over the past fourteen years. May your string never tangle, (oh, the trouble I used to get into for calling it string), and may your sheep never shank.

**Yours in Knotting
- Nigel**

Col's Comment

In the last issue of *Knotting Matters*, I announced our intention of living afloat. While this hasn't happened just yet, there are certain things that have to be put in place first, but KM is certainly moving and it's important that mail can follow us. Nigel Harding as Hon. Secretary volunteered to forward mail for KM from his address. As you will have read in this issue, Nigel has stepped down as Hon. Sec. In the interim therefore, postal mail for KM should be sent care of 17 Honiton Road, Wyken, Coventry CV2 3EF. Hopefully a more permanent solution will be found soon, and KM readers will be informed.

On a slightly different note, the back cover of KM90 taken at last years October meeting in Holland showing Europa Chang Dawson teaching Scouts, should be attributed to André van der Salm. My apologies for this oversight.

President's Letter

Some of you may already be aware that our long serving 'Hon Sec' is stepping down and

I would like to start with a heart felt 'Thank you' to Nigel Harding from all the members of the Guild. For 15 years Nigel has given us sterling service in his role as Honorary Secretary and in acknowledgment of this service we are making him a Vice President of the International Guild of Knot Tyers. This leads me on to say 'congratulations' to the brave man that follows him, David Walker. As from our AGM held 13th May David is now our 'Hon Sec'.

With some concern I have been keeping a Presidential eye on the notes posted on the 'Knot Chat' section of the IGKT Web. Having read an article in the *Times* newspaper recently regarding a new sport called 'Blogging' which is where somebody can 'Blogg' onto a web site, knowing very little of the subject, then cause the genuine reader to become irate over certain issues. Once they have generated a fuss or even mayhem, they start all over again on someone else's site and get them buzzing about like hornets. Please be careful, take a deep breath before you reply and no shooting from the hip, you can easily take somebody's eye out.

Now to some genuine questions, Lindsey Philpott of PAB IGKT posed some questions on behalf of Charlie Bell, and e-mailed them to KM (see PAB Branch Lines, this issue). I shall

answer them as my thoughts only, and not an official statement from the IGKT council:

Should Branches be represented at International meetings?

A. Meetings are never closed, all are welcome. You just have to get there, or write your questions to the Hon Sec so that they can be read out at the meeting.

Can the USA be the centre point for the 2007 AGM?

A. Unfortunately too late to ask for this one - just remember if you are not there we may talk about you!

Should the USA be the venue for a near future International meeting?

A. Yes please - as the Guild constitution is British the AGM must be on British soil to be within the law- but any other meetings can be overseas- I hear the US scouts are a 100 years old in 2010, start planning and let every one know soon so we can start saving.

Should we have the web page translated?

A. The cost is prohibitive. The French branch has a web site and has requested it be linked to the IGKT site, which is being looked into. As there are more Hispanic speakers in the USA than in Europe, maybe that area is worth exploring.

What ever happened to the learned journal of the IGKT?

A. No one has volunteered to be a learned editor, and no learned articles have been lodged for publication yet! But with the world much faster and smaller because of the internet, if they are not distracted by 'Bloggers', maybe some works will be forthcoming; again with today's technology this sort of thing can be compiled outside of the UK.

Are we stuck in a rut of aging and ever decreasing number of members without having a plan for recruiting young members?

A. Our focus is on youth and education, what are you doing at your shows?

What are the standards of the Guild?

A. With health and safety as the law and the US policy of 'Sue' every body coming over to this Country, the teaching of practical knot tying must have standards i.e.: a reef knot is not a bend; please look to back copies of KM for help.

Should there be standards?

A. If we look like scruffy freaks, who will talk to us and then who will believe us, ensure good presentation and tidy displays.

How do we know who or what is good?

A. Tricky, but who checks the checker? Collect other folk's work and put that on show with relevant information.

Are we a closed society?

A. No, it is up to everybody to spread the word of the IGKT.

Are we simply hobbyists?

A. We are an eclectic group and it will be a very brave rigger who tells a surgeon how to tie a suture, but together they may have many common points on knotting as has been born out within our members of the IGKT.

Please note, again I say these are my own personal thoughts and not an official statement from the IGKT council however if you have strong feelings for or against please write to Colin.

Ken Yalden.

