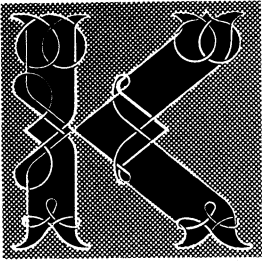
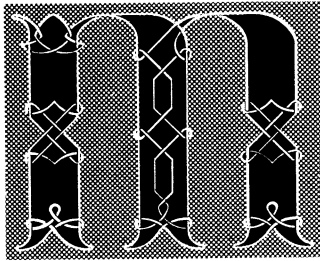


Issue No. 3
Spring - April 1983

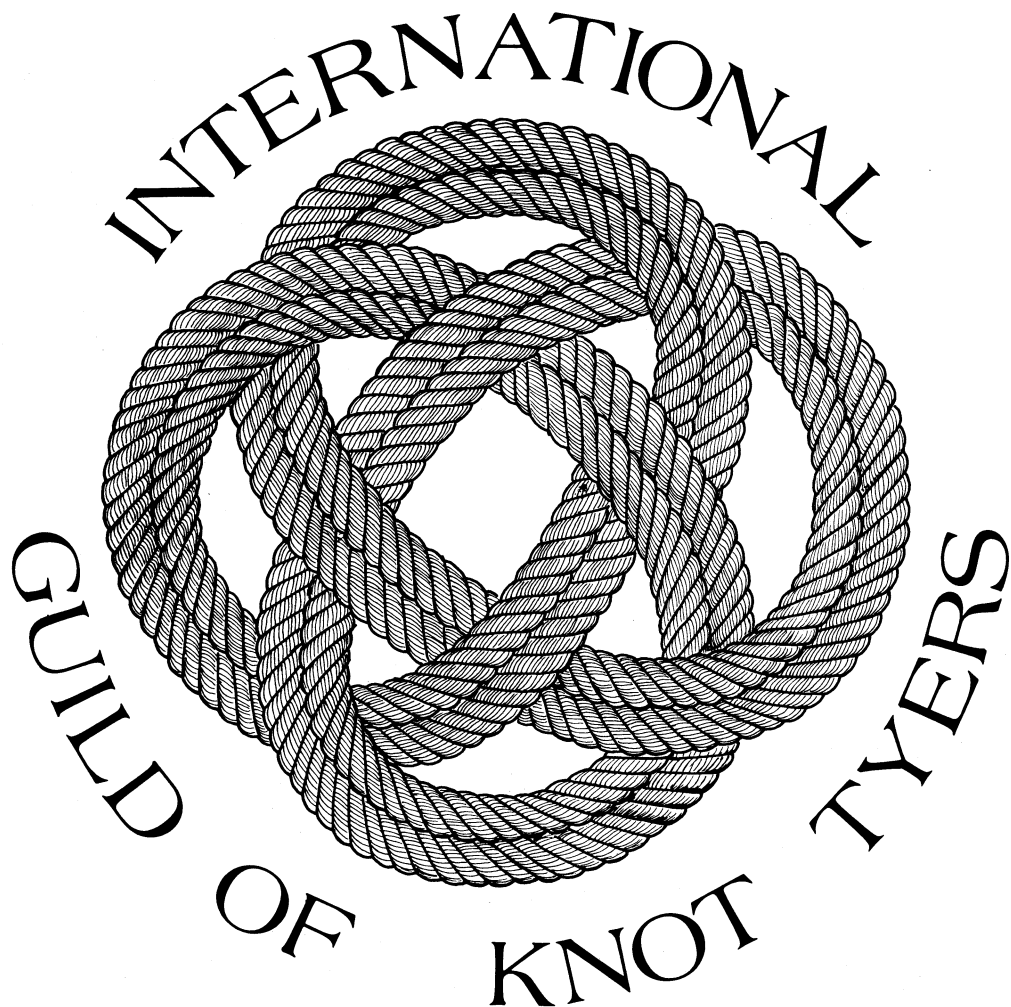


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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE



'KNOTTING MATTERS'

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS

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Issue No. 3
Spring
April, 1983

EDITORIAL

New - and very welcome - I.G.K.T. member Philip D. Noble worked as a Mission Priest with the Anglican Church in various parts of Papua New Guinea and subsequently wrote 'STRING FIGURES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA', published by The Institute of P.N.G. Studies (1979). Involved now in a Christian community in Lanarkshire, his interests (as he outlines on a later page of this issue) extend beyond simple cat's cradles; and he expresses his -hope that the Guild will encourage members who may not be directly concerned in tying knots but whose activities are in other ways akin to ropework.

Presumably those of us obsessed with Turk's Heads and Matthew Walker Knots do not object to meeting macrame enthusiasts. Similarly we accept that weavers, anglers, climbers and cavers can clearly claim to be knot tyers. So how far does this common tie extend? Are magicians who do rope tricks eligible to join? Or mathematicians specialising in that sub-field of topology called 'knot theory'? Personally, I hope so. How then should we regard yo-yo champions who may fabricate special strings in order to create some of their spectacular effects, or diabolo jugglers utilising the friction of string for their stunts; and what about lariat spinners? Just what criteria decide when ropework ceases to be relevant? Maybe a tightrope walker is ineligible to join the Guild. . .unless s/he rigs their own equipment.

I was asked the other day where the Guild was going. I replied that I didn't know but was determined to go along for the ride! We don't want to end up prematurely in any cul-de-sac, or to cut short our outing by going headlong over some precipice. But it seems to me that at this early stage in our exciting mystery tour it would restrict the number of possible destinations if we limited unnecessarily the kinds of people who would like to share in selecting the route.

So it is an apt point to announce the arrival of the Guild's first individual Junior (and therefore youngest) member, Matthew WADE (aged 15) of Fen House, The Leys School, Cambridge. He was given a copy of 'THE ASHLEY BOOK OF KNOTS' for his birthday.

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION (Issue No. 2, pages 9-11)

Dr. Harry ASHER writes: - I am clueless on anything maritime, but I have done an enormous amount of translation of scientific Russian, so perhaps the following notes may be of interest. The figures refer to the knot numbers.

1. Obviously a Reef knot. Translated literally: 'Straight knot'.
2. Shows Reef on a bight. Translation: 'Reef knot'.
3. Translation: "Double straight knot".
4. What we call a Carrick bend. Translation: 'Flat knot'.
5. Marlingspike hitch. Translation: 'Marlingspike hitch', hitch'.
6. Half a round turn and two half hitches. Translation: 'Simple/
7. Round turn and two half hitches. Translation: 'Simple hitch'.
8. Translation: 'Hitch with loop'.
9. Fisherman's bend. Translation: 'Fisherman's bend'.
10. Clove hitch. Translation: 'Ratline hitch'.
11. Rolling (Magnus) hitch. Translation: 'Sliding hitch' (This puzzles me; I thought the whole point of this knot was that it did not slide!).
12. Buoy rope hitch. Translation: 'Buoy hitch'.
13. Double bowline. Translation seems to be: 'Double painter's stool knot' (perhaps someone painting the ship's side sat in the loops?).
14. Sheet bend. Translation: 'Sheet bend'.
15. Translation: 'Topgallant sheet bend'.
16. Bowline (but tied not quite our way). Translation: 'Painter's stool knot (see comment on No. 13).
17. Timber hitch, and timber hitch with half hitch. Translation: 'Timber hitch' and 'Timber hitch with a turn'.
18. Geoffrey. Help. What's this? Translation seems to be 'Top knot'.
19. Figure of eight knot. Translation: 'Figure of eight knot'.
20. Translation: 'Figure of eight knot (second variant)'.
21. Translation: 'Stopper knot' (Geoffrey: Does this make sense?).
22. Translation: 'Cat's paw'.
23. Translation: 'Ship's boat knot'. -
24. Translation: 'Towing knot'.

