

# Knotting Matters

The Magazine of the International Guild of Knot Tyers



Issue 84  
September 2004

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# Knotting Matters

**Magazine of the  
International Guild of  
Knot Tyers**

**Issue No. 84**

**President: Jeff Wyatt  
Secretary: Nigel Harding  
Editor: Colin Grundy  
Website: [www.igkt.net](http://www.igkt.net)**

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*Paperweight by C 'Bud' Brewer*

## IN THIS ISSUE

<b>The 'Irish Bowline'</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>A Pretty Braid</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Loops on a Bight</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Knotmaster</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The 6L x 4B Turk's Head Knot</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Head Hunter's Ring</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>The Hanson Patent Knot</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Knot Gallery</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Square Knots &amp; Plato's Forms</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Cover the End</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Knot Tales</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>A Knot-Tyer's Story</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Knotless Knots</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Branch Lines</b>	<b>40</b>

# Notes from the Secretary's Blotter

They say that a typical English summer is three warm days and a thunderstorm. Well so far we have had the thunderstorms, but I am still waiting for the warm days. The thunderstorms keep my colleagues and me very busy, so it is fortunate that this is the quieter time of the year on the administrative side, as most sensible knot tyers are busy with their various activities.

Fortunately this leaves me with only a few notes on my blotter, and should leave Colin with plenty of space for more interesting comments from other members.

Hopefully, nestling up with this edition of KM you should have found the 2004/5 *Membership Handbook*. Due to the earlier failure of my computer, this has taken much more effort than usual, and has been considerably delayed in its publication. On your behalf, I must thank Lesley Wyatt, who has helped me tremendously by trying to update and correct members email addresses, which proved quite a major undertaking. She sent an email to every address in our database, and has updated and corrected addresses where appropriate. As for those emails that bounced back as 'undeliverable', we had no choice but to delete the address from our files. Hence, if you find that your email address is missing from this edition, please let me know your correct address, as the one

published in the last Handbook did not work.

One of the more interesting packages that I have received is a copy of Brion Toss's latest publication, *Basic Braided Splices* which is book five in a series called *Working Rope - Field guides for Rigging*. It looks fascinating, and from the quick look that I have had, I am sure that even I shall be able to splice a range of braided ropes quite soon, which is just a well because my knot tying leaves a lot to be desired. I cannot confess to having spent too much time reading it, otherwise members might realize why the Handbook was so late in delivery.

I have managed to squeeze in a short holiday, when Sylvia and I escaped to Brittany for a few days. Whilst there, we inadvertently wandered into the Douarnenez Festival of the Sea. We spent a very pleasant afternoon there, and I met a number of members demonstrating their craft, which was a wonderful experience. Later in the week we stumbled into the Carhaix Music Festival, where we found no knot tyers, but many young people with long hair, just waiting for someone to come along and braid it for them. I would have offered but -.

I must stop now, because I must pack my bags and set off for the Essex International Scout and Guide Jamboree, in a field somewhere near the seaside, - I should have left two hours ago.

*Nigel Harding*

# Letter from the President

**A**pologies for the lack of a *President's Letter* in the last edition of *KM*, but circumstances crept up on us and we just ran out of time.

My wife, Lesley, and I were in Australia for the whole of March and managed to meet up with some IGKT members, but not as many as we hoped because about ten days before the end of our holiday, Lesley developed pneumonia - which put a stop to any visits we had hoped to arrange in the Sydney area. We did manage to spend an enjoyable evening with Darren Samphier in Melbourne, and after a fantastic drive around the coast to northern New South Wales, we visited new member Ron Hodgens and his mate Dan Cowie, in Tuncurry. Thanks for a great couple of days, guys. I managed something I had always wanted to do when we were in Sydney - I climbed the Sydney Harbour Bridge. I left poor Lesley in bed in the motel, but she just wanted to be on her own in peace and quiet, and ordered me to do The Climb!! Who am I to disobey?