2K7 IGKT Silver Jubilee.

~~~~~

To ensure that no time is lost and that no knot tyer falls by the wayside, I am pleased to tell you all that the original three days in Fernham Hall for 2K7 (Thur/Fri/Sat) will now have the added bonus of Mon/Tue/Wed in the hospitality suite at the 'Red Lion' Hotel Fareham which is a short walk away from the hall.

This will ensure those travelling from afar have more time with fellow knot tyers and it will make for a full week.

Two of the days are kindly being sponsored by benefactors, should anyone wish to sponsor the 3rd day please contact Ken Yalden.

Your local accommodation reps are Solent Branch members Eddie and Pauline Bentley who will be only too pleased to put you in contact with local B&B's, campsites and hotels etc.

Tel: +44 (0) 1329 233251

E-mail: [edatfrost@talktalk.net](mailto:edatfrost@talktalk.net)

## What is a “prick of spunyarn”?

Graham McLachlan

During a recent conversation with like-minded marine enthusiasts, the phrase “a prick of spunyarn” reared its contentious head. Unsure of quite what form this “prick” took, it was floated that it must have some common ground with another sailor’s favourite, “a prick of tobacco”. The well-brought up camp asserted that any mariner in polite company would use a pseudo-French affectation “perique” to avoid embarrassing the ladies. The vulgar among us just resigned themselves to Sailor Jack’s lavatorial sense of humour, but were they doing him an injustice? I decided to do a little etymological research to try and find out exactly what “a prick of spunyarn” could be.

My knot books gave me no answer so my next stop was the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). No mention of the phrase in question, nevertheless it explains that “prick” enjoys the by-form “pritch”, and came to us from the Low German word prik. Its various forms are found in most of today’s modern Germanic languages, but its ultimate origin is unknown. Out of the five principal English definitions of the noun form, at least two could theoretically harbour our phrase “a prick of spunyarn”. For reference, here are the different categories:

- 1) the result of pricking [OE]
- 2) a minute part of something [OE - M17]
- 3) the action of pricking [ME]
- 4) a thing that pricks [ME]
- 5) a point in space or time [ME].

Curiously, the “a thing that pricks” category contains the phrase “a prick of tobacco”, but more on that later.

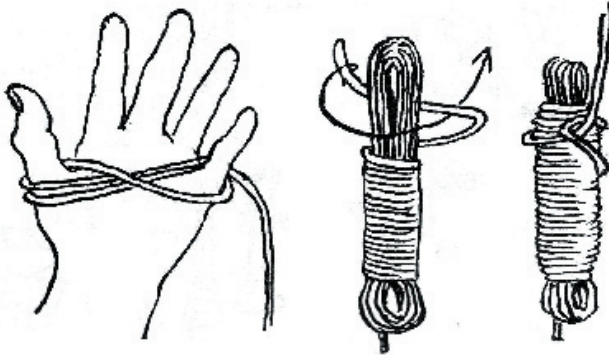
The only example from a reliable, written source that I have been able to find for the entire unit “a prick of spunyarn” comes from the 1913 edition of *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary of American English*. It is to be found, unsurprisingly, under the headword “prick” and falls into the OED’s “a minute part of something” category. The entry reads thus: (Naut.) A small roll; as, a prick of spun yarn; a prick of tobacco. Although brief, Webster’s entry clearly states three important things about a “prick”. First, when relating to spunyarn and tobacco its meaning is considered to be one and the same; second, it is of limited quantity (small); third, it is cylindrical in shape (roll). Of equal interest, but in the opposite sense, Webster’s makes no mention of the nautical “prick” being linked to coarse slang or the “perique” of our shrinking violets, but this may be misleading as it was published in a more publicly reserved age.

A glance in William Falconer’s 1780 *Dictionary of the Marine*, throws up other nautical definitions of “prick” but only in its verb form. Of these, “pricking the sails” merits mention for nautical nomenclature’s sake, but is of little help in our etymological quest. It is, he writes, “the act of stitching two cloths of a sail together along the space comprehended between the two edges, or selvages, that overlay each other. Or, it is the sowing



a middle-seam between the two seams which are employed to unite every cloth of a sail to the next adjoining. This operation is rarely performed till the sails have been worn for a considerable time, so that the twine, with which they were originally sewed, is become very feeble and incapable of resisting the efforts of a strong gale of wind". That wasn't in the OED!

Running into a dead end, I then went looking for references denoting a small roll of spunyarn. The generally admitted definition of spunyarn by any sailor worth his salt is something along the lines of "a small diameter line used for various shipboard tasks like seizing on sails and serving splices to protect them from rot". It is usually made from two or three yarns of rope that have been twisted together, rather than laid, and rendered waterproof by soaking in dark-brown Stockholm tar.



When sold or stored, spunyarn is wound into either a ball or a hank, the latter being a "small roll". For specific uses in relatively small quantities, a simple hank or skein was made by winding the spunyarn around two points, such as thumb and little finger, in a figure of eight. This produced a long, cylindrical shape which was finished off by winding the last few lengths in frapping turns around the trunk of the hank and from one end to

the other. Clifford Ashley, once a mariner in the days of sail, describes this method under knot 3085 in his famous book on knots.

Turning my attention to its sibling phrase, I did indeed find a couple of examples of "a prick of tobacco" outside the domain of dictionaries. The first was used in very formal circumstances which belie its supposed vulgar connotation. It concerns the trial of a petty thief called Benjamin Perry at the Old Bailey, London, in 1755. Accused of stealing a total of "one hundred pounds weight of tobacco, value £3.10 s" from "a certain ship lying on the river Thames" he admitted that he "took away a prick of tobacco from among the staves, and, put it into my coat-pocket, and I carried it on shore". The fact that he concealed the prick of tobacco in his pocket gives us an idea of its size, i.e. small. The second

example gives the term even more innocent credentials, as it was used in the writings of a Jesuit missionary in what was then New France (Canada). It appears in a simple list, "Home-made cheeses,[...] half a prick of tobacco, some mouldy snuff, and 2 biscuits, given to me by Father Bon".

Moving further south down the American continent, the word "perique" has a much better documented origin. All the sources that I consulted agreed that it is Lousianian French, for "a kind of tobacco with medium-sized leaf, small stem, tough and gummy fibre, and cured in its own juices, so as to be very dark coloured, usually black". Unlike "prick" in "a prick of tobacco", this definition of perique clearly does

not refer to a quantity of tobacco but a type of tobacco. Apparently, perique uses the Red Burley strain of tobacco, which is also considered a spice, and can only be grown in St. James Parish, Louisiana. Appearing for the first time in the late 19th century and as such a relatively modern word, the OED goes on to tell us that it probably derives from the nickname of the first man who grew it. Indeed, from less reliable quarters the story goes that French colonist Pierre Chenet was known to the locals by the sobriquet “Perique”, a Cajun corruption of the word “prick”! However, after checking Francophone sources, including the 16-volume *Trésor de la langue française*, I can safely say that “perique” is not a French word either as an insult or as a kind of tobacco. In fact, it is far more likely to be an English corruption (as the OED implies) of the name “Pierrick”, which means “Little Pierre” in the Breton language. Unfortunately, I was unable to find out whether Pierre Chenet actually came from Brittany in France. Nevertheless, this kind of name alteration was and still is very common; a famous example is the animator Disney whose ancestors were supposed to have come from Isigny, a small port on the north coast of France: Walt D’Isigny.

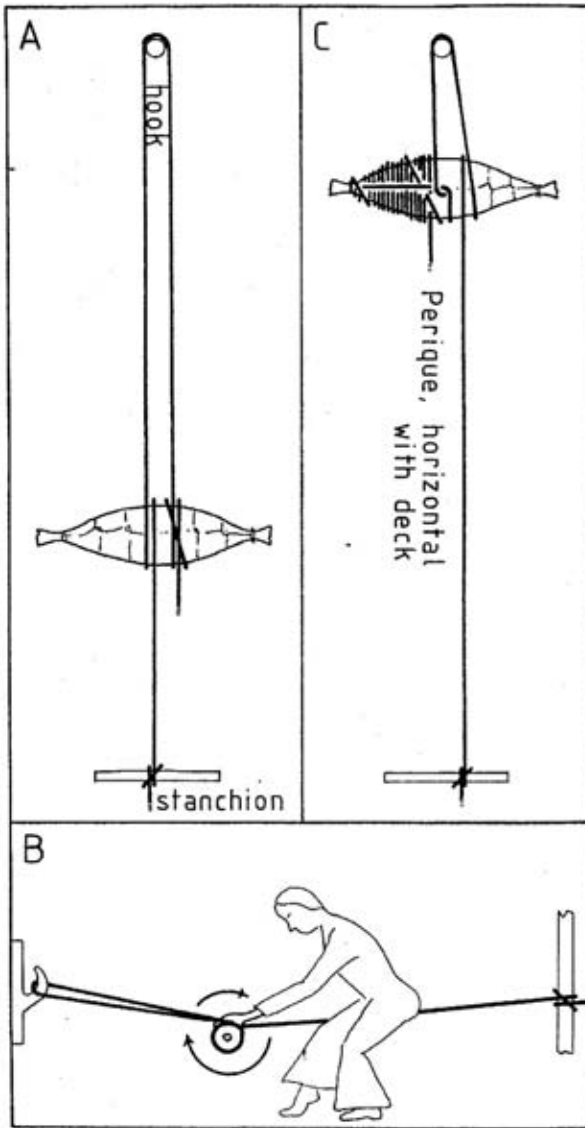
Returning to the weed, the name “carrot” has been used in North American English since the mid-17th century to designate a stick or plug of rolled up tobacco leaves and Webster’s confirms that Louisianian perique was “marketed in tightly wrapped rolls called carottes”. This presentation must have been very popular in France because even today the Gallic sign for a tobacconist’s shop is a long, orange and cylindrical affair symbolizing “une carotte de tabac”. It seems that Chenet learnt this method of presentation from the Choctaw Indians, of what would later be Louisiana, who made

carrots by pressing perique “into hollow logs with a long pole”. Undoubtedly “carrot” refers to the shape of the tobacco when prepared in a small roll.

Indeed, in the Royal Navy, these carrots were called “periques” and this is evidenced in Eric Partridge’s *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (1937): “perique - issue tobacco wrapped in canvas and lashed with spun yarn into a cylindrical shape tapered to a point”. The Navyman’s method of making a carrot was much the same as that of the commercial manufacturers except for a sailorizing of the materials employed. The tobacco was parcelled with a piece of fine duck canvas or white linen and then, significantly, served with spunyarn to compress it into a hard block. In his book, Partridge makes no allusion to any rude origin of the word and anyway, a prick of tobacco was fattest halfway along its length and pointed at BOTH ends. Also, turning the phrase on its head, I have found no mention of “a perique of spunyarn”. Whatever the case, there is undoubtedly a strong connection between an RN “perique” [of tobacco], a “prick of tobacco” and “perique” tobacco.

And there, for wont of an example of “a prick of spunyarn” in marine, nay any literature, my trail stopped.

Reading over the above there are several clear points of convergence between the various terms. In the early 20th century, “prick” was considered a nautical noun and apparently limited exclusively to spunyarn and tobacco. For lovers of the double entendre, it was cylindrical in shape and a noun of quantity describing modest dimensions. Further comparisons are that perique tobacco and tarred spunyarn are both dark brown in colour, the former sold in rolls and the latter often wound into a roll in the days when ropework was a living



occupation aboard ship. Undeniably plenty of similarities.

As can be seen on the etymological timeline, “a prick of tobacco” existed long before the English language recognized the word “perique”. Thus, it can be safely said that “prick of tobacco” was not a corruption of “perique of

tobacco”. The same can be said in the opposite sense as “perique” is certainly of French origin, albeit not a French word, and therefore not an alteration of “prick”. In the early 18th century, “prick of tobacco” was probably replaced by “plug of tobacco” in general parlance. This agrees with the OED’s entry that states that the “minute part of something” definition of “prick” fell out of use in the mid-17th century.