Then at the bottom of the page we have 'Twenty Four Nautical Knots - Article by V.P. Gusev - Launches and Yachts No. 2, Vol. 84, 1980'.

I get the impression that there is at least as much confusion in Russia as here over the terms 'knot', 'bend' and 'hitch', so I haven't bothered much about which to use. 'Vol. 84' is a bit of a guess.

QUOTATION

"... we worked on Pythagoras' theorem. I told her of the Egyptian rope-stretchers who took a rope with knots along it making twelve equal gaps which they then pulled into the shape of a 3, 4, 5 triangle."

('DO YOU PANIC ABOUT MATHS?' by Laurie Buxton, published by Heinemann Educational Books (1981))

PROFILE OF A KNOTSMAN by the Editor

The Guild's objectives are represented in Canada by a singular man, Robert CHISNALL of Ontario. Bob is a bearded, trim but muscular 140 pounder, aged 30, who earns his living mainly as a rock-climbing teacher and guide. He is on the executive of the Ontario Rock Climbing Association, compiling, editing and illustrating their journal; and is currently composing an official O.R.C.A. training manual. As a professional climber he has a mighty sensible preoccupation for seeking out the best possible knots and belays. He contacted me during the Hunter's Bend saga and, since then, has unstintingly shared his knotting

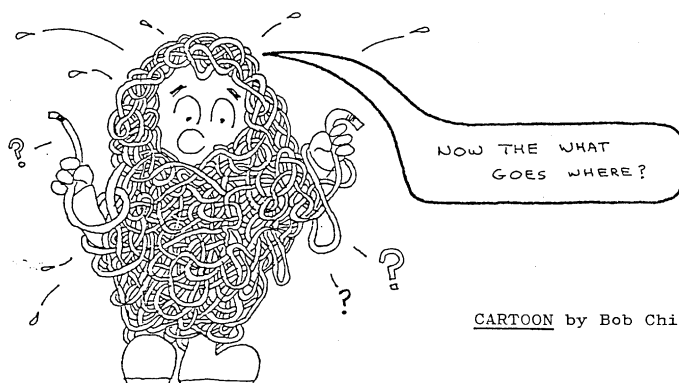
know-how (what little I understand of climbers' knots I acquired from him). In that time he has proved to be an innovative knotsman, clear-sighted and keen-witted.

Indeed, people meeting Bob Chisnall often express surprise that he has devoted himself to climbing. His reply is; "Climbing is a 'head' game; it's the smart people who survive." In which case Bob should cope. He dislikes seeing intelligent rated, so I will simply state that his I.Q. has been assessed as several points higher than his weight. He gained a 1st. Class Honours' degree in biology from Queen's University; solved Rubik's cube 5 minutes after seeing it; and recently placed 4th. in Canada's 'Superbrain' contest sponsored by NENSA. His preliminary entry was submitted for fun ("I figured I had the ability to process information and comprehend about the same as anybody else") and, after a successful series of written semi-finals, travelled to Toronto as one of the 4 National finalists to meet the psychologists who would determine the winner. ("If I'd known the last test was going to be an interview, I would never have gone. I'm shy in company and in a real bind when I have to respond orally under pressure. Crowds scare me. My idea of relaxation is hanging by two fingers from a quarter inch flake a thousand feet off the ground").

That last comment is no exaggeration. Recently, in an astonishing performance before witnesses in his University's gym, Bob earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records when he broke two existing records and created a new third one for one-armed chins. Using his right arm he raised and lowered himself 22 times (previous world record - 20). Then, holding on with just 2 fingers of his gloveless left hand, he did a further 18 lifts on his other arm. Reverting to that strong right arm he completed another 12 (previous world record - 7) supported by 1 finger only.

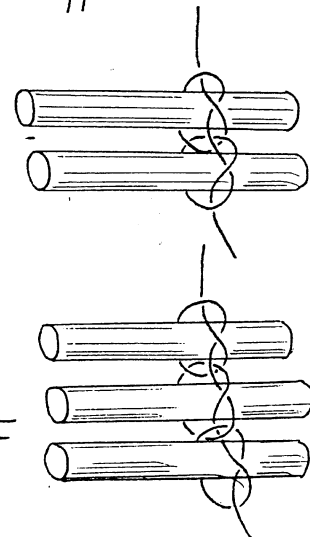
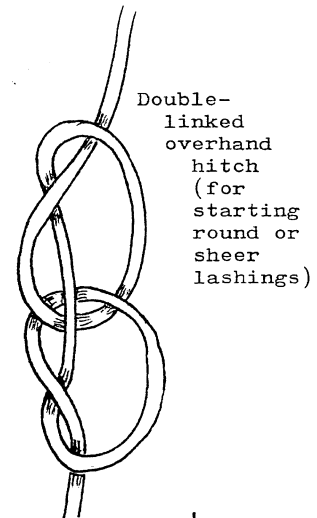
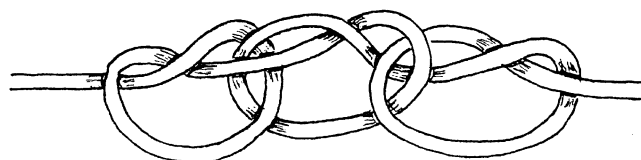
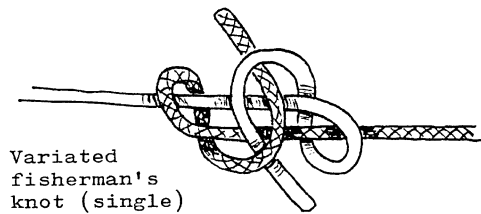
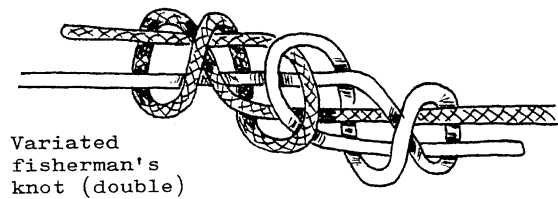
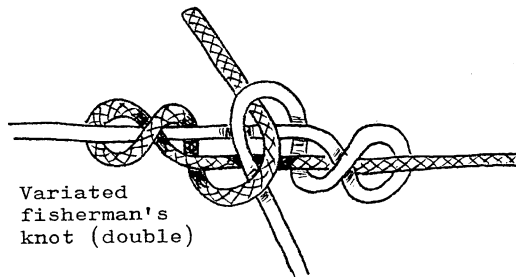
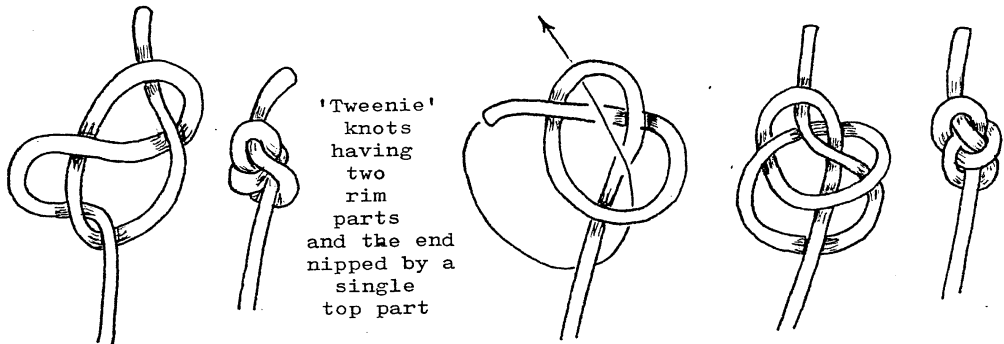
Yet, in complete contrast, Bob has sold his own poetry and short stories, had an occasional cartoon published, and is writing a science fiction novel. He can also play most of the woodwind musical instruments. Of course, he also invents knots; and is engaged in an attempt to bring a new order to the world of knots, bends and hitches by classifying them all according to the 'Kingdom', 'Phylum', 'Class', 'Order', 'Family', 'Genus', 'Species' and 'variety' headings devised by Swedish botanist Karl Von Linn (Linnaeus).

