

# Knot



# News

**International Guild of Knot Tyers – Pacific Americas Branch**

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**Joseph Schmidbauer – Editor**

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## **Dog Leads** Hooley Michaels

Here are a few of the original prototypes of dog leads I braided some years ago. 8-strand kangaroo leather over a core, with the variations being in the handheld area.



One lead has a wrist loop, another a large stopper knot, and the third a different stopper with a fancy horsehair tassel. Each has its place. The hair tassel serves as decoration only, and would go well with a show dog being paraded around. The leather and hair colors can be made to match (or contrast with) the color of the dog, or the clothing of the handler.

The lead with the wrist loop works well for leisurely walking, training, correcting behavior problems or just about any other use you can invent. It is the most universal. The length of this lead becomes the deciding factor in what it will be used for - shorter for teaching how to heel, longer for the daily walk, and so on. Or the loop can be slipped over a fixed post to hold the dog while your hands are occupied

elsewhere. The last is the stopper knot version. A knot braided to larger than usual proportion gives a good stop should the dog try to jerk free. The main advantage I find with this one is that there is minimum overall bulk, and it can be carried in any pocket comfortably. It is my favorite for when I hike trails and do not need a lead constantly, but should a distraction occur, the lead is readily available and I can keep my dog close by me until the situation is back under control. Because of its small and convenient size, it is usually with me and comes in handy when taking the dog out of the truck in a public parking lot and keeping her close and out of danger.



**Short Dog Leash**

Larger leads, unless in continuous use, tend to be elsewhere when I need them. The convenience of knowing it is with me at all times is why I prefer this style. I sometimes make leads for people with particular needs, customizing them as is necessary, e.g. thicker or thinner, various lengths, different snaps, etc. I consider it an interesting diversion from my other braid work. And, like my other braid work, it allows for a lot of creativity. And that is always a pleasure.



Long dog leash



Fancy dog leash

## Sticks and String Frank Brown

A few years ago I had a crook knee and needed to use a walking stick until I got a Total Knee Replacement. Even after that I still needed the stick for a period after getting off the crutches, as I could not trust myself from not going base over apex when negotiating steps and stairs. I then had the same problem others have encountered – getting something out of your pocket while both hands are occupied. Naturally the answer was to construct a wrist loop for the stick: a fifteen minute job making up a length of macramé and attaching with a 4 X 3 Turks Head. In addition the product looked a darn sight prettier than the boring commercial types available. I made another for a friend who admired my handiwork, but who has failed to deliver the bottle of Red in exchange as was agreed.



Decorated canes and sticks

That was the end of my stick decorating career until recently. Several decades ago I used to do a bit of cave exploration with a bunch of friends. I recently re-established contact with one of those idiots and it turned out he had taken up the hobby of constructing different types of sticks. He makes walking sticks, thumb sticks, market sticks, and shepherd's crooks out of a wide variety of materials. He also makes angler's priests and hunting whip handles. While his craftsmanship with wood, antler and horn is excellent, his rope work is very basic. I offered to construct a couple of wrist loops and decorate a couple of sticks with some rope work and that offer was readily taken up. He handed over a few of his products and a couple of weeks later I handed them back with added ornamentation. For that effort I received a very acceptable bottle of Red, which works out at about one glass per stick decorated.



Back scratcher

Having established my credentials as a knoter I was presented with a bunch of walking sticks, some hunting whip handles and a box of angler's priests. All to be decorated in any manner I thought fit. Now my fancy knotting repertoire is pretty limited and so I did a bit of research both in books and on the web. I also got some good advice from a distinguished knoter in Yorkshire who I knew was a dab hand in



the art. I determined that the easiest techniques to start with were basic macramé for lanyards and Ringbolt Hitching and Needle Hitching for covering the shaft. The simplest wrist loop was a thick linen braid threaded through a hole in the head of a thumb stick and tying the ends with a single Bosun's Lanyard Knot. Another simple loop was made by making a three part plait, then twisting up the cord to make a short length of laid cord each end of the plat. One end was passed through a hole in the shaft of the stick and finished with a Wall and Crown Knob Knot, while the loop was made by making an Eye Splice.



I started with some of the simpler braids, beginning with four cords and later getting up to eight. The instructions and drawings in Ashley were pretty easy to follow but the sheer repetition caused some problems. After braiding for a while the mind tends to wander and you discover a nasty fault and have to reverse course a few cm and then pick up the correct sequence to go forward again. Not an easy task for the tyro. Joining the ends of the braids was a bit of a challenge. I settled on using a variation of a Shroud Knot and finished by making a Wall and Crown Knob Knot. Turks Heads were useful for both straight decorating and attaching wrist loops to the shaft.