Furthermore, the nautical “prick of spunyarn” seems to have a different, though perhaps not altogether unconnected origin from tobacco. It is certainly more recent than “a prick of tobacco” and may well have been coined after “perique” entered the English language. Perhaps it was a synonym for the RN “perique”, seagoing slang for a carrot of tobacco served over with spunyarn? Maybe it was the corrupt practice of selling a perique filled with spunyarn instead of tobacco to make a fast buck? In either case, these terms would have surely

engendered some polite examples of “a perique of spunyarn” which thus far have not been forthcoming. Alternatively - and this is where I stick my neck out! - maybe our humble Sailor Jack just thought a small hank or skein of tarred rope yarn resembled a carrot of perique and, through

the unconscious or accidental alteration of the nickname of that Louisiana tobacco grower Pierrick Chenet, came up with “a prick of spunyarn”. ☞

## Etymological Timeline

### Pre-16th c.

“skein” enters English as: yarn coiled in a figure 8.

### Early-16th c.

“hank” enters English as: skein or coil of yarn.

### Mid-16th c.

“tobacco” enters English and French (tabac).

### Early-17th c.

“yarn” enters English as: an element of rope-making.

### Mid-17th c.

“prick” enters English as: a small roll of tobacco.

“carrot” enters American as: a small roll of tobacco.

### Early-18th c.

“plug” enters English as: a small roll of tobacco.

“carotte” enters French (1721) as: a small roll of tobacco.

“perique” tobacco first commercialized by Pierre Chenet (1824).

### Late-19th c.

“perique” enters English as: a type of tobacco.

### Early-20th c.

“perique” appears in slang dictionary (1937) as: tobacco packaging.

“prick of spunyarn” unique written reference (1913).

## Sources:

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Thanks to Mark Whelan, Ken Yalden ☞



# Young at Heart

## Tie an Ocean Plait

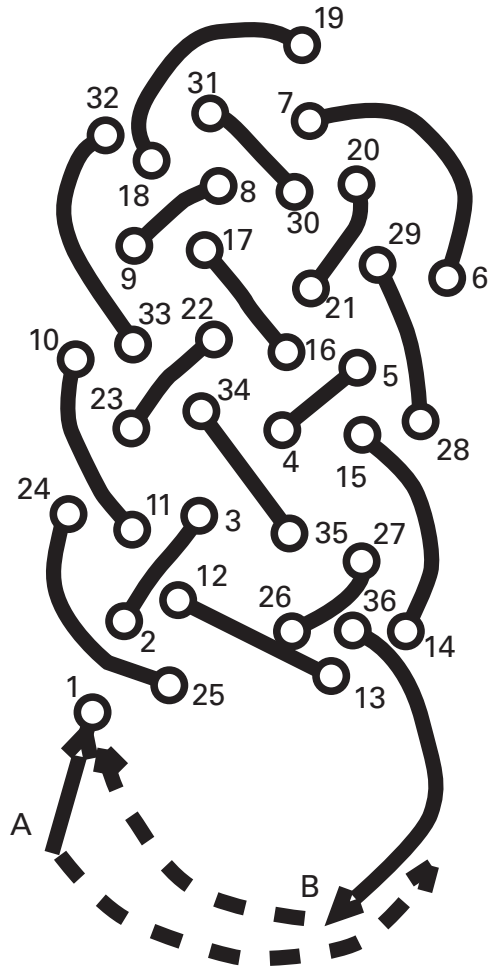
Ken Higgs

To tie the ocean plait, first make a copy of the diagram on plain paper, with a hole at each of the points marked. Next take 80" of 2mm cord and thread it down through hole #1 to about half way.

Continue threading one end up at #2 - down at #3, etc. - until #36 is reached.

Tear away the paper and lead end 'B' along the same path as 'A' until the cord ends. Then take 'A' back along the path of 'B' until you have trebled the whole plait.

The finishing touch is to carefully work out any slack until the mat lays flat and even and the ends have been trimmed and secured by sewing or heat sealing (with nylon or polypropylene cords) on what will be the back of the mat. 🌀



### Please Note

Contributions for 'Young at Heart' are always welcome, and the more the merrier. Please note that these will also be posted on the IGKT website ([www.igkt.net](http://www.igkt.net)), where they will be freely available for download by visitors to the site.

# Knotmaster Series No. 29

‘Knotting ventured,  
knotting gained.’

## Bag, sack or miller’s knot

|                      |                      |                       |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Use this             | partially embed      | through, as shown     |
| rudimentary          | itself into whatever | (fig’s 2, 3). Arrange |
| binding to secure    | it is tied around.   | the twin turns (fig.  |
| the neck of a canvas | Make an overhand     | 4), then place them   |
| bag, a rolled up     | loop and tuck        | around the object to  |
| carpet or any other  | the working end      | be secured and pull   |
| soft and yielding    | back through it      | tight (fig. 5). ❧     |
| article that will    | (fig. 1). Now tuck   |                       |
| enable the knot to   | the OTHER end        |                       |

A very learned Frenchman, in conversation with Dr Wallace of Oxford, about the year 1650, after expatiating on the copiousness of the French language, and its richness in derivations and synonyms, produced, by way of illustration, the following four lines on rope-making:

*Quand un cordier, cordant, veut corder une corde;  
Pour sa corde corder; trois cordons il accorde,  
Mais, si un des cordons de la corde décorde  
Le cordon décordant fait décorde la corde.*

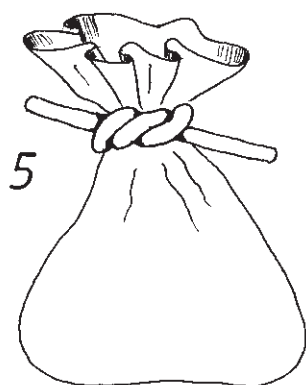
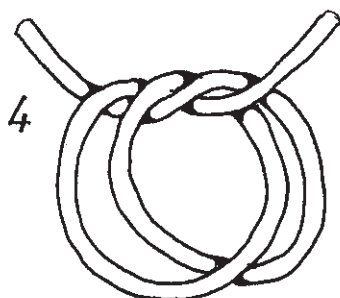
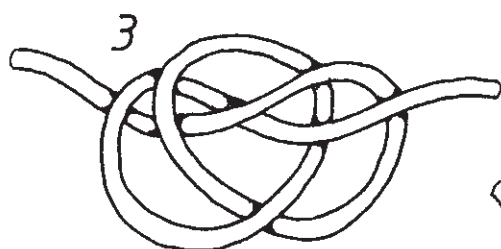
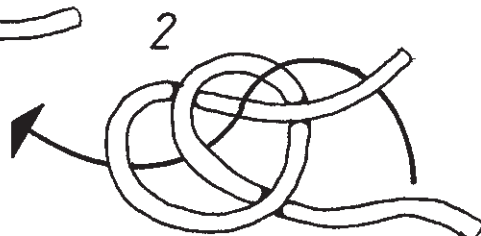
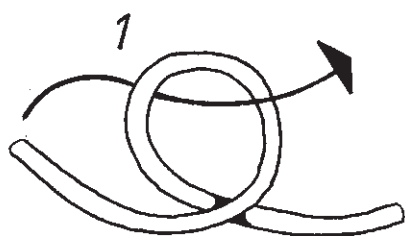
To show that the English language was at least equally rich and copious, Dr Wallace immediately translated the French into as many lines of English, word for word, using the word twist to express the French corde.

*When a twister a twisting, will twist him a twist;  
For the twisting a twist, he three twines will entwist,  
But if one of the twines of the twist do untwist,  
The twine that untwisteth, untwisteth the twist*

Taken from *Macaronic Poetry* by James Appleton Morgan (1872)

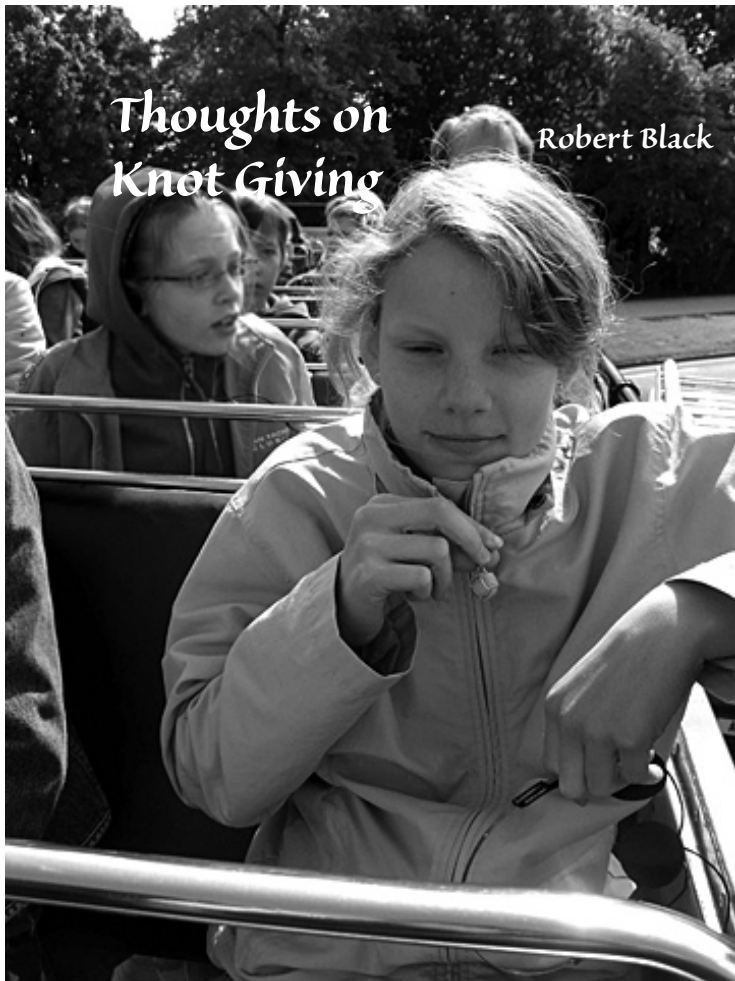
Richard Hopkins

Bag, sack or  
miller's knot



# Thoughts on Knot Giving

Robert Black



If you have never made a fancy knot and given it away, you are missing some real blessings in your life. Consider the following experience I had in Oxford, England earlier this year.

I went to Oxford by train early one morning. Outside the train station was a double-decker tour bus. It was a little tour to orient you to the town and later you could get on and off where you like all through the day. It seemed

like a good idea to me. So I bought a ticket and went to the upper deck. I was the only one there. Then, out of nowhere, about 25 to 30 young kids hurried up the stairs of the bus and filled the remaining seats. They were a bundle of energy and excitement as they spoke and laughed. There were a few boys among them but most of the group were 12 to 13-year-old girls. Tagging along behind were a few parents trying

to keep up. I learned from one of the parents that they were a choral group from Sweden and that they were going to sing Swedish folk songs in a concert later that evening.

The little girl behind me asked me if I would speak with her so she could practice her English. We exchanged greetings and off we went. Soon, the other kids wanted to join in and practice their English too. Before long, I was speaking with each of the 30 kids. What a great time it was. Then, all of a sudden, the bus stopped. It was their hotel and they had to get off. All the talking came to a stop. The greetings that came so quickly, soon became goodbyes as each person queued up to go down the bus stairs. My new-found friends were about to vanish into the hustle and bustle of the Oxford streets. I decided that I wanted to give each person a small gift. I pulled a bunch of monkey's fist zipper pulls from my backpack and gave each choir member one as they left the upper deck of the bus. I received a wonderful encounter from each of them and they received a small token of my appreciation from me. A fair exchange I thought. Then, just as



the bus began to pull away from the bus stop, I heard someone yell my name. I looked over the side of the upper deck and saw the children waving to me. I waved back with a smile. They began waving more vigorously. Then I realised, they wanted me to get off the bus. So I went down the upper deck stairs quickly and jumped off. One of the parents came up to me and with a smile in her eye, asked me to follow the group across the street. As we dodged cars on the busy street, I heard a faint tone from a pitch fork. The children quickly transformed themselves from a bundle of excitement and random energy into

a little structured choir right there on the street corner. Shoulder to shoulder, backs straight with their eyes focused on the outstretched hands of their director. Then came the most beautiful hummmmm I have ever heard. Then stillness and silence. People on the street began to stop. I asked a parent, "What is going on?" "You have become a special guy to them. They like you and want to sing you a folk song", was her reply. And then they began to sing. A beautiful song about spring. I didn't understand a word but the meaning was clear and my heart pounded. What a wonderful gift.

Then, off they went to practice for their concert. The entire encounter only lasted about 30 minutes but the memory will last a lifetime. And so began my day in Oxford.

As I have grown in knotting and shared that growth with others, hundreds of experiences like this one have come my way as I travel the globe. It is not just giving gifts. It is making something personal with your own hands. It is the story behind the knot itself. It is connecting with other people. You can have these experiences too. Make something. Tell the story. Then give it away.





loop (Fig. 27; *The Alpine Journal*, 1864), which has been used for mountaineering in the distant past: an overhand knot precedes passing the wend through the harness, and an overhand knot follows. However, with the right kind of rope and under certain circumstances, it is possible to untie the second overhand, and the knot then quickly becomes a deadly slip loop.

Modify the fisherman's loop with a simple tramble or modified tuck i.e., put the wend under two bights rather than one when finishing the knot and voila: you have an overhand loop (Fig. 28; *The Alpine Journal*, 1864). Historically, this loop knot has been used in Europe and Quebec as a simple waist tie-in, sans harness (not the most comfortable!). The overhand loop, when properly tied and dressed, is difficult if not impossible to untie while in use and particularly when loaded, and it is very difficult to untie afterward.

## The Security of Bowlines and Figure Eight Loops as Harness Tie-Ins:

*The Principles of Pre-Knotting, Post-Knotting and Concatenation*

Rob Chisnall

### Other Knots and Some Observations

Clearly, to maximise security, the stand must be knotted as well. So there should be a knot before you pass the wend through the harness, and the wend must be knotted afterward. (Again, we are not considering strength, ease of untying, or any other characteristic here.) Are there any exceptions to this two-part security requirement?

Well, consider the simple fisherman's

In terms of its basic formation, the simple overhand loop, like a figure eight end-loop, is pre-tied, post tied, and the two knots are entwined and meshed together in parallel. (The figure nine loop (Fig. 29), which has gained popularity in the past few decades



Fig. 27



Fig. 29

amongst riggers and rescuers, shares these properties, can be noticeably stronger than the figure eight loop, and is relatively easier to untie after prolonged loading.) In terms of the three security requirements identified so far, the overhand loop is one of the simplest loops I can think of that meets these criteria.

Consider nonparallel entanglements, like that of the versa vice loop described by Dick Clements in *Knotting Matters* (2005). Clearly, the knot proper is quite tangled, but the parts of the knot are not parallel. Under what conditions will that knot invert and untie? Is inversion possible? There are many other kinds of loop knots, and the question of what makes one more secure than the next is open to more experimentation and research, but any



Fig. 29

testing should realistically reflect how the knot will be used in practice in order for any observations to have meaning (Chisnall, 1995b).