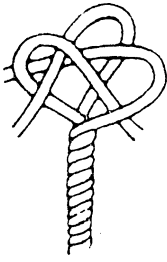
Bob CHISNALL is a good friend, and a practical yet imaginative knotsman. Satisfied only with a high standard in all he tackles, we may rest assured that the Guild is well represented by his efforts on our behalf.



CARTOON by Bob Chisnall

A small selection of new(?) knots from the notebooks of
Bob CHISNALL





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Alternatively, send a large s.a.e. for our latest mail order Price and Book Lists. The Book List includes over 100 titles of macrame books, booklets and pamphlets; as well as - a number of good knot books. The Price List too is mainly intended for those doing macrame. As it is NOT possible to send out samples of all available - cords, knotters attempting more complicated work should write explaining their requirements as fully as they can (including a sample of cord if possible) and we will do our best to find the right thing.

QUOTATION

"What the cowboy wore . . . Lastly and affectionately is recalled the horsehair chain, which was laboriously and often most excellently woven from the hairs of horses' tails. These chains usually were of length sufficient to surround the neck and to reach to the bottom pocket of the vest, and, at the lower end, had a small loop and a "crown knot" wherewith to engage the watch. They were - a factor in the courting on the Range, for among cowboys it was axiomatic that the female doted on horsehair chains as it now is among the cowboys' descendants that she has no aversion to pearl necklaces. The puncher, disdaining to shoot Cupid's arrows at his inamorata, essayed to lasso her with a tiny lariat made from the discards of his favourite pony's tail."
('THE COWBOY' by Philip Ashton ROLLINS, published. by Charles Scribner's Sons (1922))

AUTHOR SOUGHT BY WELL-KNOWN PUBLISHERS

Granada Publishing (Adlard Coles Ltd.) seek an author to compile for them a new knot book. Mr. Julian van Hasselt, Editor, would warmly welcome a Guild member. This is a splendid opportunity for anyone hoping sooner or later to see their knotting know-how in print, and should not be missed. It will particularly benefit a first-timer who would otherwise find it hard to persuade a publisher that a manuscript was saleable. In this case Mr. Hasselt is already convinced there is a slot in the market to be filled. He simply needs someone qualified to produce the goods.

The format is for an 8" x 5" paperback selling at about 1.50p. with a total of 96 pages (8 - prelim; 6 - intro; 80 - textual; and 2 - index). Provisionally entitled 'KNOTS IN USE', it is suggested

that treatment should not only show how (stage-by-stage) to tie the selected knots, but that emphasis should be placed upon how they are actually used. As it is likely the book will be aimed at the yachting market, the author would need to consider producing photographs and drawings (black-and-white) depicting the knots aboard (say) a Thames sailing barge, an off-shore racer, a small motor boat, or a canal cruiser; and should feature lines around winches, cleats, etc. An abundance of illustrations and minimal text might be an advantage.

Payment by royalties would amount to 73-% the published price (home sales) and 73-% the price received by Granada (export sales).

Anyone feeling they could undertake this project is urged to contact Mr. van Hasselt at Granada Publishing, P.O. Box 9, Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts. AL2 2NF (tel: 0727 72727) for further discussion. Approaches will also be welcomed from anyone who - while unable to write - could help with the illustrations. If you thinking that this invitation might just be for you...don't hesitate...ring or write to Mr. van Hasselt. Opportunities like this do not conveniently recur.

SPIRAL PLAITS by Harry ASHER

After weeks trying to learn some of the hundreds of plaits described by the immortal Clifford ASHLEY I was disappointed to find how little true variety there was. I therefore set about a search for something new, and finally hit on the idea of interlocked spiral pairs. ('spiral' in the sense of spiral staircase, not spiral watch spring). It was rewarding to find that these new plaits have a distinctive appearance, and I hope that some members will try them and find that the considerable effort required to learn to plait in the new fashion has been worthwhile. Like learning to swim, or ride a horse, it is not easy at first.

Introduction:left- and right-handed spiral pairs (fig. 1): -

Twist two strands together (like a piece of electric light flex) to make a horizontal double spiral running towards you. Note that if you make this double spiral right-handed you bring each strand in turn up on the right-hand side, across the top from right to left, and then down on the left-hand side of the other strand. Strands slant away from you left to right.

In a left-handed spiral you bring each strand up on the left, across left to right, and then down on the right. In the completed plait strands slant away from you right to left, and this is true from whichever end you view the plait.

4-strand spiral plait (1 + 1)(fig.2): -

The (1 + 1) means that there are two double spirals at right-angles to each other. This plait is by no means new; it is the well-known solid 4-strand plait (Ashley No. 2999) but it serves as a useful introduction to the new plaits. Plait it by the old method of "behind two, back over one" and note that it consists of two double spirals. By applying the rules about strands slanting away from you, you will see at a glance that one double spiral is right-handed and the other left-handed. Before we move on to more complex plaits, it will be useful to learn to plait this 4-strand plait as two spirals.

- (i) The plait is to extend horizontally towards you. Start with two dark strands outside and two light strands inside (fig. 2(a))
- (ii) Open up the two light strands by moving the left one up and the right one down (fig. 2(b));
- (iii) Cross the two dark strands right over left so that they run left and right in between the two light strands and almost perpendicular to the length of the plait (fig. 2(c));
- (iv) Bring the left light strand down over the point where the two dark strands cross and continue with it on down to the right of the other light strand, which you pull sharply upwards (fig. 2(d));
- (v) Repeat (iii) and (iv) alternately. Completed plait (fig. 2(e)).

Other 4-strand (1 + 1) plaits (fig. 3): - The plait you have just made has one left-hand and one right-hand spiral pair. You can also make the plait with both spirals left-handed or both right-handed, though neither has much to commend it as both are more prone to distortion. Alternatively you can use an arrangement (fig. 3(a)) which is not a spiral, though somewhat similar. For one pair you can draw it...but not make it. Each strand runs back and forth while remaining on the same side of its partner. With two interlocking pairs you can make it (fig. 3(b)). The Table below shows the different combinations possible...

1 left-handed + 1 right-handed pair (normal solid 4-strand plait)
2 left-handed pairs
2 right-handed pairs
1 left-handed + 1 'side-by-side' plait
1 right-handed + 1 'side-by-side' plait
2 side-by-side plaits (fig. 3(B))

6-strand (2 + 1) spiral plait (fig. 4): - This plait consists of a right-handed and a left-handed light spiral pair held together by a dark spiral pair. You may find it best to work it out for yourself simply from the definition above, without further instruction; or you may like to use the following notes for guidance.