After several hours of braiding and knotting I had a collection of decorated items that had been created using a wide variety of both materials and techniques. I then started to consider what other items could be similarly decorated. As a wood worker I am a good knoter, so whatever I selected had to be pretty simple in the carpentry department. The answer was a back scratcher. A scan of the images Googled up showed a huge variety of bent and pointy sticks but few had any knot ornamentation. There is a niche in the market there I think.





That is a brief description of my introduction to stick decorating. I can recommend it as an excellent way to hone one's skills as a knoter. If anybody has any acceptable suggestions to make or advice to give, I would be happy to receive same.

### From the Mail Bag

**Louie Bartos** a master sailmaker in Alaska. He has recently undergone spinal surgery and we wish him a swift recovery. He still found the time to send us this letter to update us on his many activities:

Tomorrow evening I am lecturing/talking at our "Discovery Center". The topic? What else: *400 Years of Sail Evolution and Sailmaking – 1500 to 1900*. This is essentially the same lecture, though watered down for American intelligence that I gave at the Amsterdam Maritime Museum about a year and a half ago. It all started about two years ago. I was in Amsterdam working on the analysis of a sail from 1590. After opening four frozen packages, I found out that we had two sails, not just one. The first one was a ship's fore and aft boat sail. The second, to my delight, was a beautiful forecourse with attachments on it that had *never* been positively documented before. A major discovery! Anyway, I had the research well completed in Power Point when the director of the Institute asked me if I could possibly do a lecture/talk in Amsterdam. That is what pushed me into it. I expanded it and realized that this was not for the common person. There were about 250 people in attendance so there was no fooling around. It went off great! So now I have lectures on the *Vasa – 1628*, *HMS Victory – 1803* and now this new one. I plan on expanding the last effort into two blocks.

I have several other projects going so I am not sitting around. The 1590 effort is taking most of my time, now that the big *Vasa* museum document is completed. I am still technical advisor for the new

suit of sails, for the *Batavia* in the Netherlands, but that does not consume much of my time.

This picture [below] shows me demonstrating traditional (early 17<sup>th</sup> century) sail making at the big boat show in Enkhuizen in the Netherlands a year and a half ago. My good friend, a traditional sail maker and the master sailmaker for the new *Batavia* sails talked me into this. It was an hour on and an hour off between the two of us. We were just doing finishing work, i.e. sewing the tablings down ready for holes and boltrope. I had no more stepped off the train and he said, "Surprise, we are working tomorrow, demonstrating traditional sail making at the boat show. I thought you would enjoy that." In two days, we got a lot done on the *Batavia* sails. The seaming, etc, was done by highly controlled and trained volunteers. There you have to watch them like a hawk, press for good workmanship and go by the rules. My old friend is a good instructor and kept a keen eye to ensure these sails were done in the exact specifications and methods of the very early 17<sup>th</sup> century.



Louie Bartos

Did I ever send you a copy of the paper from the International Journal of Nautical Archaeology on another analysis of a new sail found in Southern France? It was a Swedish merchantman that sank in 1755 while trying to break the British blockade. Some great discoveries from that sail, mainly in the cringle, and it set a new time line for that method in making a cringle.

The University also wants me to teach a short course on "Advanced Splicing Techniques": splicing 8-strand and double braid, 3-strand splicing around a round thimble and the correct long splice, but I already have far more projects than I need.

I had better cut this short. I've been sitting too long and I have to balance between sitting and walking. Not easy, I have had enough of pain.



## Why People Know of the Sheepshank

Des Pawson, MBE

©Des Pawson, April 2012

Sir Henry Mainwaring, naval officer, professional seaman, privateer and pirate, had returned to England, where he was pardoned by the King and subsequently knighted in 1618. Plans for him to enter the service of Venice fell through and, in 1620, he was given the post of Lieutenant of Dover Castle and Deputy Warden of Cinque Ports.

During the next two years he took time to write down everything he knew about seamanship. Mainwaring gave a copy of his manuscript to Lord Buckingham, the Lord High Admiral, as well as a number of other leading naval commanders and powerful people. These manuscripts, titled with variations on the title "*Nomenclator Navalis or an Exact Collection and Exposition of all Words and Termes of Art belonging to the Parts, Qualities, Conditions, Proportions, Rigging, Fitting, Managing and Saying of Shippes; with other Necessaries to be knowne in the Practique of Navigation. Also including so much of the Art of Gunnery as concerns the Use of Ordinance at Sea*", are today referred to as "*The Seaman's Dictionary*", the title given to them when later published in book form.