### Figure Eight's Revisited

What about the potential for inversion in figure eight's and figure nines tied as loops? The simple figure eight inverts to a Pretzel and back to a figure eight. (See Figs. 30 a, b, c and d, which show a figure eight capsizing.) The simple tucked figure eight can invert to a version of the figure nine or a version of the Stevedore knot, depending on which side of the stand the wend has been initially tucked. (For the Stevedore knot, see Ashley # 456, 1944, p74.) The simple figure nine can invert into a reversed figure nine. (See Figs. 31 a and b, which illustrate isomorphic versions of the figure nine.) Hence, any potential security problem with knots of this kind is not

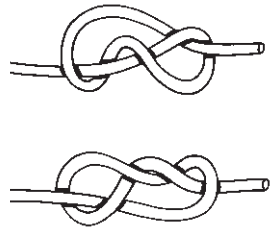


Fig. 31

likely related to what the knot changes into, but how easily it can invert and how close the working end gets to the

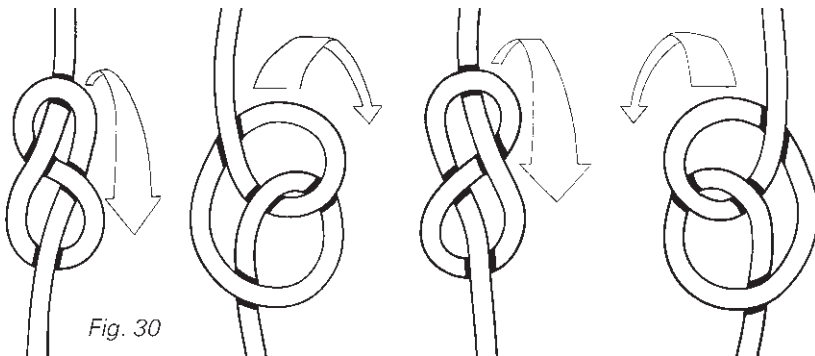


Fig. 30

approaching knot as it migrates under load. The inversion of figure eight and figure nine loops is unlikely. However, the side figure eight or indirect figure eight bend is another matter.<sup>4</sup>

The point is, even if certain knots are pre-knotted and post-knotted and intertwined, they could still invert if the loading is somehow contrary to their lay or structure relative to the standing parts of the ropes but this applies to bends, like the side eight, and our discussion is centred on harness tie-in loops. Are there any standard harness tie-in loops that meet the three identified security requirements in which this could be a concern? I cannot think of any off hand.

### **Security Principles for Tie-In Loops**

Finally, all of this leads to the following set of principles in genesis.<sup>5</sup> I believe there are at least three requirements for a tie-in end-loop to be most secure:

**1. Pre-Knotting:** The line must be knotted before the wend is passed through

the connection point(s) on the harness or around the anchor point.

**2. Post-Knotting:** The end itself must be knotted after it has been wrapped around the anchor or passed through the harness.

**3. Concatenation.** Ultimately, these two-knot formations must be entangled or intertwined. What is the minimum degree of entanglement required for guaranteed security? The critical characteristics of entanglement are open for discussion.

I am curious to learn of other examples that highlight these principles. Conversely, if you know of some exceptions that disprove these principles in even a small way, please share that information as well.

Finally, if you are a climber or a person who works at height, carefully consider your choice of harness tie-in knot. Always make sure it is properly tied and dressed, always utilise a redundant keeper knot or tuck of some sort, and constantly check, recheck and have others check your tie-in knot.

### **Footnotes**

**4** This is a concern with the side figure eight (aka side eight or indirect figure eight bend; Fig. 19), and the side or indirect overhand knot (also called the American or European death knot in some circles; Fig. 32). Try tying the latter in dental floss and pulling on the stands how easily it comes apart is unnerving. The research regarding the security of the side eight, and the side overhand seems to be perpetually inconclusive and controversial. (See various discussion sites on the internet.) These knots have failed, and they have worked reliably. Further discussion about the security of bends should be reserved for another article.

**5** In the case of bends, the following enhanced or additional rules may apply (but this is fodder for further investigation):

*Sufficient Concatenation and Nip Orientation.* The structure must contain enough 'knottedness' to resist inversion and slippage. (This maxim could be applied to more complicated versions of the bowline.) As worded, the rule is vague and incomplete. It relates to Ashley's "principle of the knot" (1944, p17), and reminds me of the relative security of the direct and indirect sheet bends, along with so many other bends. The relative positioning of the various knot parts must be considered along with the amount of 'knottedness.'

*And/Or Appropriate Orientation and Load Direction* Like the side overhand and figure eight; the orientation of the actual knot relative to the loaded stands can be crucial. Every knot is unique and has notable qualities that must be tested. Again, this can relate to the "principle of the knot."

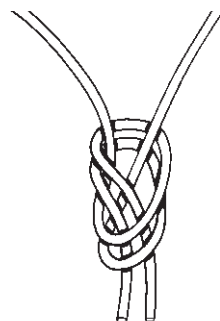


Fig. 32

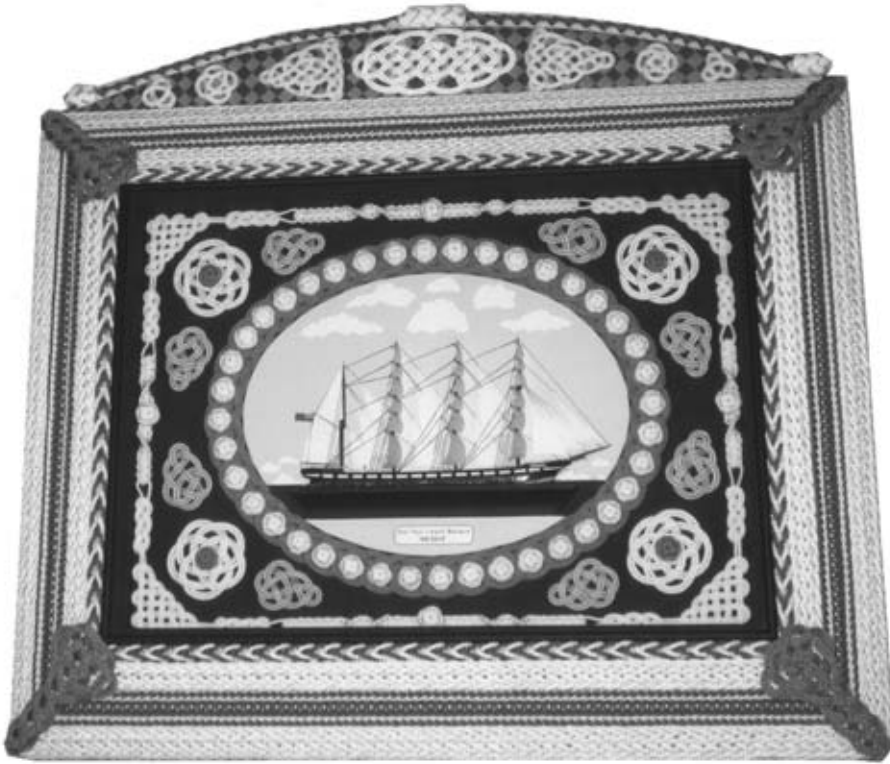
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# Knot Gallery



*Above - A half model of a four-masted barque set in a knotwork frame  
- Joe Bennett (Scotland)*

*Facing - A finely worked sea chest becket - Yngve Edell (Sweden)*

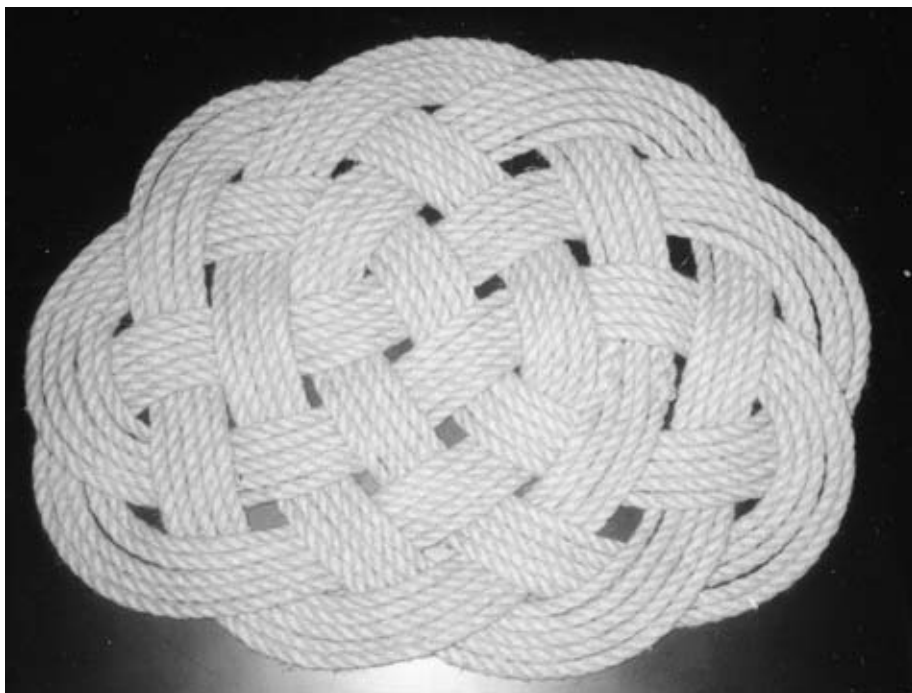
*Overleaf - Three strand cockscombing on the trawler "Mar Chele" - Lindsey Philpott  
(USA)*

*Back Cover - A button fender of the type fitted to Samuel Barlow canal boats. Hitched  
in 12mm manila - Colin Grundy (England)*









*Above - mat in 14mm hemp - Madeleine Arnell (Sweden)*

*Overleaf - A set of dog leads - Rod Orrah (New Zealand)*

*Below - Leather braided purses and gifts - Ron Hodgens (Australia)*





The object of all this pain and anguish is, of course, to produce a thing of beauty which hopefully will be enjoyed for a long time. To the right is a performance belt for a lady musician which, when finished, will have taken over 130 hours to do. It is of #18 cotton seine, 28 strand and is a pattern of a small “five-diamond” (one large diamond containing four smaller diamonds), one large “five-diamond”, another small, then a “ten-diamond” which is a large exterior diamond containing nine interior diamonds, and so forth.

I do not think I have ever seen a “ten-diamond” previously and I have certainly never seen a “capped” “five-diamond” design. Note that the “ten-diamond” square is ALSO capped in all respects... maybe THAT ain't a bummer to keep straight in your head! At any rate, I'm damn proud of this work.



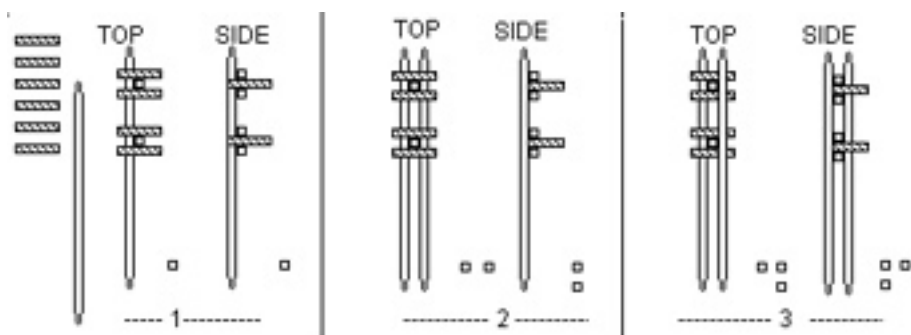
## A (very) rough Square-Knot Belt Tutorial - Part 2

Vice Brennan

A plain pattern of knots, while useful, is boring, so here's how to put diamonds and crosses into the belt for more interest. Note that while these are decorative they are also integral to the strength of the belt.

For the diamond shape, I recommend you initially use a “filled” diamond, as it is much easier to hold a shape by making square knots inside the diamond. After a while you'll want to try an “open” diamond similar to the treatment of the “X”.





### CORNER SPACER

Materials: Three toothpicks (approx 1/16" square by about 2½" long) and six spacer sections cut from other toothpicks, about ½" to ¾" long. Methacrylate ("Super") glue, tweezers and perhaps a bit of dental floss.

To one toothpick, glue two spacers flat and one between at 90° as shown in (1) and duplicate this about ½" to ¾" below.

Glue a second toothpick to the flat spacers as shown in (2) ... note the profiles shown by the squares.

Glue a third toothpick to one side on TOP of the flat spacers as shown in (3). Allow all glue to cure hard (about 20 minutes) then trim off spacers flat to long toothpicks. (You can do a binding to hold the whole thing together while curing, but that'd be for insurance only - allow the glue to cure and you'll be golden).

To make the two-point spacer, stop after (2), allow to cure and trim as per the above.

Make several of these at a time as they always get broken, stepped on, dropped or disappear just when you need them.

To start the diamond, knot four across, then knot three, but DON'T knot the centre set. Then pick up the outer two sets and knot them, thus giving you an inverted "VEE" shape of knots. (1)



(2) This is a "corner spacer", used to start the diamond and keep the lines from being over-pulled and thus pulling the diamond out of shape. Made of three toothpicks (square ones) arranged as three points of a square, glued and



lashed. Insert this at the point between the centre pair with one line coming in each of the spaces between the toothpicks (the windows). This allows you to do the half-hitch while retaining the spacing over the core line and giving the correct placement at the apex for the first pair of hitches. This is important as the hitches going the opposite way will use this

### A NOTE ON "HALF-HITCHING"

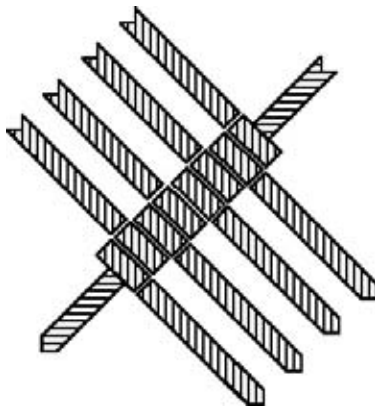
Basically you will be making a simple overhand hitch (half hitch) around a "core" line and you'll note that each set of two hitches forms a Clove hitch.



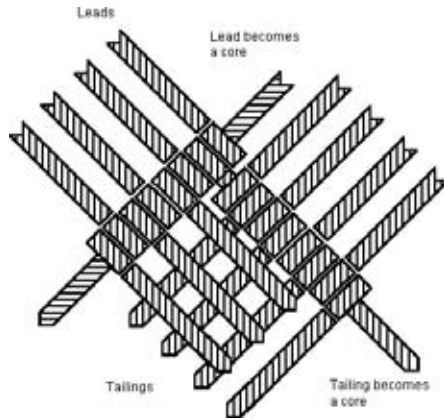
A very basic schematic of the hitch as it looks from the front of the work. From this little sketch you can see the parts of the half-hitches: two half-hitches around a core and the remainder of the line from the hitches is the tailing.

The "lead" comes UNDER the core and around and over the top, then goes behind the core ABOVE the lead and comes out underneath.

When you do two of these in a row you wind up with a clove hitch with the crossing part underneath the core and the turns showing in the front of the work.



Row of half-hitches



90° row of half-hitching

tailing for their core line and thus if it is out of place, the entire thing will be out of place and lopsided.

Leave the three-point spacer in place for a while: it'll prevent over-tightening as you go along.

NOTE: Take care when picking up the

lead to make the next set of half-hitches as it's quite easy to miss one. Remember: TWO half hitches make ONE set and you want ONE set per lead line.

(3) shows the first SET of hitches made onto the core.

NOTE: Again, take care when picking up the lead to make the next set of half-hitches as it's quite easy to miss one and then have a lot of ripping-out to do later on!

After the first two sets of half-hitches, take a two-toothpick spacer and put it over the next lead (4); make the set, then the next set, then move the spacer to the next free lead and so on... just gives a neater job.

You should be able to whip up a





two and three point spacer from the instructions above, if not, I can make some up for you for a charge, but why buy when you can do (for) yourself?

First row completed (5).



Count as you go: each set of two hitches equals one lead line. In this belt example you have 16 lines total for 8 leads per side, but on the first row you will wind up with SEVEN used leads and one unused lead. The reason for this is that using SEVEN leads allows you to do another “cap” on the bottom rows and also, using all the leads makes your diamond “stick-out” on the sides; using only SEVEN of the EIGHT will have



the point of the diamond fall within the line of the edge of the belt. (Dragging a series of points through the belt-loops is annoying and creates unnecessary wear on the fabric of the belt as well as pulling the half-hitches apart. Not pretty.)

(6) When you have done the seventh lead you will have a row of fourteen turns... now go back and repeat this process from the apex, but take care to take the

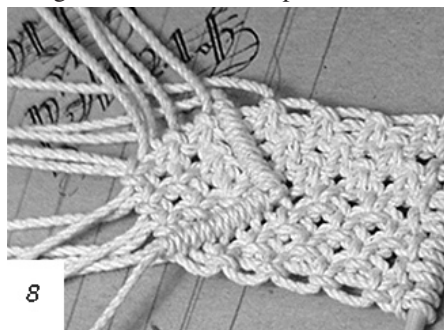
TAILING from SET ONE and use it as the core for the half-hitching (see sketches for 90 degree half-hitching).

Leave the 3-point spacer in there still and use the 2-point spacer as described on every other free lead until you have used SEVEN leads.