- (i) Start with four light strands (two light pairs) in the centre, and a dark strand at each outside edge. The plait is to extend horizontally towards you (fig. 4(a));
- (ii) Raise the outer strand of each light pair, then cross the two dark strands right over left so as to run almost horizontally between the two strands of each light pair (fig. 4(b));
- (iii) Bring the two outside light strands down over the crossed dark strands near their point of intersection, taking them also inwards over and down beneath the other two light strands which now become the new outer strands (fig. 4(c)). Now raise these new outer light strands as in (ii) above; and proceed as in (ii) and (iii) alternately.

Variations on the (2 + 1): -

Any or all of the three pairs of strands may be made right-handed, left-handed, or side-by-side.

8-strand (3 + 1) spiral plait (fig. 5): -

As before there are two groups; one group, the '3' of the (3 + 1) is what we will call the vertical group. It is made up of a right-handed dark spiral pair in the centre, flanked by a left-handed light spiral pair on the left and a right-handed light pair on the right. This whole group is held together by a half-tone horizontal spiral pair.

Detailed instructions would probably be unhelpful. The plait is precisely the same as the (2 + 1) plait except that a dark pair is added between the two light pairs. When plaiting remember to make an intersection with the dark pair both before and after every half-tone intersection. The plait is not easy to make, and needs practice.

Variations on the (3 + 1) plait: -

You can of course please yourself as to which pairs are right-handed and which are left-handed or side-by-side. If you must have complete symmetry, then the two light pairs must be of opposite handedness and the half tone and dark pairs must be side-by-side. You need some colour scheme; plaiting would be even more difficult without it.

8-strand (2 + 2) plait: -

The example shown (fig. 6) has a top face with a left-handed pair on the left and a right-handed pair on the right. The side faces have an upper right-handed and a lower left-handed pair. The difference from the (2 + 1) plait is that there are two strands to be passed across to the left to intersect each time with two passing to the right. The two strands passing right to left always pass outside the two coming the other way.

Variations on the (2 + 2): - For symmetry the two spiral pairs on each face should be of opposite handedness, or else both should be side-by-side. Apart from symmetry, there is no restriction on handedness.

Other plaits in this series: -

All are included in the general formula (any number + any number), and - if one had enough fingers - there would be no limit to the number of spiral pairs that could be assembled.

Flat spiral plaits: - Ashley shows a plat sinnet (No. 2974) made from two interlocking spiral pairs, and the method can be extended to include three (or perhaps more) spiral pairs.

Also, almost any ordinary flat plait may be embellished by incorporating one or more spiral pairs in a plane perpendicular to

The plane of the plait. A row of intersections in a flat plait will serve as support for a spiral pair, which can also be introduced in other ways. Fig. 7 shows a spiral pair supported on the intersection running down the centre of a flat 4-strand plait.

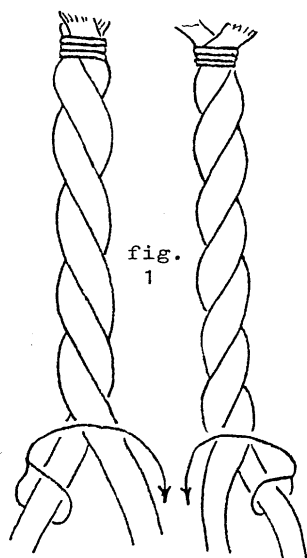


fig.
1



fig. 2(a)

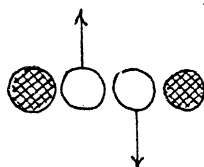


fig. 2(b)

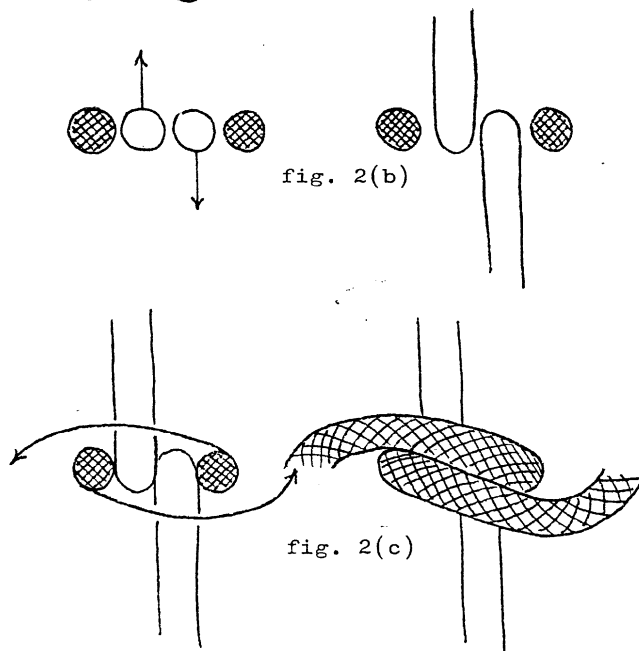


fig. 2(c)

fig. 3(a) & (b)

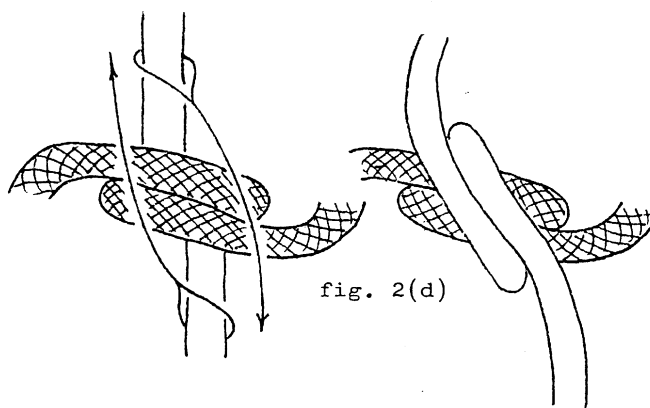
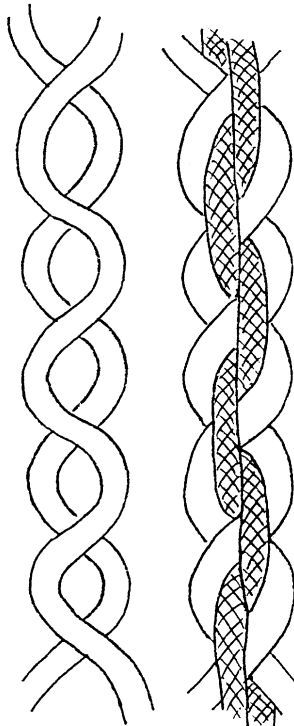


fig. 2(d)

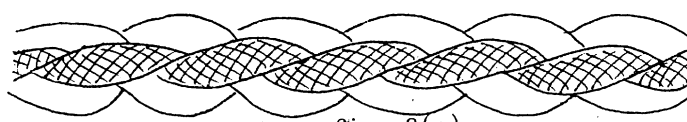


fig. 2(e)