In May I attended the A.G.M. at Chatham Dockyard - a shorter gathering than usual, as unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstance we were unable to hold our usual three-day event. My thanks to all those who stepped in at the last moment to salvage the day. I personally had a good time, and I hope

the rest of those who attended enjoyed it too.

I attended the Small Boat Show in June on the River Thames at Beale Park in Pangbourne, Berkshire, in the very able company of Ken Nelson, Lonnie Boggs, Charlie Tyrrell, Andy Dart, Robin Gray, and new member Andy Lyle who was visiting this country from South Africa. A good time was had by all.

There was the usual gathering of several members of the Solent Branch at the Queen Elizabeth Park Country Show at Butser Hill in Hampshire which I was invited to attend - a very entertaining weekend.

Many of those members connected to the Internet will have received an email from Lesley requesting verification of their email addresses. My apologies - that was my fault. I volunteered her services for the task at the last Committee meeting. She has now completed it and passed the resulting amendments to Nigel who has updated the Handbook and sent it off to the printers.

To end on a sad note, those of you who know Harold Scott will be saddened by the news that his wife, Ethel, passed away in June. She was a lovely lady and will be sadly missed.

**Jeff Wyatt**  
**President**

# Message from Webadmin

The Guild's website is continuing to grow with yet another innovation introduced by our WebMistress, Mel Pedley. We now have a section where members can place links to their own photo galleries. There are many sites on the Internet, some free, some not, where anyone can upload and store their photos for access by friends and family across the world.

Don't forget that there is a Diary facility to advise members of Knotting Events all over the world, and we now have a sub-section of the Diary page for Reports of Knotting Events. Just send me the information or the reports and I'll ensure that the details appear on the site as soon as possible.

The Forum is going strong, but it does still need input from a few more of the more experienced members to answer some of the questions put by new and/or potential members.

Mel is continually coming up with new ideas, so keep a look out for some fancy new stuff on our site in the coming months, and if anyone has any suggestions as to things that they would like to see on the site, just drop me a line. Whatever it is will be given careful consideration and could well be incorporated.

I was volunteered by your President, my husband, to help Nigel with the task of checking email addresses for the new edition of the *Members Handbook*. I sent a message to all members with an email address, but only had about a 50%

response. Many "bounced" i.e. were returned as undeliverable for various reasons, and as many more did not reply. Thank you so much all of you who did reply, and for the many kind, sympathetic messages contained in those replies. Can I just request that as with changes of normal addresses, can those of you with email addresses please notify Nigel of any changes? And in view of the number of 'bouncers' and non-replies can members please check their entries in the new Handbook when it arrives.

*Lesley Wyatt*  
*WebAdmin IGKT Website*  
*webadmin@igkt.net*

---

## Col's Comment

I recently went through an exercise of working out the value of my knot tying and rope working tools. It was an interesting experiment - although one with an important purpose for me. I was shocked by the cost I would have to pay out should I ever have the misfortune to have them stolen or destroyed. Perhaps you rarely take them from your home, so therefore could claim the replacement cost on your household insurance. On the other hand, if like me, you take them to IGKT displays and other places, then perhaps it would be wise to insure them against loss. The same could be said for your materials and finished items. Try it someday. Get a couple of catalogues of materials and tools and spend a little time doing the exercise, like me you'll be surprised!

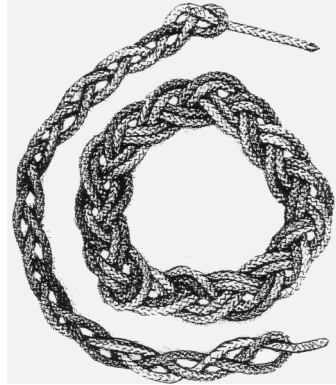
# More Doodles

by Ken Higgs

Many of us who teach our craft to others have come across the unfortunate person with dyslexia as regards being able to see how a knot or splice, etc should be formed. At a recent workshop this subject came up and, as an exercise for our own insight, we tried this: -