(7) shows the top of the diamond completed and also shows (toothpick) the “capping” described above.

(8) The inner portion of the diamond being filled in and as completed.



(9) shows the beginning of the bottom row of hitching:



Note how the free line (the eighth line that wasn't used) comes around to be the core of the bottom row? You can use several toothpicks to maintain the spacing shown, but with a little care you should be able to put your half-hitch set precisely as shown to "cap" the upper row perfectly. Continue half-hitching along the bottom of the diamond until you've used SEVEN leads again. (10) shows the bottom row completed to that point.



Then on the other side use the TAILING of the last set as the core, and run another SIX sets toward the bottom point. (11) shows the diamond completed.



Only one last thing to do.... put some rows of square knots in and then do an "X" or "Cross" shape (12). This is MUCH easier to do than the diamond!



(13) Fill in to a point with square knots, then use a single toothpick to hold the orientation on BOTH sides when starting your rows of half-hitching. Leave the toothpick in until you've done at least four sets to prevent overtightening. Bring the rows to a point as shown in (11).

Once you've completed the chevron, continue knotting as shown, being careful to maintain the straightness of the line all the way across the belt. The open work will form itself with no effort on your part





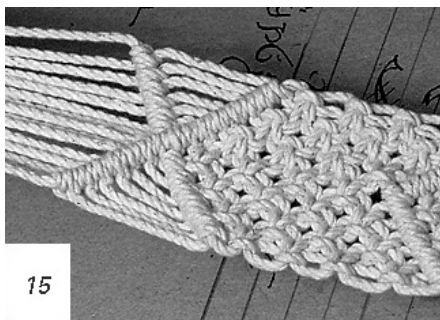
as long as the straight-line orientation is maintained. (It appears crooked because there is no tension on any of the lines)

The “X” completed (15). Now you can fill in with square knots and repeat the pattern, do another “X”, another diamond or put a long field of plain square knotting in, whatever thrills your tiller.

TIP: When making your belt in a pattern, decide on the pattern first (six rows squares, diamond, six rows square, filled cross, etc.) or whatever and make a test section to check for length... This way you can “centre” the patterns on the belt, or lengthen the “fields” of square-knotting between specials so that you come out with a symmetrical belt from buckle (or belt-loop) to the start of the tongue.

TIP: Allow at least six inches of plain square-knotting as a belt tongue so you have something to buckle into other than the pattern. An Open Diamond is a lousy place for the buckle to hit, as you don’t have anything to run the buckle’s tang through! Adding eight inches of plain knotting at the end will give you ample room for expansion in the future (as we all do with time!) and preserve the pretty pattern you’ve created. Remember also that your pattern should stop about one inch from the lip of the buckle.

TIP: I say “plain knotting” above, but you need somewhere for the damn tongue to go into, so (for a 16 line belt) knot four across for a base row, then knot three across, knot four across, then the next row, knot the first and third, then knot four and then knot three. This gives you a ‘gap’ in each set for the buckle tongue... in #18 this



15

gives you approx. 3/4” of belt; in #21, about 7/8” and in #24 approx. 1-1/16”. Make up eight inches for the buckling end and you should be golden.

#### NOTE!

I have been contacted by several “Old Salts” who also make belts with corrections or emendations to this tutorial, and thanks to all that have done so!

One VERY important item that was brought to my attention concerned finishing off the belt:

Contrary to any other instructions in the tutorial, DO NOT trim off any splices, additions or drops until the belt is essentially done. Take the finished belt, dip in boiling water (98% water and 2% white vinegar) for a few minutes to “set” the knots, then hang in a not-too-sunny place and allow to air-dry completely before trimming off the ends and the “loosers” from the additions/ drops/ etc. This will give you a tighter-looking belt and will also (should the end-user throw it in a washing machine) give the knotting a much better chance of not pulling out. NEVER use fabric softener treatments when washing the belts! ☼

**For the complete tutorial, visit:**





# Thoughts on Knots

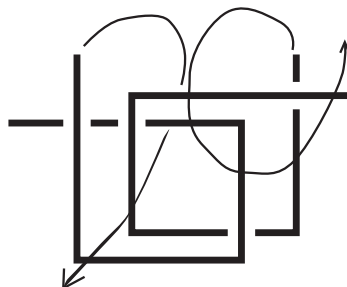
Richard Goodrich

I am a recent member of the IGKT from the little town of Cash, Texas. Knots have been a hobby of mine for about 40 of my 50 years. I have wanted to contribute some ideas on "A Few of My Favourite Bends" for some time. As I was looking over that diagram recently and looking at my knot books I made - what was for me - some interesting discoveries!

Let me first mention my few, but precious knot resources! I have had the *Ashley Book of Knots* for almost 30 years and it is still a great resource. I bought *The Handbook of Knots* by Des Pawson at some point. It is a uniquely styled little book. Unfortunately I personally don't care for the method of tying knots shown in it. The book I am most thrilled about is Geoffrey Budworth's, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Knots & Ropework*. The title is a bit pretentious perhaps, but the book does not disappoint. It is a thoroughly modern and up to date treatment of the new fibres in ropes and new knots. The large size and excellent colour photographs and great selection of knots makes it a great coffee table book that never remains on the coffee table for long! Perhaps my only complaint is Mr. Budworth's left-handed orientation (similar to Des Pawson if I am not mistaken!) to knot tying. (Perhaps this is just another indication that only left-handed people are in their right minds!) I am fascinated by Mr. Budworth's background also! I am particularly thrilled by the inclusion of knots by Harry Asher. My last book is not really a knot book per se. *The Complete Riggers Apprentice* by Brion Toss was a gift. His various methods for tying the bowline and some other knots

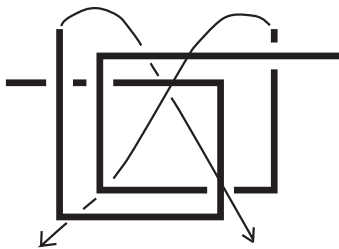
were the attraction for me. By the way on page 72 of Toss's book he makes a claim for inventing a knot called the Strait bend, which I think looks remarkably like the alpine butterfly bend! My main other resource is the Internet. Typically I go to [www.knots.com](http://www.knots.com) and take the link to Peter Suber's super knot site at: [www.earlham.edu/~peters/knotlink.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/knotlink.htm). With all that and *Knotting Matters* from IGKT I have mostly what a knot tier could desire! My main disappointments are not being able to find a couple of rare books on knot classification. One is Harry Asher's *Alternative Knot Book*. Actually, I did find a used copy at \$50 for sale but could not bring myself to paying that much! The other is a rare work from Australia on knot classification: *A Fresh Approach to Knotting and Ropework: Knots Arranged According to Their Structure*, by Charles Warner, published by Charles Warner (Picton, Australia), 1992. I can't get a handle on this book at all! The U.S. had an excellent Inter-Library Loan program, that I can usually get a "look" at most books - but alas not these two!

Enough of that! Consider my diagram of a few of my favourite bends. Bends have perhaps been my favourite type of knot over the years. I figure I am not likely to discover any new knots. However another interesting area for me is to discover unique ways of tying the known knots and then considering



Hunter's Bend

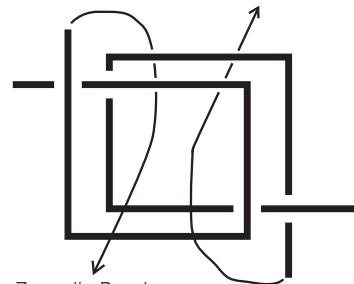
from very primitive attempts at knot classification the similarity in structure of various knots. This recently came to my attention when looking at Hunter's bend (see the diagram). I thought I had made a mistake in the inter-locking of the two bights shown on the diagram. I was using as a reference page 53 of Budworth's Encyclopedia .... It appeared to me from his method of tying, which was Mr. Hunter's way that the interlocking was not necessary. So I tried it both ways and was confused until I remembered that the way I discovered the subtle interlock was by tying the knot this way, then unravelling it very carefully! I am now convinced that the interlock is present with either method of tying. In fact picture #8 in Budworth's book was one place where I noticed a distinction between tying it with the interlock and simply by laying the left bight over the right bight shown in my diagrams. There was a subtle difference between how the lines lay in the centre part of the diagram shown in picture 8. It made me realise also the importance of how well a knot is drawn up. I don't know what the knot should be called that is so similar to Hunter's bend - even whether it has a name at all!



*Shake Hands*

Note one thing in my diagrams. The knots shown all shown start with the left-hand line in the position shown in all the diagrams. This is my standard orientation for showing these knots. This is not necessarily the preferred way of tying any of these knots, but does allow

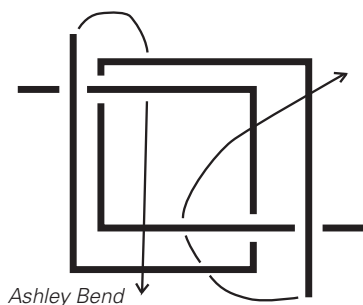
me to compare in at least a crude way the similarities between these excellent bends. Hunter's bend and shake hands are remarkably similar. In fact the only difference I can detect is that final crossing of the bitter ends and the method of drawing them up. Shake hands must be very carefully drawn up to allow for the bitter ends to parallel the respective standing parts. Certain bights on each end of the knot must be kept outermost to keep part of the line from separating the bitter ends from lying next to the standing parts. When properly drawn up it is indeed a very attractive knot!



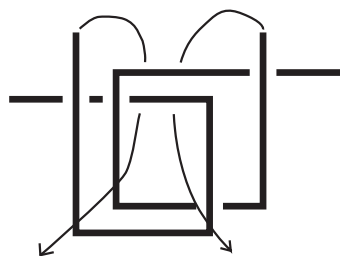
*Zeppelin Bend*

I had also noted the comment in Budworth's book that the Hunter's bend was a "young relative" to the Zeppelin knot. Certainly if I mis-tie Hunter's bend without the interlocking they become perhaps even more similar! Note that the two bights of the Zeppelin bend do not interlock and also the opposite orientation of the bitter end of the right-hand line. I really enjoy the Zeppelin bend from the point of view of its ease of untying and its very attractive finished appearance. I wonder perhaps if it is not quite as secure as the other bends shown because of that?

Another interesting comparison that I noticed recently was the similarities between Hunter's bend and what I am calling Ashley's bend (#1451 from *Ashley Book of Knots* - and one of the bends Ashley considered most secure). If



you rotate the right hand loop of Hunter's bend down so that the bitter end is oriented the same as Ashley's bend then the crossings are all the same! It seems the sole difference is that the right hand bitter end is put through the centre loop in the opposite direction. In fact if you return to the Hunter's bend diagram and take the right hand bitter end and loop it over its standing end then send it through the centre loop from the other direction then you have the Ashley's bend!



Now consider the alpine butterfly bend versus Hunter's bend and shake hands. Wow, the difference seems to be that last crossing of the right-hand bitter end and the fact that it causes both bitter ends to be inserted from the same side through the centre loop! Finally consider similarities between the Zeppelin knot and Ashley's bend. It appears to be just a couple of crossings and the final insertion of the bitter ends. Perhaps I am making too much of the similarities and differences. However, I think drawing