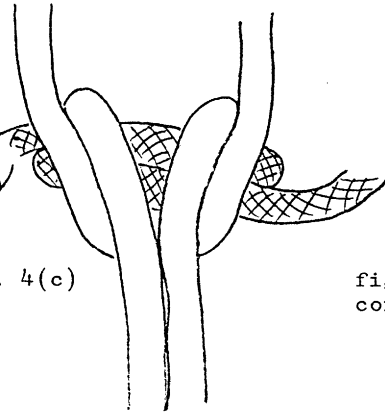
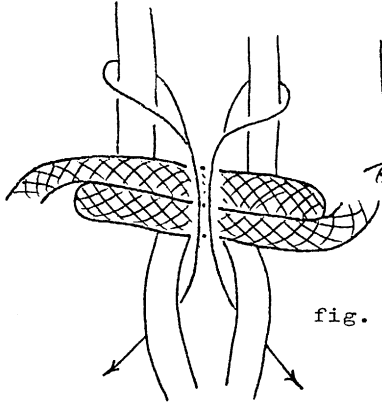
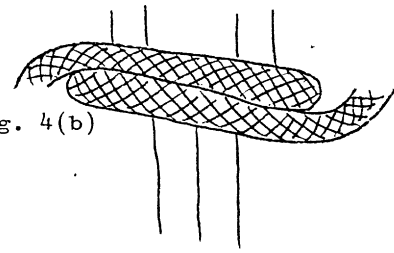
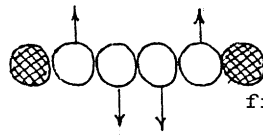
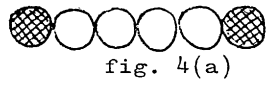
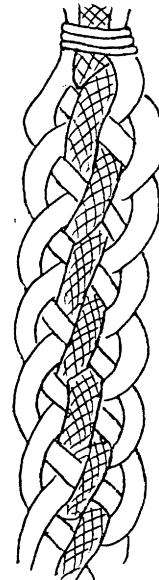
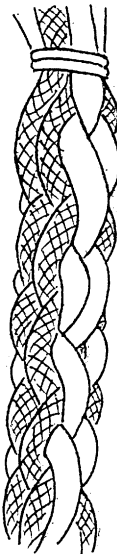
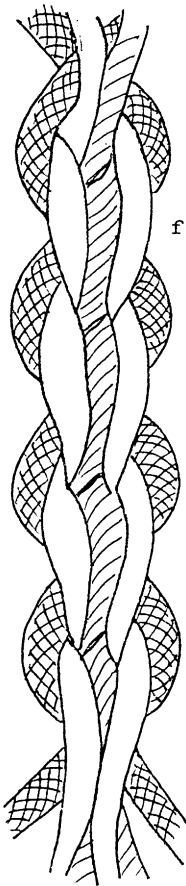


fig. 4(c)
cont.....



QUOTATION

"...one could quote Sir Thomas Thywitt, who lived in the early nineteenth century and collected hangmen's ropes. His oldest "treasure" dated from the fourteenth century, the rope with which Sir Thomas Blunt was hanged for high treason. In his study there was a most varied collection - ropes that had ended the lives of political victims, common criminals, and suicides. He was perhaps proudest of ropes that had been used to hang dogs, according to the strange medieval custom to which we have already referred (trial and punishment of animals). There were nooses roughly twisted from willow branches which were used to hang the Irish rebels, and he also possessed the silken rope with which Lord Ferrers had been executed - as it was His Lordship's rightful privilege." *

('THE NATURAL SCIENCE OF STUPIDITY' by Paul Tabori, published by Windmill Press (1962))

LETTERS

Dear Geoff,

The remark by Cy Canute, "The silly Matthew Walker story", nearly made me unravel. I say long live the Matthew Walker story and all like it, including the story of another man saved from hanging by his knowledge of knots.

Four men were condemned to hang but there was only one rope. The judge offered to free the man who could tie a knot that would hang the other three. Our hero (was he a member of. our Guild?) offered the following knot. He was freed, quite rightly.



Yours sincerely,

Des PAWSON

5-2-83

Ipswich, Suffolk

P.S. I think that it should be (in that same article) 'Lever's bend' and 'Lever's eye splice'.

Dear Mr. Budworth,

Thank you for your letter of 18th. December in which you extended the invitation to join the International Guild of Knot Tyers. Briefly about myself: I am a teacher of Religious Education in a large Comprehensive School in Gateshead and started my interest in knotwork during my three years service as a Merchant Seaman. I cannot claim expertise in any particular aspect of knot- work, but have a fascination for Turk's Heads. May we look forward to a renewed interest in our art?

Yours sincerely,

Thomas SOLLEY

2-1-83

South Shields,
Tyne and Wear

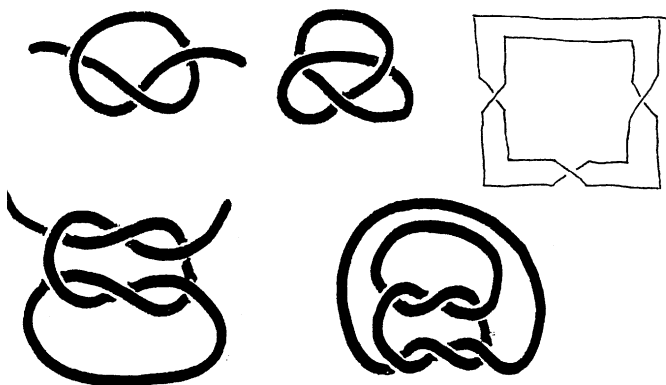
Dear Geoffrey,

Many thanks for your delightful letter. The only reason for not joining earlier was involvement with Origami and String Games societies, but I feel that there is a lot to share in the knots area. My hope is that we can keep the term "knot" loose!!

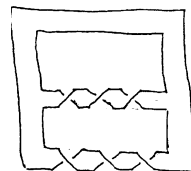
To include paper knots, Flexagons, rope spinning (manipulation of rope with loop), yo-yos twisted string around wood and so on. It seems to me that there are many areas directly related to knots, not obviously so at first sight.

I first got interested in knots through a couple of articles in 'Scout Magazine' on Chinese lanyards (about 1960)(Eric FRANKLIN...are you reading this? Could this be your doing? Ed.). Recently a string figure magazine has started in Japan and I co-edit an English translation; we are at Newsletter 8 now. I have now begun to explore story telling through string figures and knots. A recent trip in Japan gave the opportunity to meet string game players in Tokyo -some incredible patterns made by weaving 2 or 3 different coloured string loops (at the same time!) on the hands. Also a group of us have become involved in "clowning". We usually make at least one giant string pattern using soft rope, and people instead of fingers! Celtic knotwork panels (on stone crosses, especially in Western Scotland) also interest me, and the mathematics - topology - of knots.

You ask about 'Paper Equivalent Models'. Briefly this is just to apply the fact that knots, and patterns, can be represented with loops or strips of paper twisted and attached in suitable ways - the EDGE of the paper represents the string: -



Of course, this is not new but does give a basis for classifying simple string games and establishing 'base' figures - I've got it more fully explained elsewhere, and I'll send the details when I unearth them.



with kind regards, 3-3-83

Philip Noble

Cambuslang, Scotland

Dear Geoffrey,

I recently attended the special ceremonies marking the reopening of the Asiatic Galleries at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I saw some things there that seem quite pertinent to our long-range goals for the I.G.K.T. I specifically went to see Sadaichi Gassan, a master swordsmith, in action. He was born in 1906 and his ancestors were making swords over 700 years ago. Several of his swords will be on permanent display at the museum after he returns to Japan. He actually made a sword while in Boston under the view of thousands of museum visitors.

Japan has instituted a most worthy concept, the Living National Treasure. Gassan is a Treasure, but so are several other men who are painters, sculptors, and textile artists. All of the men have their work on display in the new wing just opened for the occasion. Gassan

is the only Living Treasure to come to Boston for the reopening phase. In an auditorium near the exhibition room, films of each of the Living Treasures in action were shown continuously. Each film lasted about 30 minutes, which gave a lot of time to interview the artist and see him in action. I noted that the room was always filled because people could just walk in and get a good briefing before actually looking at the exhibits.