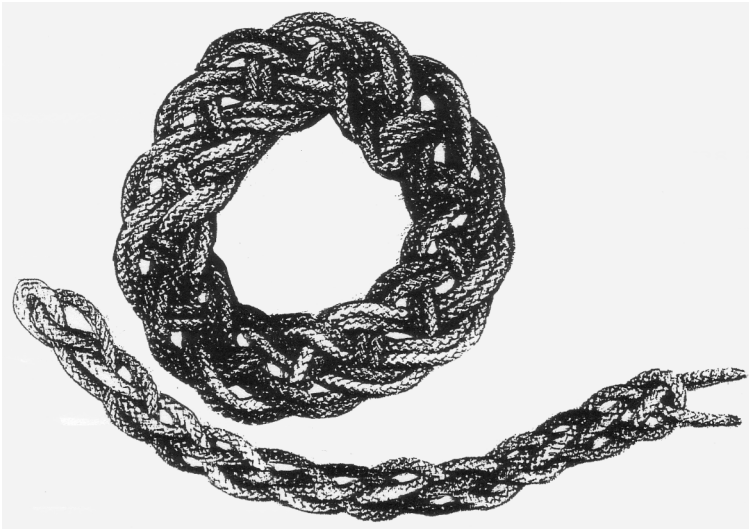
Make, from a single strand, firstly a three strand flat plait, next a four-strand flat and then the round 'lariat' plait. This done we went on to joining them into circlets and finally doubling them - either flat or as a bangle.

The two examples gave us what looked like impossibilities, a 3 x 15 and a 4 x 14 Turk's heads! The join gives the game away however!



Working out the need to pre-twist the standing parts caused some problems but that was all in the exercise.

Have a go yourself!



# Book Reviews

## **A Guide to the Multi, Single-Strand Cruciform Turk's Head**

published privately in 2004 by Harold Scott<sup>IGKT</sup>

ISBN 0-9515506-7-5

This booklet combines, updates, corrects and augments the author's two original works, namely *On Various Cruciform Turk's Heads* (1997) and *Sliding Template Method for Designing Cruciform Turk's Heads* (1998), as well as the supplement (2001) to those publications.

It consists of 34 x A5 pages, in a soft cover, containing 35 individual line drawings, 7 tables of data, and 6 scanned images of completed projects; all of which enable the Turk's head devotee to plan and tie knots that are T-shaped, crucifix and cruciform, or right-angled (knee-shaped).

More ambitious shapes described and explained are a Celtic cross, a ship's wheel and a globular design. There is even a 5-branch candelabrum.

Whether you are a dedicated Turk's head practitioner, or an all-round knottologist, I recommend you take the earliest opportunity to obtain a copy of this unique booklet.

**G.B.**

## **Working Rope - Field Guides for Rigging Book 5 - Basic Braided Splices**

written by Brion Toss<sup>IGKT</sup> and illustrated by Margie McDonald published (2004) by Xian Press ISBN 0-9753343-0-1

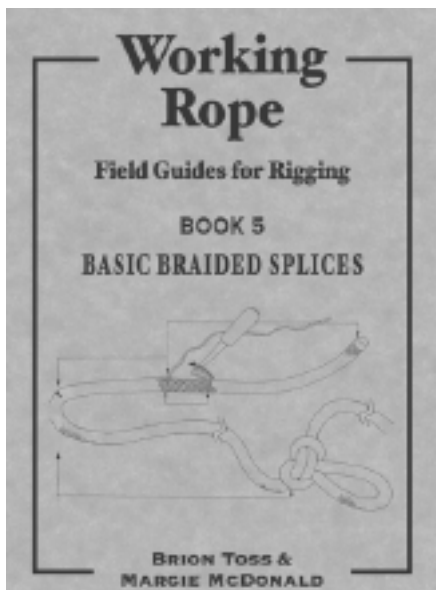
This is a soft cover manual of 122 x A5 pages, spring-bound to lie flat when open, with more than 150 black-&-white, step-by-step, instructional line drawings. It contains introductory paragraphs on splicing terms and tools - including a special feature on the author's own Splicing Wand® - and a chart that demystifies and standardises the usual measurements and markings by making them multiples of rope diameters. Amongst other expert tips is an imaginative use for bungy cord (shock elastics) to 'milk' slack sheath over inner core.