knots from some type of standard starting position does facilitate comparing them. Perhaps there are other comparisons that could be made and it seems every time I study my diagram I see others, but then do not always remember to write them down! Perhaps you can find others?

Starting with these diagrams, if you start with the left hand line in the "standard" starting position and then consider all the possible ways of either interlocking or not interlocking, crossing, and the possible ways of orienting the bitter ends and finally of tucking the bitter ends through the centre portion, I wonder what existing and/or new knots might be created? Also, to be considered in the interlocking case is to draw the central loop tight in a way that creates two loops to either side and consider the tucks that could be made between the two loops as an additional option.

Before I sign off, I would like to make a couple more comments about tying either the anchor bend or the Eskimo bowline by starting with a slipped over-hand loop (or slip-knot noose if you prefer). I think I must have come across this in *Knotting Matters* (but having trouble discovering it!). In one case you simply tug the bitter end underneath two strands to make the anchor bend. In the other case you insert the bitter end in the loop then tightening the loop pulling the bitter end through and thus forming the Eskimo bowline. Well I was quite excited to read on page 65 of Toss's book about making a slipknot bowline, which simply requires you to tuck the standing part instead of the bitter end through the loop before tightening it and pulling the line through. For me this makes what some call a left-handed bowline (the bitter end is outside the loop rather than inside it) Toss's method for forming an overhand loop - slipknot by laying the line over your wrist adds some pizzazz to the whole process! ☺

# Tie Wire

Hooey

**M**y first hands on experience with tie wire was over 35 years ago. A coil spring on a piece of machinery in a metal fabricating shop snapped in two. I re-connected the halves with continuous tightly wound turns of tie wire, as in a lashing, and finished off with a simple twist, much like the twist tie on a bread package. The repair held well. Since that time I have used tie wire for emergency repairs for ranch, auto, home, industrial, and even nautical applications. The results have always been satisfactory. The trick is to remember that a tie wire fix is meant only as a temporary measure, not as a permanent repair. It will get you through, until a more permanent solution can be effected. In this capacity tie wire is second to none, although duct tape seems a close runner-up.

On ranches, hay bales used to be, and sometimes still are tied together with soft wire. After the bales were cut open it was common practice to save the wire for emergency repairs rather than discard it. But hay bales were not

available to everyone, and actual tie wire was sold in small coils available at any hardware. The coils proved convenient, inexpensive, and readily available.

Tie wire can be worked with almost any type of pliers. The type I prefer is known as the "lineman's" pliers. The lineman's pliers can twist, tighten, cut, stretch, and snip fairly flush. Other types of pliers can not do as much. But depending on the repair at hand, any type of pliers can be made to work. I have even worked tie wire barehanded, breaking the wire by bending it sharply back and forth several times.

For convenience there is a small reel sold that holds a coil of tie wire. It fits on the belt, and with a slight pull dispenses as much as necessary. Being only an occasional user of tie wire, I prefer to just wrap duct tape around the perimeter of the coil, then pull what I need from the centre of the coil. Things stay much neater that way.

On small repairs a wrap or two, finished off with a simple twist will do. On more serious repairs that will come under stress, more wraps can be added or the wire itself doubled or tripled before the wraps are applied. The advantage of doubling the

wire is that the final twist will have four wires in it instead of two, or six if tripled, making it more secure.

Tie wire lends itself well to lashing, binding, and whipping. But the actual uses it can be put to in emergency situations rivals that of most other cordages. It has the added benefit of being resistant to heat, and it can conduct electricity. I have secured stove pipe to the wood burning stove in my shop with it. And I have repaired breaks in the "hot wire" of the electric fence I sometimes use around livestock. With practice and imagination tie wire can serve you well. I leave a few coils of it around the place in different locations so it is within reach at all times. Within limits, tie wire can be one of the handiest things you will ever work with in emergency situations. The only warning necessary is not to expect too much from it and exceed its limits.

Experience counts. ☼



# Branch Lines

## France

Over the last year, the French Branch has got its act together with the newsletter it started in early 2003. Indeed, this year a total of three issues has been published and sent out to sub-paying members of IGKT France (IGKTF).

Why do IGKTF members pay a subscription fee? Well, unlike some of the other extra-UK branches of the Guild, IGKTF is a registered charity and quite distinct and independent of the Guild. We founding members thought this the best approach because we knew that many of IGKTF's members would not join the Guild for the simple reason that they wouldn't read enough English to enjoy *Knotting Matters* and make the investment worthwhile. For this reason, we are currently keeping the subscription to IGKTF very low so that knotters can join both organisations without costs being prohibitive, however I suppose the future norm will be that most

French people will join IGKTF rather than the Guild. This supposition is already being borne out with only 21 of our 51 current members actually members of the Guild. In the light of this development, perhaps the Guild council could consider whether it would be possible in the future to include IGKTF members in the Guild Membership Handbook.

Anyway, back to the newsletter. It is of course in French and called *Sac de nœuds* (SDN), which is an appropriate colloquial expression meaning "muddle" or "tangle". The idea behind it is to create a French-language version of KM and to this end, SDN has duplicated much of KM's layout and contents. This said, SDN is produced in black and white photocopy with a coloured cardboard cover as in the old days of KM. It would be nice to improve the presentation in technical terms, but our finances will not stretch to the luxury of colour photos just yet. Each edition comprises 24 pages (including covers) and contains articles and letters sent in by IGKTF

members as well as articles found in certain magazines (if authorized) and on the Web. There are also several standard slots that are the President's introduction to the issue, the Secretary's review of IGKTF's activities over the preceding period, financial issues brought to light by the Treasurer, a member's profile, a translation of Knotmaster, members' letters, and a list of new members and upcoming events in France and other Guild events. A new slot for SDN5 will be a review of the branch news and letters sent into the preceding issue of KM.

Contributions to SDN will be gratefully received, but only specifically "French interest" articles will be translated from English into French; obviously the best option is to send in your contributions in French.

Deadlines are January, May and September at the end of the month and are sent to me: Graham MacLachlan, La Verneuillette, 50200 Ancteville, France or via [igktfrance@club-internet.fr](mailto:igktfrance@club-internet.fr). These deadlines are significant because they coincide respectively with IGKTF's spring meeting and general assembly,

the beginning of the summer season and the beginning of the winter period. Lastly, if you wish to receive *Sac de noeuds*, it is a simple matter of joining IGKT France, which will set you back the princely sum of 10 euros.

Send your subscription, along with your mailing address, to the Secretary: Luc Prouveur, 490 rue de la Haie, 76230 Boisguillaume, France. The simplest way of paying your subs would be to slip a 10-euro note in a card, but it is a risk and we cannot be responsible for any losses if you do wish to do so.

IGKT France's 2006 Knotting Weekend took place in Saint-Malo, France on April 1st. For those who don't know it, Saint-Malo is an impressive walled city dating from the Middle Ages. Famous for its seafaring heritage, the port lies on the north coast of Brittany and was one of the most active refuges for the privateers that dogged the Royal Navy during the *Guerre de course* of the early 18th century.

Unfortunately, we had to delay the meeting for a week, which probably put some people's plans out, and I do apologize for any inconvenience

caused. The local council agreed to give us a venue and then changed their minds... and then changed their minds again, but by that time it was too late. Anyway, we did eventually get given an admirable venue in the former town hall of Paramé, a suburb of Saint-Malo.

About twenty-five knotters took part, coming from the UK, Holland and France, and bringing with them fine and varied objects to display to the public. New member Thomas Geoffrion brought along some of his practical knotwork. Very much a traditional sailorizer, he has recently set himself up as a self-employed knot tyer after working for a number of years on replicas of ancient working boats on the River Loire. He also brought with him a few bottles of very fine Anjou wine, Coteaux du Layon. Michel Levesque is passionate about making brain-teasers and he brought along a bundle of rope puzzles for everyone to try. Luc Prouveur's latest interest involves taking spherical coverings one step further by giving them pyramidal and other geometric shapes. Michel Straub brought along his coverings and Turk's heads. Pat Moreau

demonstrated how to make a fixed eye with a single strand Matthew Walker. Des Pawson put on a magnificent display of ancient chest becketts, complemented by Gabriel Richir's contemporary work in the same vein. Liz Pawson continued working on a belt, which will probably keep her occupied for a long time to come (at the apparent rate of 1 cm per hour!). Willeke brought some relief from the dominant maritime ropework with some light-hearted fishy macramé. Jan and Elise Vos brought in their library, while Graham macLachlan set up his usual big knotboard and knotting exhibition. And finally, Jean-François Vanheegehe seems to have been bitten by the knot-book-collecting bug and is patently putting together a very interesting collection of old books.

Sunday morning was the AGM and the discussion was earnest and fruitful. The IGKT France web site has been given new impetus with Luc at the helm, backed-up by the technical know-how of Jean-Paul Braud (have a look at the photo galleries at [www.igktfrance.com](http://www.igktfrance.com)). Next year's meeting will be in Dieppe and will be organized by Jean-



François Vanheeghe and Gabriel Richir.