Visitors to the 'Kathleen & May' - or anywhere our ropework will be permanently displayed - should be able to see a short film or videotape wherein a number of knots and wrinkles are shown, along with some informative discussion about the ropework. A proper approach to T.V. people could result in getting videotapes of a number of I.G.K.T. members at work tying knots. If we planned soundly, we could probably get videotaping and editing for free.

I personally doubt if England or America will officially designate somebody as a 'Living National Treasure' in the field of ropework. However Percy Blandford comes to my mind as a worthy recipient of such a designation. Ashley is dead, so I can't think of any American in ropes who would have a background comparable to that of Gassan in swords. One thing is certain; you have a better chance of getting such a concept accepted by your government, in England than I will by the American government.

Best regards,
Fred BROWNE

16-11-82
Cambridge MA, U.S.A.

Dear Geoffrey,

Thank you for a very nice letter. It pleased me to hear that I am not the only one objecting to the sentence "Ashley's Constrictor Knot" as W.P. Maclean writes in his 'MODERN MARLINSPIKE SEAMANSHIP'. At page 14 he writes, "This knot was invented by Clifford W. Ashley". This is absolutely wrong. A knot cannot be invented, just be discovered. It is the same with all other things in nature like flowers, animals, minerals, etc. In my opinion there are 6 elements in the Universe, not 5. They are WIND, FIRE, EARTH, WATER, AIR and KNOTS. The man used knots before he was able to use the other elements. The Constrictor Knot is a very strange knot and I think it has not been very popular because it is very similar to the Strangle Knot, which is easier to tie. The history of the Constrictor Knot is as follows: - It first appeared in Hjalmar Ohrwall 1916-edition 'Om Knutar'

(About Knots). It is called "Timber Knot" (not Timber Hitch which is mentioned as another knot) and he compares it with the Strangle Knot, which he considers to be better as the round turns are close together and the knot can be made more firm. Ashley says in his "Encyclopedia" that he tied this knot 25 years or more before he published the book in 1944. This means before 1919 (as Day writes). However, in Ashley's articles about Sailors' Knots in 'Sea History Magazine', published July-December, 1925, the Constrictor Knot is not mentioned at all and the Strangle Knot (together with the Clove Hitch and Miller's Knot) is called a Ligure Knot.

Rapponen is the first to show the knot drawn and calls it 'WHIP KNOT', this is in 1931.

Drew does not mention this knot in his article 'Some Knots and Splices' in 'The Irrigation Age'; but in Lester Griswold's 'Handicraft', 1931, he mentions the Constrictor as a strangle knot to be tied in the middle of a rope. Later in his book 'Ropework', published 1936 and reprinted 1942 and 1955, the knot is gone with the wind.

Graumont/Hensel, in their 'Encyclopedia' 1939, only have the Strangle Knot and they call this knot "Blood Knot". No sign of anything similar to a Constrictor.

Let us say with a smile; Ohrwall got the idea 1916, Rapponen and Drew made the drawings in 1931 and Ashley placed it on the market in 1944 and everybody after that thought he had "invented", drawn and patented it.

The Constrictor Knot together with the Strangle Knot (a double Overhand Knot) and the doubled Overhand Knot are the best knots to use when you really want to secure anything very quickly and firm. Note that the Strangle Knot and the Fisherman's Bend are the same knot. The Constrictor and the Strangle are not very much used as they are always described as dangerous knots in the books, but I use them 'slipped' and the wild knots are tamed.

Do you know anything about the following - 'NOTES ON KNOTS', compiled and drawn by Henry North Grant Bushby of Hertfordshire, England, 1902-1926; manuscript, 8 vols. 2000 illus. part col. I have not seen it in any bibliography. Have you seen it or heard about it? It is in a small museum library in the U.S.A.

I have been doing research in knotting for several years and I have more than 370 books, pamphlets and articles from 20 different countries. I am also very interested in the old sailing ships "the most beautiful Creations of the Human being" and their rigging. have been able to get about 200 books about seamanship, rigging, rope-making, etc., and I also have about 1000 books about the sailing ships.

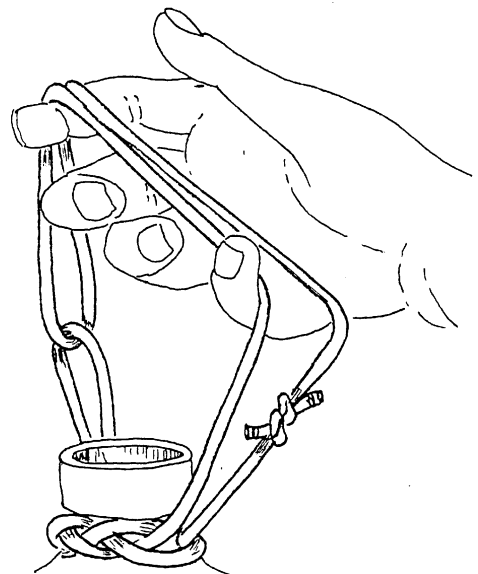
I wish you many happy sailings and safe ports,
Yours sincerely,
Sten JOHANSSON

8-2-83
Stockholm, Sweden

Dear Geoffrey,

'Eric Franklin . . . Never Lost a Bottle' (Issue No; 2, pages 7-8) -my favourite knot, painstakingly learnt from Ashley, but I think both Franklin and Ashley describe a poor method of finishing off. It needs a shrewd judgement and perhaps some fiddling to get the two loops precisely the same size, and they must be the same size for comfort in carrying. I find it far better to thread one loop through the other and then insert the fingers as shown. The loops are made of unequal size, and the two parts of the longer loop then rest perfectly on the finger. . . , and the adjustment is automatic.

Harry ASHER, 12-1-83



QUOTATION

" . . . old silk tasselled knots of the queer shapes familiar in temples

'THE JAPS AT HOME' by Douglas Sladen, pub. Hutchinson & Co. (1893)

KNOTTING BRICKLAYER by Cy Canute

When I was a young Sea Scout we all shook hands LEFT-handed. It set us apart, a kind of secret sign. Didn't we also fasten our shoes in a special way? The laces weren't tied with visible bows. Somehow the tag ends were buried but just how we did it I can't recall.

It was seeing a bellrope in our Scout hut that triggered off my knotting and started me on all the traditional sailors' knots depicted in those dated manuals (I mean, whoever actually used a Nelsonian "comb-hanger"?). Very early on, however, I was seduced by macrame. I can - and do - work on it for hours at a stretch. Yet hard-bitten characters sometimes try to make me ashamed of my indulgence. Just as the efforts of impressionist painters are belittled because they have abandoned formal draughtsmanship, so I'm often told my masterpieces are "...not real knotting".

What nonsense Of course it's real knotting. Macrame is reef knots and clove hitches (or paired half hitches, if you like), hundreds of thousands of the little beauties, cunningly repeated to produce striking effects. I reckon I've tied more reef knots and clove hitches than an entire fleet of sailormen could have done in a lifetime of voyaging. Macrame is like laying bricks. A brick is crude and simple but put enough of them together with skill and you can build a cathedral. Macrame makes proper knotting as bricklaying creates architecture.

Mind you, macrame is an ugly word. Nobody's certain how to pronounce it, and any meaning it once had has ceased to be relevant. The Americans have the right idea. They call it "square-knotting". Their term 'square knot' refers, of course, to the reef knot; so, why don't we British just call it "reef-knotting"?