In these manuscripts, he spoke of just two sorts of knots, the *Bowling* (Bowline) *Knot* and the *Wale* (Wall) *Knot*, but he also made special separate mention of *Sheepshanks*.

**Sheepshanks** is a kind of knot which they cast upon a runner when it is too long, so that they cannot hoist in the goods over the ship's side unless they be shortened; and by this knot they can quickly shorten it up as much as they list, and instantly undo it again.

Why, one wonders, did he do this? There must have been more important knots that were used. Perhaps they were considered too mundane and the sheepshank was included because of its rather strange name.

Not long afterwards in 1626, Captain John Smith, some-time Governor of Virginia, used Mainwaring's manuscript as the basis of his "*Sea-man's Grammar*", including almost word for word Mainwaring's description of the Sheepshank, after mention of the Bowline and the Wall Knot.

Lastly is the **Sheepshank** which is a knot that they cast upon a Runner or Tackle when it is too long to take in the goods, and by this knot they can shorten a Rope without cutting it, as much as they list, and presently undo it again, and yet never the worse.

A couple of years later in 1634, Nathaniel Boteler (Butler), another seaman, governor and privateer took these sources of information and reconfigured them as "*Boteler's Dialogues*".

ADMIRAL. *What be your Sheep-shanks?*

CAPTAIN. *This is the kind of knot, cast upon a runner when too long which runner is a rope, for otherwise the Goods or Victuals cannot be hoisted in, over the ship's side; and by this knot called the sheepshanks, this runner is upon all occasions shortened at pleasure, and as easefully lengthened.*

Once again this was first circulated as a manuscript and later published as a book in 1685.

Finally in 1644, Mainwaring's "*Seaman's Dictionary*" was published as an actual book. But the book was full of mistakes including mixing *Sheers* with *Sheepshanks* as *Sheer Shanks*, then giving the description for *Sheers*, rather than *Sheepshanks*. It is possible that there was a second edition in 1666 which may have had corrections, but no trace can be found; perhaps it was lost in the Great Fire of London. However, Mainwaring's manuscripts had done their work and the Sheepshank was released on the world by firstly Smith and later Boetler. These works, all containing the Sheepshank, ensured that this knot or perhaps more precisely this hitch, needed to be included in Falconers "*Marine Dictionary*" of 1769 and, when David Steel was trawling around for information to go into his major work the "*Elements of Rigging and Sailmaking*" 1795, he of course included the Sheepshank and, for the first time, illustrated it.



So obviously in 1808, Darcy Lever in his "*Young Sea Officers Sheet Anchor*" had to follow suit.

Between them these early writers ensured that, whatever its usefulness, the sheepshank was destined to be forever included in any book that deals with knots. Indeed there have developed many variations of the sheepshank, with additional hitches, seizings or toggles, some with names such as the *Naval* or *Man-o-War Sheepshank* even one with the romantic name of *Two Hearts Beat as One*.

The Sheepshank's rather curious name has stuck in people's minds, even if they cannot tie it. The name being so powerful that sometimes people refer to *Sheep Bend* when they mean *Sheet Bend*, a knot that is extremely old and useful, but that is another story.

## Two Color Helical Sennit

*Applied Friction in Cordage Art*  
Jim Long

Cord - mankind's earliest technology after teeth and fingernails. Cord normally requires a knot, some clever kink, to hold it to its task. Typically, knots must be untied to remove the rope. As you may know, I always start with "For What Do I Need a Knot?" and then tie a knot to meet that need.



Here's a way to make a cordage structure which will grip many objects strongly enough to hold small things like key rings or other personal items, yet still be easily removed and replaced.



Suppose you just want to carry spare cord, and have lots of bare tubing on your Expedition Backpack? This technique puts significant amounts of cordage into compact packages and holds themselves in place until you need them, when you just "grab and pull" to remove for untying. It's made to come off easily, so don't use it on a handle! You can cover those parts with hitches in the usual way.

Suppose you ride a bicycle and want to keep your pant leg out of the chain, or keep small personal items easily accessible. Pepper spray, perhaps a snack container or whatever you like. But you want it to be secure, yet easy to remove? You could tie a

knot, untie it, and retie it every single time you need it. Yeah, right.