Actual splicing techniques are drawn and described for eye splices in: the New England Ropes product Sta-Set-X; double-braid HM (high modulus) ropes of Spectra, Vectran, et cetera; double-braid Dacron, nylon and polypropylene; and single-braid Dacron and nylon. A multiple Brummel developed by Margie McDonald for HM ropes also appears, as well a reeving eye for all core-&-cover ropes.

Two versions of an HM grommet are presented, together with an end-to-end splice for Dacron, nylon and polypropylene double-braid ropes.

Brion Toss is perhaps the most credible and readable author in his field. 'Bear in mind,' he writes in the Preface, 'that splicing is still a skill. The instructions will not splice the rope for you.' His book is, however, an indispensable aid to acquiring that skill.





Other books in the Working Rope series to look out for are:

Book 1 - Basic Knots

Book 2 - Specialized Knots

Book 3 - Basic 3-strand Splices

Book 4 - Specialized 3-strand Splices

Book 6 - Specialized Braided Rope Splices

or you may order them online at [www.briontoss.com](http://www.briontoss.com).

**G.B.**

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# The 'Irish Bowline' and the Triangular Bend

by Dick Clements

In KM 77 (December 2002) Joe McNicholas described a loop knot which he called the Irish bowline. This loop knot may alternatively be viewed as one of the loops which can be derived from a knot named by R E Miles in his book *Symmetric Bends* (World Scientific, 1995), the triangular bend. This bend is also found in *The Ashley Book of Knots* as #1424 but Ashley does not give it a name.



The knot diagram of the triangular bend can be rendered as Figure 1 where the standing parts and working ends are labelled SP1, WE1, etc. McNicholas' Irish bowline results from joining SP1 and SP2 to form a loop and treating



either WE1 or WE2 as the standing part of the loop - the other WE becomes the working end of the loop knot.



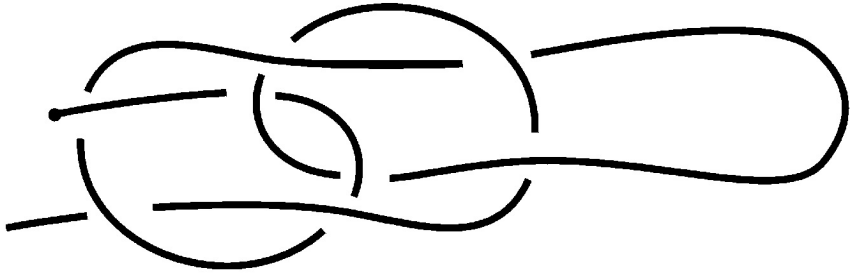
Viewing the Irish bowline in this light immediately gives rise to an alternative method of tying the Irish bowline to that shown by McNicholas. Form a Whatnot as in Figure 2, then rearrange the knot as in Figure 3 and take a clockwise (right-hand) turn around the standing part of the loop with the working end as in Figure 4.



Of course, it might be considered more natural (and probably mechanically sounder) to form a loop based on the Whatnot by splicing the working end of one cord to the standing part of the other leaving the other

standing part and the other working end as the standing part and the working end respectively of the loop. The resulting loop is illustrated in Figure 5. This loop

can be tied in a similar manner to that described in the last paragraph but starting from a granny knot rather than a Whatnot.



## Walker's Knot

Matthew Walker designed this knot  
And saved one sailor's mortal lot.

A Judge giving Sentence of death  
Named this challenge in the same breath:

'If you can interlace some cord  
In such a way that I am flawed-

Or, make intricate a tangle  
Of good use which I can't wangle-

Your life at stake you may retrieve-  
My word at stake I will relieve!'

The sailor walked back to his cell  
Trusting a knot to serve him well.

He thought it out and when inspired  
'10 fathoms-cord!' he then required.