I once worked with a cultured literary chap who, seeing my knotting, asked; "What's it all called? Is there an '-ology' for this sort of thing?" "Well, it's - sort of - just known as fancy or decorative ropework," I mumbled inadequately. "Rot," he announced brightly. "There's bound to be an '-ology' for it. I'll just go away and unearth it for you." That was about 19~3. He's never come back. I wonder what he found. Does anyone have any idea?

QUOTATION

"KNOT TYING. The fastest recorded time for tying the six Boy Scout Handbook knots (square knot, sheet bend, sheep shank, clove hitch, round turn and two. half hitches and bowline) on individual ropes is 8.1 seconds by Clinton R. Bailey Snr., 52, of Pacific City, Oregon, on April 13, 1977."

'GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS' revised edition (1980)
Poem - 'SAILMAKER' from 'Wind in the Topsails' by Bill Adams, pub. by
George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. (1931)

Old man Stitch-away, old man Sails,
With his long grey beard, he's as hard as nails. His teeth are yellow,
and his eyes are grey,
And he-'s seaming and he's roping all the livelong day. Stitch away,
stitch away, sew them strong
For the lofty spars, where they belong.
Rope them tight and seam them true
So never a capful of wind blows through;
A big ship's topsails, a big ship's courses,
Royals and skysails, a big ship's wings,
To race her along through the wild white horses, To lift her high where
the comber swings.
Stitch them, Sails; aye, sew them tight
For the mad squall blowing in the maniac night.
Sew them to stand the beat of hail,
The lash of rain and the hurricane's flail.
Sew them strong, so they'll never rip
When we're bow to bow with a rival ship;
Bolt on bolt of canvas high to tower in a pyramid to the sky; tide;
Bolt on bolt of canvas wide to cast swift shadows on the blue sea's/
Bolt on bolt of canvas white to gleam in the glory of the tropic night.
And if there's a bit of sail left over,
Save it, Sails, for a fellow-rover
Old man Sails, with his grey head bowed,
He's sitting and he's stitching at a dead man's shroud.

BOOK REVIEW

'ENCYCLOPEDIA OF KNOTS and FANCY ROPE WORK' by Raoul Graumont and John Hensel, originally published 1939; now reprinted by Cornell Maritime Press (1982), price 14: - Simple knots and complicated marlinespike work, both practical and decorative, canvas stitching, wire splicing, mat-making and macrame, are all in this classic 690-page book. Over 3, 600 knots in 350 full page photographic plates and a few drawings. The lure and lore of knotting is also there, from Longfellow's poem 'The Ropewalk' to the Roman name for a reef knot. But this is a 6th. printing of the 4th. edition of a revised and enlarged version of the original 1939 publication, so the contents are now curiously old-fashioned. Many knots(wo)men cannot work out the ill-defined photographs. Written clarification is often inadequate. Knot names are sometimes unorthodox and some subjects are omitted. The 23-page index is notoriously difficult to use. It contains no recent developments. So this is not the book for anyone hoping to learn to tie knots. For 2 more, the 'Ashley Book of Knots' with its meticulous step-by-step drawings and detailed instructions is superior; and there are many good cheaper books. However - as stated on the dust jacket - it is " . . . a museum of a book", the combined personal collections of two men, both of whom sailed in merchant ships, and a magnificent effort. No knotting enthusiast who can afford the hefty price should be without this weighty tome. Knotcraftsman Bernard CUTBTUSH told me recently he much preferred this book to 'Ashley' because it gave him more ideas. Beneath the dust

jacket the publishers have retained on the hard cover the 1939 imprint of a mariner's wheel tied in cord - a nice detail to find these days.
BOOK LIST

A complete knotting bibliography for members may take years to compile and still never be complete. Even deciding how to group and classify each title will be difficult. It seems the Guild will need someone skilled in this kind of task and with the right resources.

Meantime, one or two book reviews together with a book list will be included in each newsletter, accumulating to produce a useful reservoir of reading material. Some of it will be readily obtainable, some may only be discovered hunting in second-hand shops or by employing specialist dealers. Space will also be given in future issues to books available from members hoping to swap or sell.

'PRACTICAL FISHING & BOATING KNOTS' by Lefty Kreh and Mark Sosin, pub. by Adam and Charles Black (1975)(orig. U.S.A. 1972) - good range of thoroughly modern fishing knots, including the remarkable 'Bimini Twist' (breaking strain 100%), together with useful notes on knot and line strengths, abrasion, stretch, twist, etc. You don't need to be an angler to find this knot book useful. Price 4.75p.

'BENDS, HITCHES, KNOTS and SPLICES' by John Irving, reprinted by Seeley Service & Co. Ltd. (1961) - Practical marlinespike seamanship ('Boatswain's work') aimed at the average cruising yachtsman half a century ago. A traditional source book still worth buying for its basic contents. Price about 2.50p.

'ABBOTT'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ROPE TRICKS FOR MAGICIANS' compiled by Stuard James, pub. by Dover Publications Inc. (1975)(orig. 19145) -The title says almost all that needs to be said; 1400 pages of clearly explained and illustrated knot and rope tricks which even an amateur reader could master. Price about 2.50p.

'ROPE, TWINE and NET MAKING' by Anthony Sanctuary, pub. by Shire Publications Ltd. (1980) - No. 51 in the familiar 'Shire Album' series, a record of Bridport, Dorset, as a centre for these ancient crafts illustrated by fascinating old photographs. A charming gift for all ropeworkers. Price 75p.

'CAT'S CRADLES and other String Figures' by Joost Elffers & Michael Schuyt, pub. Penguin Books Ltd. (1979)(Germany 1978) - Excellent (sometimes beautiful) photographs and textual treatment of what has, in older books, seemed a rather dull facet of knotting. Price 2.95p.

'MACRAME' by Virginia I. Hervey, pub. by Van Nostrand Reinhold Co. (1967) - Not for beginners, this splendid work explores the roles of colour and design. Photo's and drawings are so clear an experienced macrame worker could use them as patterns. Price 2.75p.

'THE COLOUR BOOK OF KNOTS' by Floris Hin, pub. by MacMillan (1982) (orig. Switzerland, 1982) - Glorious technicolour photographs of all sorts of cordage, tools, basic knots and fancywork; this unique treatment in colour together with a clear explanatory text makes it all seem quite straightforward. Recommended for beginner and long-term enthusiast alike. Price (unfortunately) 6.95p.

'THE DITTY BAG BOOK' by Frank Rosenow, pub. by Adlard Coles Ltd. (1976)

- How to make a canvas ditty bag with associated ropework to a traditional design by means of a sailmaker's palm, needles, prickers and all the glorious paraphernalia. Illustrated with sketches. Price 3.95p.

'THE ART OF KNOTS' by Marc P.G. Berthier, pub. by Macdonald & Jane's (1978) ('L'Art des Noeuds', France (1975)) - You must take this title very literally. It's a look into the sketchbook of an artist who specialises in drawing and writing about nautical subjects. It's simply a feast for knot tyers eyes; perhaps never intended to teach anything, although you might learn a thing or two. Price 3.95.

'WHIPS AND WHIPMAKING' by David W. Morgan, pub. by Cornell Maritime Press Inc. (1972)(orig. 1925) - Any knot crafts(wo)man wanting to do something different will appreciate this detailed, informative book. However, some of the knots and braids used in it need to be acquired from the two books listed below. Price 4.50p.