All in all we had a very convivial weekend, we gained a couple of new members, and our thanks go to Alain Faisant for organizing a marvellous meeting.

Graham McLachlan

### West Yorkshire

We had another good meeting in March with a theme of “Splices and Stopper Knots”. Graham Smith opened the meeting with a welcome to local members and those from further afield. He then went on to give a talk on the many different varieties of splices, and also showed some of tools that he uses. This was followed by John Kemp who gave a talk on “The Kemp Splice and Trident” (as published in *Knotting Matters*). He then demonstrated very skilfully how they were both made.

This left me to follow with my interpretation of stopper knots and having researched this very carefully, my conclusion was that almost any knot can be a stopper knot! Some of our regular members

were missing however the sixteen who attended had a very informative and enjoyable day. We hope to have our next meeting in November and all our regulars will be informed in due course. These meetings are open to all Guild members so if you would like to come just let me know.

David Pearson

### Midlands

Branch meetings are held in the delightful surrounding of the Old Swan at Netherton in the Black Country. Known locally as “Ma Pardoe’s”, the licensee is Guild member Tim Newey. They brew their own real ales on the premises, although this is not the only reason we go to the branch meetings!

Colin Jones hosted the first meeting of the year, held in February. Colin brought his years of experience working for Wright’s Ropes of Birmingham to show us how to deal with rope ends. He dealt with a range of whipping techniques used in the industry, from tape to twine. Finishing off with a slim side fender that was peculiar to the Black Country, a fine evening

was had by all.

Two months later saw us back at “Ma Pardoe’s” to be treated to an evening constructing multi-faceted monkey’s fists. This subject has received quite an airing in *Knotting Matters* over the last few issues, and Bill Newey was determined that we would all play our part. Bill is well known in the branch for his engineering skills, more often applied to miniature rope-making machines. This time he had constructed a template from plywood, based on the drawing by Thomas Simpson in KM86. Many hands assisted with the project, and at the end we had an unusual but very serviceable heaving line.

From our Midlands Stringer

### East Anglian

Nineteen members and friends from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex met at Stowmarket on Saturday, 9th April. I opened the meeting with the sad news that our old friend and member Brian Walsh died in March 2006. We were sorry to learn that Europa Chang Dawson is moving to the Bristol area. East Anglia’s loss is the West Country’s gain.

Ken and Elizabeth Higgs have decided to stay in Suffolk after all, so the branch was pleased to reappoint Ken as our librarian, with grateful thanks to Irene Warner (not Turner!) who had been prepared to take over.

Duncan Bolt will be holding his fourth summer gathering at his home in Thornham, Norfolk on Saturday 3rd June 2006. He is circulating details.

Des Pawson talked about splicing, particularly short splices and eye splices. He gave us short pieces of small stuff, some 3-strand and some 4-strand, to practice what he preached as he drew diagrams on the blackboard. Des uses Sellotape to seal the ends of strands to prevent fraying. He lent out a lot of Swedish fids for us to test, his opinion they are far superior to solid fids. We discussed "dogging", splitting and marrying strand-ends for strength, and also halving and re-halving tucked ends for neatness, sometimes whipping the ends of the splice.

John Halifax our Secretary talked about mesh netting and showed us a new type of folding frame with hooks he had devised and made for ease of starting and

tying nets. We discussed various member views and experience of netting. John then showed us various key-fobs he had made. He gave each of us a piece of thin cord about a metre long, and we followed and practiced as he demonstrated starting and tying fobs.

Ken Higgs had talked briefly about his recently re-discovered interest in French knitting and showed us some pinned reels made by Richard Pitt that are considerably larger than the traditional wooden cotton reels. We asked Ken to give a longer talk and demonstration as one of the main topics at our next meeting on Saturday 23rd September 2006.. The other main topic will be a presentation by Geoff Youngman about "Marlow Splices", eye-splices in woven, solid-cored rope.

"Tuffy" Turner

## **Pacific Americas**

Charlie Bell is rapidly becoming the West Coast guru on knotted frames - he has produced yet another stunner!

We have been well

represented by the usual suspects Joe Soanes (or as Jose our Branch Librarian calls him Joeda), Tom Mortell (can you tell me what this knot is? Can you make it? Let me show you...), Jimmy Williams (have I told you the one about... and poster of excellent photos in Yahoo!), Tom Gergen (keeps our web page together), Darrell Ausherman (I was thinking the other day - when is he not thinking - keep it up Darrell!) and Terry our hero in leather. We made the Cabrillo Aquarium and are now planning the Whale Festival in Dana Point for March.

There have been many questions and often posed in our huddles around a steaming latte. Here is a sampling of what we have been trying to answer, one-on-one or as a group, as yet with no success:

- Whatever happened to the learned journal of the IGKT?
- Are we stuck in a rut of aging and ever-decreasing numbers without having any plan (seemingly) for recruitment of younger members?
- What are the standards of the Guild - should there be standards?
- How do we know who is good at what they do

and, more importantly, how does the public know?

- Are we still a closet society with no major voice in fashion, art, education, or rigging? There is a Cordage Institute - do we contribute to their learned annals? What about wire rope, paracord, sutures, etc? Are we simply hobbyists, and if so, how do we elevate our knowledge to the people who desperately need to hear it?
- Where do we and others hear about our accomplishments as a group?

Well, many questions as I said, but no answers as yet - what are your thoughts? Answer privately or publicly as you wish, but please let's hear from you!

Whew! We just finished a day with 2500 kids at the Earth Day celebration at Eco Fair in Culver City, California - April 23rd for those who may be wondering. What a wonderful day - Jimmy Ray and I answered normal and bizarre questions from some wonderful people, young and old, who are bent on mastering a silly piece of string. Some amazed themselves at how much they knew and

the younger ones also succeeded in amazing their parents with their abilities. Some kids just could not figure out what we did with those knots that we "pulled" from a piece of string and then there was the lady who wanted to know just a little more than I was comfortable answering about BDSM - it was a personal question and I just smiled and said "wouldn't you like to know!" and she seemed satisfied. Our next adventure is going to be making some auctionable items for an upcoming annual dinner of the Los Angeles Maritime Institute, then it is on with our AGM - our ninth - on June 30th followed by an exhibition on July 1st and 2nd on the Hyde Street Pier. Can you believe that we have been around for nine years? Watch this space for news of that event and for news of the next significant event for SoCal, the Tallships Event in Dana Point. We also hope to hear more from Roy on the possible simultaneous event organized by Pacific Americas Branch at the Center for Wooden Boats in Seattle, Washington, on the 1st and 2nd of July. Photos will follow, so beware!

Lindsey Philpott

## New Zealand Chapter

Since I arrived in the UK, New Zealand members have kept me up to date with happenings there. I attach a photograph of Guild members Pat Cunningham and Jack Sheahan completing the splicing of a wire rope in the 'tween decks of the floating crane, the *Hikitia*. Have a look at some of the shackles and thimbles, used for the 100-ton wire strops! Pat and Jack are serving the eye of the wire, which is used for the aft winch system.

You may remember that the *Hikitia* is the New Zealand Chapter's headquarters. The vessel now is under the control of the Maritime Heritage Trust of Wellington and one of the Trust's very first actions was to invite the IGKT to continue to use the *Hikitia* as its HQ in New Zealand. The photo, by the way, was taken by Malcolm McGregor the Trust Secretary and a keen supporter of all the Guild's activities on the crane for a number of years.

For my sins, I have been appointed the Health and Safety Officer of the vessel and will take up my duties when I arrive back home in September. I



have also offered to be in charge of the maintenance and painting of its superstructure, a job I had prior to coming to the UK in 2002.

There is a rumour that the team in Wellington also want me to resume the Presidency of the NZ Chapter when I return. But I will not spread the rumour in the hope that it is untrue! I'll wait till they let me know more formally, on arrival back home.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my friends in the Guild in the UK for

their friendliness and hospitality whilst Carolyn and I have been here. When I first met Brian Field, shortly before he died, he explained to me his belief that the Guild is the "Friendly Guild" and I can certainly vouch for that in spades full!

One further piece of news. In a recent contact with IGKT Vice-President, Professor Vaughan Jones, he has expressed his desire to again attend a meeting of the New Zealand Chapter, when he is next in Wellington. The winner of the Fields Medal,

the Math equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize, Vaughan values his contact with the Guild, particularly in his home country, New Zealand. He is based at Berkeley and I wonder if any of the North American Branch people have made contact with him?

My last few months here will be spent at the Historic Dockyard at Chatham, where I will be helping with rigging work on the sloop, the *Gannet*.

*Tony Fisher*



# Postbag

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

## Is it Finished?

While in a charity shop I was looking in a book published in 1981 about Italian museums and saw a reference to the Naval Museum in La Spezia, Italy.

The text said that they were compiling a collection of over 1500 'sailor's knots'. I wonder if they have completed the collection over the past 24 years and whether any of our members might have visited the museum to see the display. If so could they report on it to KM so anyone able to holiday on the north west coast of Italy can have another reason to get away from the beaches and really enjoy themselves.

Richard Hopkins  
Bristol, Avon, UK

## Guidon Knot

My name is René, and I am a silversmith/designer from Chicago.

I am making a ring for a client, and was asked for a particular pattern from a mythological character by the name of "guidion" (or "gwidion") ... there may be an historic knot attached to this wizard/alchemist of old ... only, I haven't the faintest idea as to where to look for it?