Suppose you are getting along in years and need to use a walker or need a cart for your oxygen – you need to keep your keys handy but you don't have pockets "at hand". What could be better than to have a knot that will let you hang things on a handlebar, yet easily take them to the keyhole or badge reader when you need it? And with no fiddly spring-reel-string-thingy to deal with!



Why not try this sennit? It is easy to describe, relatively easy to tie, self-setting, no "massaging into shape" (although you are welcome to manipulate it) and surprisingly grippy when applied. I can't illustrate this but I can take this sennit and "whip" it over a rail (for example) and it automagically wraps itself around – single-handed!

If you notice the direction of the helix – arrange it so it makes a flat mat as shown below. Get yours to that point then pull the center out. Which way?



One way makes it work much differently than the other way. Try it yourself and see!



If you're still interested, let's get you tying them. First concern: how much of what kind of cord? Tough question. I take scraps from earlier projects and make up short pieces of whatever I want to ultimately make, measure the result, then measure how much of the scrap piece(s) were eaten by that length of finished goods. Then if you know the desired finished length (say a 4 inch fob of 10 inches for around your wrist), it's a matter of simple math. That's assuming you have scraps. If you don't, consider sacrificing "that much" of your ends of your cords – tying that much as you can with it, measuring the result and extrapolating the other way. The only other choice would be to trust someone else's opinion and I would advise against that in all cases. Knowing for your own self is very reassuring.



In each "tier" or "level" of this sennit, you'll notice there are two "kinks" of one color and only one of the other color. When you're measuring, be sure to

keep track of which color is which. For this demonstration the "double" cord is Red and the "single" cord is Green. I will try to be consistent but I mix my metaphors sometimes...

When you have your cords, one of each color, middle both and lay the single one out horizontally. With the double one, make a Ring Hitch around the single one's middle and draw it tight. Haul away and fair both ends.



At this point, I must pause and point to the wee gap in the ring hitch. If you're really looking for a clean look, I would reckon you could reeve the single cord through some terminal tackle there. If it matters, I think that's the way I'll be starting these from now on – with the clasp or ring on this end. But for purposes of communicating the technique I hope to be clear.

### The trick to making it helix

Decide which way you want the resulting sennit to helix and begin to weave the single cord. The helix trick effect seems to be caused by consistently crossing the single cord the same way on each tier. If you reverse that, the helix is reversed. If you alternate right then left, the result won't helix, but what fun would that be?





I would suggest making one where each crossing of the single cord goes right-over-left, then making another where each crossing goes left-over-right and see what it does for you. In this case, I laid the right hand over the left hand cord every time.

Notice the single cord makes a "hole" with the double cords behind it. Take the ends of the double cord and reeve them through the middle of the pair behind the hole. Keep each to its own side and begin to draw all parts tight.

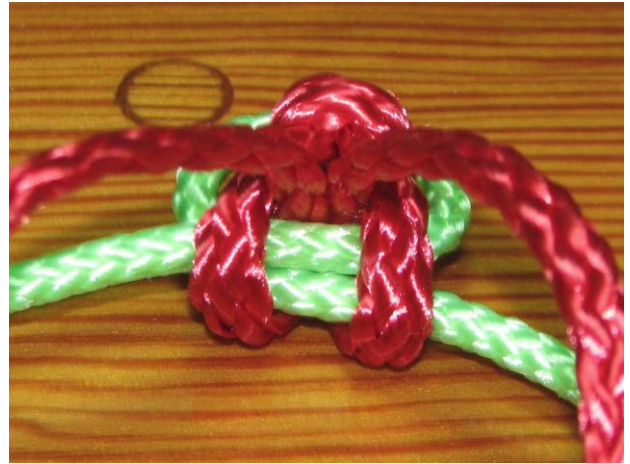


It has been demonstrated that reeving the red cords to the outsides instead of the inside performs essentially the same way, with a different surface texture on the inside of the helix. To me that confirms the helix is caused by the single cord's involvement with the structure.