'LEATHER BRAIDING' by Bruce Grant (illustrated by Larry Spinelli), pub. as above (1961)(orig. 1950) - This first-rate book includes a generous section on tying Turk's Heads with leather thonging in a way not seen afloat (and Larry S. deserves a mention for this part of the book alone). Price 3.75p.

'HOW TO MAKE COWBOY HORSE GEAR' by Bruce Grant, pub. as above (1956) (orig. 1953) - There is some overlap with the previous publication, but this is another, splendid book for the knot tyer wishing to extend h(er)is repertoire. Price 4.00p.

QUOTATION

"...to working cunning knots and splices dear to the old-time sailor's heart."

'A GYPSY OF THE HORN' by Rex Clements, pub. Jonathan Cape (192L1.)

I.G.K.T. VISIT TO MARLOW ROPE WORKS

"What", asked the young engineer in the research and development section of Hawkins and Tipson's 'Marlow' rope works, "is the International Guild of Knot Tyers?"

Funny, isn't it, how a good concise definition deserts you at moments like that?

"Well," I foundered, "it's an association of people of like interests, organised for their mutual knowledge and benefit"; and, indeed, I suppose our day together as a group representing the Guild had furthered just these aims.

We had met quite early in the local pub. Harry ASHER, myself (Ann DEVINE) and an interested friend arrived first; but, shortly after, Ian MacCORMACK came in to add a professional touch to our talk with his rigger's tales. Next Paul HERBERT - a ship keeper - found much in common with Ian. Finally Jill JENNER and two friends arrived to add two folk from the scouting world and another ex-naval man to our group. Over lunch we discussed the Guild and debated such topics as the value of holding weekend 'schools', whether corn dolly workers constituted knot tyers, should we have an enamel badge, where to obtain the different types o~ ropes we variously needed.. .and finally, just to bring ourselves back down to earth, the merits of the local beer

Our tour of the factory started at 2.00 p.m. and we were fascinated to see the commencement of two types of synthetic rope being created from small granules of polypropylene substance. The 'Nelson' rope is made from filaments manufactured and cut to simulate hemp; combed and then spun and finally twisted into a yarn which is fed into an interesting machine (which to the layman or woman looked like a combination of dodgem car and maypole) to make multiplait ropes. These had a slightly hairy finish, still simulating the hemp. .but unlike hemp have to be watered repeatedly during manufacture to dissipate the static electricity.

As the braided rope is made at another factory we did not see that being made: but we were all awed by the sizes of the ropes which are manufactured, the splicing done by Marlow at this works and the uses of these huge ropes. Although the principles of splicing a braided rope are much the same for 10mm. or 200 mm., the latter needs a winch and overhead crane to help with the handling. The one we saw in the process of being spliced was a single-point mooring rope for a tanker. Of the other uses for this large rope, towing away icebergs which imperil oil rigs was perhaps the most bizarre.

Later we were able to see the splicing of smaller ropes of all types, braided, laid and multiplait. Our guide even had some difficulty in drawing us away from watching the speed and consummate ease with which these practised professional men carried out their splicing.

The culmination of our visit was to the research and development section to witness a strength test. Here a rope of approximately 40mm. diameter was put under test. Guaranteed to 15 tons breaking strain, it did not go bang until the load reached 17* tons, and by that time it had nearly halved in diameter.

Before we left I gave the young engineer more details of the Guild and hopefully we shall have gained another member with something special to contribute to the wealth of knowledge collectively possessed by Guild members.

Ann DEVINE, Tuesday, 15-3-83

HARRY A's AFTERTHOUGHT

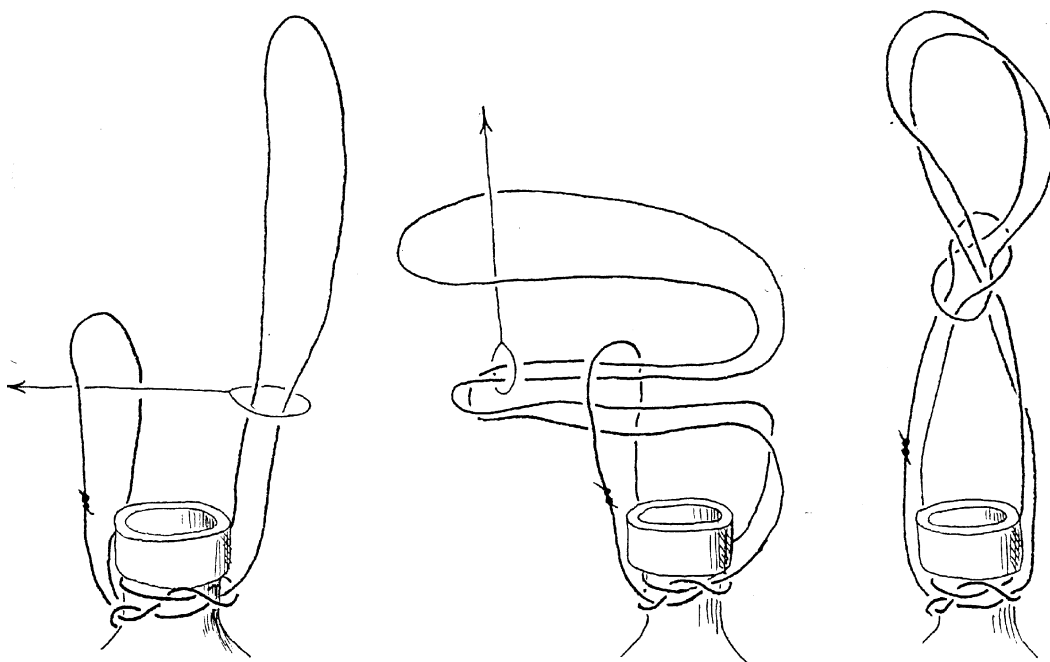
Dr. Harry ASHER is a puckish, sharp-witted gentleman from whom ideas come faster than they can be tidily recorded. Consequently, when his inventive mind is pursuing a particular line of research, you can expect to be bombarded with letters..., each a continuing episode in the same saga. His record was to have 3 on my breakfast table the same morning!

So, it was no surprise to receive a further instalment to the solution for fashioning bottle sling loops; and- like all Harry's letters - it proved another thoughtful contribution. Dr. ASHER, keep 'em coming. I can take it!

"There is another way of finishing off, as follows. Start with two separate loops (diagrams overleaf...page 20) held upright and facing each other, the one on the right about twice as long as the one on the left. Pass thumb and forefinger of the left hand through the short loop and with them seize the two strands of the long loop in the middle of their length and pull these parts only through the short loop.

Next, pass thumb and forefinger of the right hand through the top of the long loop and over the top of the short loop; reach down and take from the left thumb and forefinger the two middle parts of the long loop half by them, and pull them up through their own loop.

Written thus it sounds involved, but it is in fact extremely simple. The way it seems when you know it is; "Pull - through the short loop; now - pull them through the long". When you have done it you end up with a double loop, the two halves automatically the same length and therefore comfortable to hold. A knot encircles the four strands a short way down from the top."



OBITUARY

We were shocked and saddened to learn of the death on 28th. February 1983, a few days before his 72nd. birthday of George COPE.

George was a director of the necktie firm Halliford Ties Ltd. and a member of the Gaelic-speaking fraternity, who also had sailing and scouting connections. He discovered our Guild's existence by chance just a couple of months after the inaugural meeting and promptly joined. His interest and support, during the tragically short time we had to know him, was motivated solely by a desire to see us flourish . . . and we are the poorer for his passing.

Some of us possess a tie bearing the knotting pattern designed by George COPE, and each time we wear it now it will stir fond memories of him.