With this, unlaying 30 feet  
He put in Walker's-very neat;

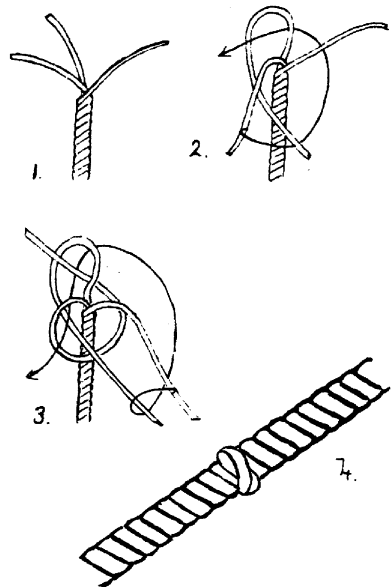
Re-layed his cordage in a trice  
Finished off with a crown-backsplice.

The Judge, a hard man to defy,  
Could neither make it nor untie.

He claimed a new evolution  
Stayed the sailor's execution.

And thus the victim saved his lot  
With Matthew Walker's stopper knot.

*Knot and their Vices -  
Michael Jenaid*

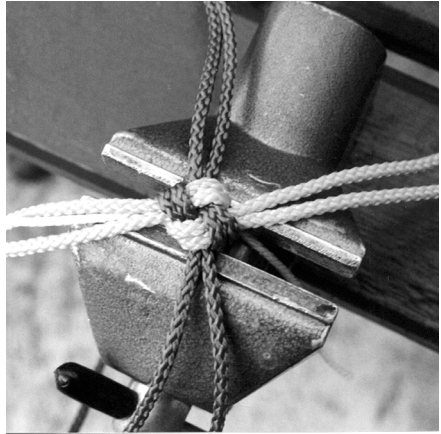


# A Pretty Braid

by Frank Brown

Sitting happily up here on my island the other day, twiddling with bits of string as knotters do, I developed a braid I had not seen before. No doubt it is not new, and I would not be terribly upset if some erudite member provided details of its origins. In the meantime I would like to describe the method of construction, as I reckon it is a very ornamental piece of ropework that some members may like to utilise. I have used it for bell ropes, key fobs and ditty bag handles, generating quite a few compliments.

The method is based on normal crowning using doubled lines. I have made braids with three, four and five pairs of lines so far, and believe it would work quite well with more.



Then comes the clever part. Form new pairs with adjacent lines and make the next crown as in Fig 3. Repeat the process of forming new pairs for each row of crowning as shown in Figs 4 and 5. With continuous crowning, a braid will emerge that should look like that in the lower part of the ditty bag handle shown in Fig 6.

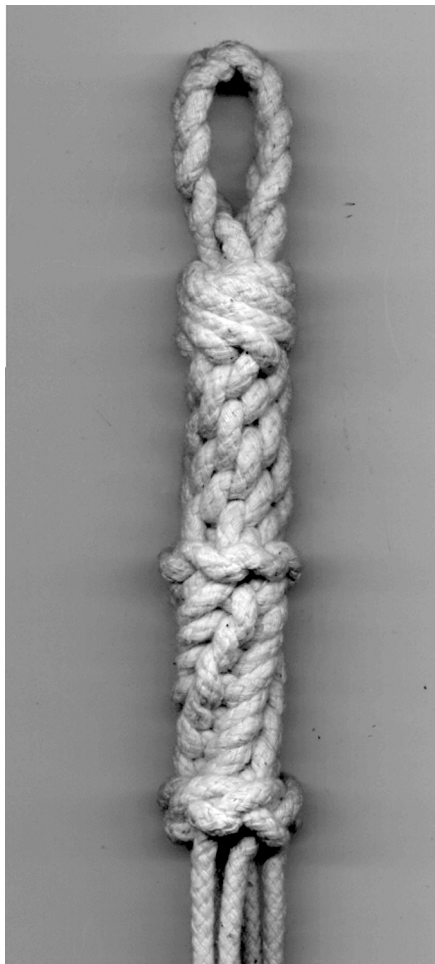


Firstly the lines are gathered in pairs as shown in Fig 1. The first crown is made as in Fig 2.