Would you or your Guild be able to point me in the right direction? I appreciate the time and help, and I must say that it was nice to stumble onto a site that still has an old-world art form to bring to today's table!

René  
Somewhere in Arizona  
artofrant@yahoo.com

## Have We Closed This Loop?

It seems that every few years we get the question about a so-called "Single Bowline on a Bight" that is the Angler's or Perfection loop (Ashley's #1017). Then flow the replies to set the record straight; latest couplet is Vick Burt's and Owen Nuttall's, responses, in KM88 pp44-5 and KM89 pp46-7. But even after all these iterations, have we closed this loop, yet? I think not!

It has yet to be remarked that the Angler's loop IS a single bowline

in the bight - in reverse! John Smith presented this true bowline in KM19 p2 and KM20 pp7-8 (early and mid 1987), where he showed three ways to tie it. It or versions of it were later presented in KM26 p15 (Jan Hoefnagel), KM42 pp11-13 (Owen Nuttall), KM55 pp39-40 (Karl Nilsen) and KM57 p52 (Charlie Smith) - related only by knots, to John. The authors seem to have been oblivious to the preceding articles.

And a like knot is shown in Hansel and Gretel's fairytale work, EKFR p589 #2, but with the load apparently on what should be the end. Moreover, in his letter, Nils presented another, similar loop knot which was also shown later Jens Johansen in KM57 pp66-7, and is used among rock climbers et al. and called the "Yosemite bowline" (Nils presents a misdressing of this). THIS knot in reverse is Ashley's #1043.

And among the knots that might emerge from the inchoate states are bowlines of the airborne variety - yes, the infamous "Flying bowline" in from the circus and reported to have a life among tugboat workers. Such knots have what I regard as a crossing-knot (bight-



wise, vs. loop-wise, in orientation) base, and were the finishing arrow's crossings reversed in the image Vic provided, such a knot would result - and is a preferable knot for ease of untying.

I'm uncertain of Owen's meaning that the Angler's loop, today, "is never used in modern lines"? It IS used in monofilament fishline, as demonstrated by pretied leaders and jetsam cordage clumps found beachcombing - it's ubiquitous there. Now, that line isn't so "modern" as "contemporary", in contrast to lines of gel-spun HMPE, e.g., where it would weaken the line far too much.

**Dan Lehman**  
Falls Church, Virginia, USA

## High Modulus Shackle

I have a question regarding a rope-shackle made of uncovered High Modulus rope. Maybe one or another Guild Member will have an answer. In 2003 I was shown by Dick Hollander (NL), how to make that rope shackle.

Later I had made some of them by myself and used as jib shackles on a sailing yacht. The little piece was so strong and helpful in many ways that I decided to send a recommendation to a German yacht magazine for publishing it in its skipper's section. *Yacht* magazine published my letter, including digital

photographs, in May 2005.

Now to the point: In January, 2006, the two major German yacht rope makers, "Liros" and "Gleistein" sold those shackles at the "boot2006" in Düsseldorf, Germany's finest boat show, until a young Frenchman passed by, claiming that he owns the patent on the HM Shackle.

I can hardly believe that anyone might have the patent of an article which can be made easily by everyone who "knows the ropes" a little bit: Just taking a piece of HM rope, middle it and passing the one end through the tunnel of the other, coming out at a certain mark and tying a two-strand diamond of the two ends.

Does anybody within the Guild have knowledge on this? Does anybody know where around the globe those kinds of HM-Shackles were used and since when?

A good answer would be much appreciated.  
**Karl Bareuther**  
Glucksburg,  
Germany





### Devil's Tongue Knot?

My son (aged 9) and I are currently reading the Lemony Snicket books, A series of unfortunate events. In the first book the Devil's tongue knot is mentioned.

As we both enjoy knot tying (the highwayman's hitch is a favourite) we headed for our knotting books and were disappointed to find it wasn't listed. Richard Hopkins book gives your address so I thought I'd ask you. If you don't know the knot it must be a work of fiction!

Don Clark  
Canterbury, Kent, UK

### One for the Cowboys

As a 'Man of the Sea' I have a question to ask, and I'm sure somebody out there will come back with the answer of "First you catch your horse" but that doesn't deter me from asking it any way.

Having read an excellent short article in KM 89 p34, which I'm sure has prompted more than one knot tyer to get out their favourite piece of line and add one more knot, the Fiador knot, to their memory bank of skills. My question is this, how do you rig it on a horse?

What part does the horse put its foot through, yes I know that bit is silly but at least I have your attention. I understand that horses have outboard fittings such as ears and things, and I understand that it is a Hackamore, which is a bridle without a bit, but after that I'm stuck. More details on the fitting please.

So, over to you.

Ken Yalden  
Cowplain, Hampshire, UK

### Snelling

Responding to Keith Snelling's understandable interest in snelling a hook, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition, 1989) states that the word snell is a U.S. term of obscure origin and the earliest reference it quotes in support of this opinion is dated 1846. Could it - I wonder (and perhaps some philologist can tell us) - have come, however, from the very much older Scandinavian (snell) or Teutonic (schnell) meaning active, quick, swift, et cetera?

Geoffrey Budworth  
Salisbury, Wiltshire,

### Marrison Splice

In the attractive Peak District town of Castleton, UK, lies the Peak Cavern. Inside the magnificent entrance to the cave, rope making for the local lead mining industry was carried out for over 500 years. Traditionally, new brides of Castleton were given a clothes line made at the Peak cavern rope works.

Rope making is still carried out at Peak Cavern on the original machinery. Demonstrations, using flax from the Chatham ropery (Master Ropemakers), given by the tour guides explain its history. At the end of the demonstration, they show an eye splice that they claim does not appear in any book of knots and splices - the Marrison splice. Herbert



Marrison was the last of a long family of rope makers at Peak Cavern, retiring in 1975, aged 91. He had worked in the industry since the age of 12. In accordance with his last wishes, his ashes are buried in the cave entrance next to the ropewalk.

The splice is made by passing the unfinished end of the rope through the lay. The loops at the end of each strand, where they have been wound round the machinery's hooks are then passed over the eye, and the splice drawn tight.

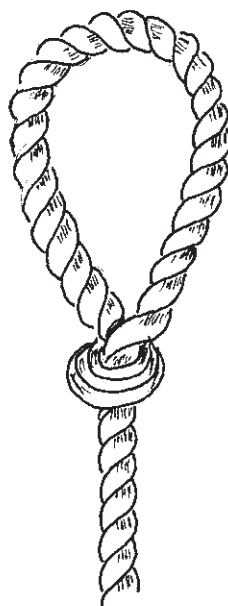
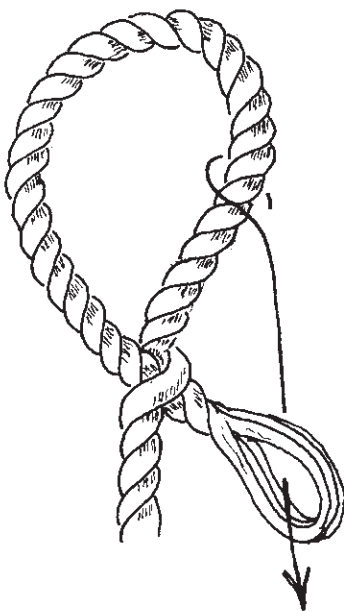
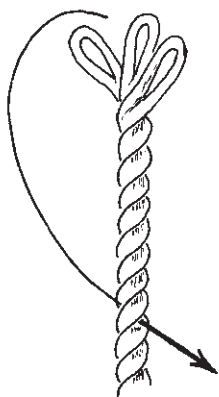
It would appear that this eyes splice can only be made in new rope, where the end has not been trimmed. Can KM readers throw light onto this splice; does it appear in any knot book? Please let your editor know.

Colin Grundy  
Coventry, West Midlands,

## ROPE NEWS

Marlow Ropes, the UK manufacturer of cordage for yachting, industry and defence, went into receivership in November 2005, overwhelmed by rising debt. English Braids have since bought the company and so Marlow Ropes has resumed trading at their location in Hailsham, East Surrey. (The acquisition does NOT include the heavy marine division, which remains in administration ... but that's another story.)

According to Peter Earp, managing director of English Braids, based in Malvern, Worcestershire, the two companies will compete with one another, which it is hoped will enhance both their reputations for technical innovation and development combined with quality and value-for-money products.



# Knotting Diary

## GUILD MEETINGS

### Pacific Americas Branch AGM

30th June 2006

Hyde Street Pier, National Maritime  
Historical Park, San Francisco, USA

Contact: Lindsey Philpott

Tel: (00 1) 562 595 8854

Email: president@igktpab.org

### Half-Yearly Meeting

14th October 2006

Caen, France

Contact: Graham macLachlan

Tel: 0033 233 076 704

Email: igktfrance@club-internet.fr

## BRANCH MEETINGS

### UK

#### East Anglian Branch

23rd September 2006

Museum of East Anglian Life,  
Stowmarket, Suffolk

Contact: John Halifax

Tel: 01502 519123

Email:

john@endeavour-knots.freemove.co.uk

#### Midlands Branch

14th August, 2006

The Old Swan (Ma Pardoe's),  
Halesowen Road, Halesowen

Contact: Bruce Turley

Tel: 0121 453 4124

Email: bruce.turley@blueyonder.co.uk

#### North West Branch

19th-20th August 2006

Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, Nr. Manchester

Contact: Dave Walker

Tel: 01244 682117

### Surrey Branch

4th September 2006

Guildford District Scout Centre,  
Nightingale Road, Guildford

Contact: Peter Goldstone

Tel: 01483 763045

Email: goldstonepg@aol.com

### West Country Knotters

9th July 2006

Almondsbury Scout Hall, Almondsbury,  
Nr. Bristol

Contact: 'Tug' Shipp

Tel: 01275 847438

Email: tugshipp@tiscali.co.uk

## Non-UK Branches

### Alaskan

Every Wednesday evening 6.30-8.00

Anchorage Senior Center

1300 East 19th Avenue, Alaska

Contact: Mike Livingstone

Tel: 907 929 7888

### Netherlands

24th June, 29th July, 26th August 2006

*De Hoop*, Nr Rotterdam Maritime  
Museum, Rotterdam

Contact: Jan Hoefnagel

Tel: 078 614 6002

### Pacific Americas

13th June 2006

Los Angeles Maritime Museum,  
San Pedro, California

Contact: Joe Schmidbauer

Tel: (909) 737 4948

Email: koolkatz@prodigy.net

## EVENTS

### UK

#### Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival

17th-18th June 2006

Middlewich, Cheshire

Contact: Dave Walker

Tel: 01244 682117

**Stainforth Canal Festival**

24th June (provisional date)

Contact David Pearson

Tel: 0113 2572689

Email: wayzegoose\_uk@yahoo.co.uk

**WoW - Wild over Water**

24th-25th June 2006

The Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port,  
Cheshire

Contact: Dave Walker

Tel: 01244 682117

**Braunston Historic Boat Show**

24th-25th June 2006

Braunston Marina, Northants

Contact: Colin Grundy

Tel: 07946841157

Email: colin.grundy1@btinternet.com

**Saul Canal Festival**

30th June - 2nd July 2006

Saul, Near Frampton on Severn,  
Gloucestershire

Contact: Ken Nelson

Tel: 0783 6722198

Email: knotnut@vodafone.net

**Dewsbury Canal Festival**

30th July 2006

Contact David Pearson

Tel: 0113 2572689

Email: wayzegoose\_uk@yahoo.co.uk

**IWA National Festival**

25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> August 2006

Beale Park, Pangbourne

Contact: Ken Nelson

Tel: 0783 6722198

Email: knotnut@vodafone.net

**Non-UK****German IGKT-Members Meeting**

30th June - 2nd July 2006

Exhibition and Displays of Ropework in  
Kressbronn-Gohren at beautiful Lake

Constance, Germany

Contact: Peter Willems

Email: peter@fancyworks.de

**Australia - Advance Notice**

9th - 12th February 2007

Australian Wooden Boat Festival

Hobart, Tasmania

Opportunity for Australian IGKT members  
to meet - visitors welcome

Contact: Frank Brown

Email: frank\_brown@bigpond.com

*PAB Secretary, Joe Schmidbauer hard at  
work talking to the public.*