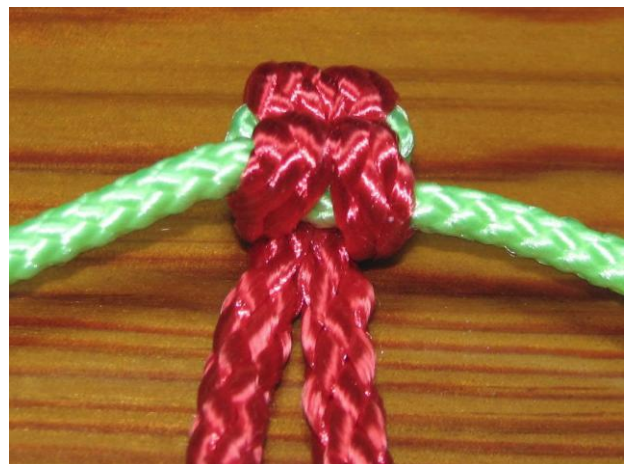
I'd have to suspect that very firm tightening helps some. Basically, when I say "haul away" just pull as hard as you can. If you find yourself breaking cord, it may be too tight.

Continue to remove slack carefully, until you can really haul away on the single cord and the double cord stays in place pretty well when you do. In my humble opinion you can't pull it too tight, but my hands disagree. The tighter you make it, the better it works, at least as tight as I can make it. Try to pull on the last one just exactly as hard as the first, second, third, etc.

First: a flipped close-up of the double cord almost home:



Second: the finished first crossing of the single cord:



Cross the single cord the same way each time and repeat until your brains fall out on the floor.





As this sennit builds, it will develop into a helix shape naturally. Play with it. Avoid letting slack creep in as it would soften the spring effect.



To finish, use whatever 4-strand knot floats your boat. This is where you'd attach terminal tackle or continue into some other knotter. I was looking for a match to the other end of the sennit because I really like the ultra-clean start.



As you can see I missed the mark a little, but here's what I was trying to do: instead of just crossing the single cord, put in an overhand knot instead, but as loosely as you made the loops before, but this time take the ends back around and between the double cords and the single cord's knot.



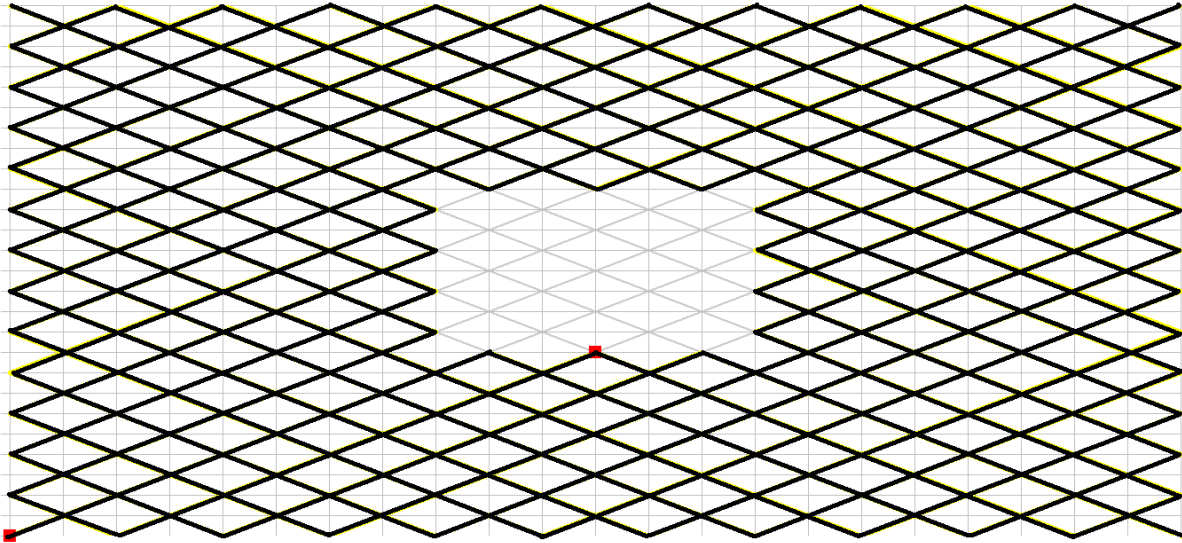
This is supposed to mimic the initial ring hitch, except as you see it leaves the crossing member doubled. I'm afraid I ended up "tying lots". Use whatever knot you like to lock the ends in place.

## Holey Knot - 001

Pieter van de Griend

©Pieter van de Griend, February 2013

Here is a  $p/b = 22/13$  regular grid with a symmetrically positioned excision of  $3 \times 4$  bight. I leave it to you for to run a few copies of this grid. A simple exercise is to fill in a row wise (or column wise) manner with an overall over one under one pattern.



You may try to apply some more exotic coding, which retain symmetry. Looking forth to see your suggestions in a future *Knot News* issue!



Happy Valentine's Day



My old ship that was recently decommissioned...