Reversing the direction of crowning each row produces an interesting braid as well. However I don't think it is as pretty. Should the braid prove to be new, I would like to call it the "Tassie Twist". I can dream, can't I?



## ROPE ENDS

In the ancient Oriental tradition knots and braids made by - or for - men to use spiralled clockwise, and for women, anti-clockwise. (Structurally, it may not make any difference to the effect). A simple example, still seen in Japan today, is the knot tying the *obi* (sash) to its binding-cord. [The True-love Knot]

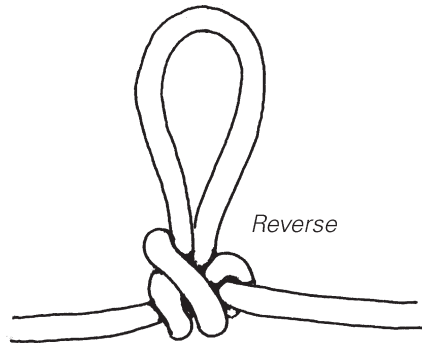
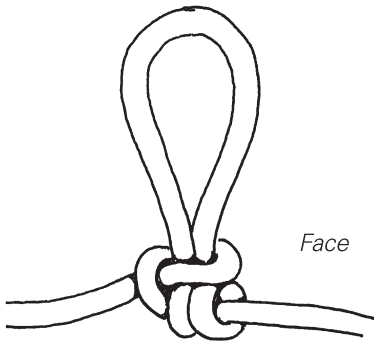
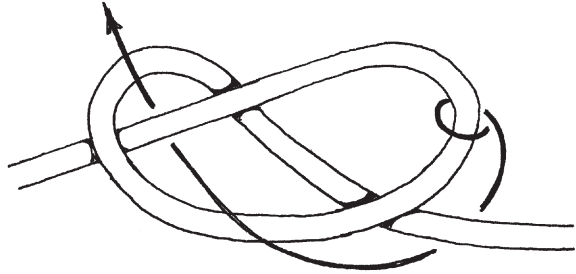
*Europa Chang*

# Loops on a Bight

by Owen K Nuttall

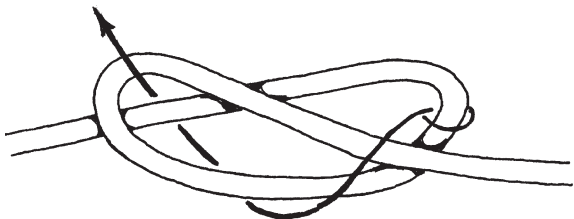
## Middleman's Loop (Linfitt way)

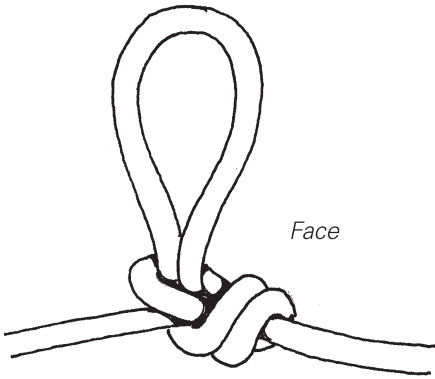
A simple knot to tie, and secure when pulled up tight.



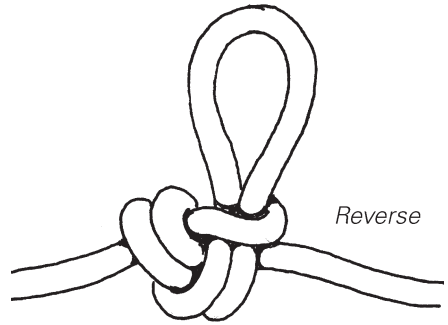
## Mountain Loop

Another simple knot that is secure and with a figure of eight style of tying which might appeal to climbers.





Face



Reverse

### Whitby Bowline

Tied very similar to the double bowline on a bight. When tying this knot make sure that after placing the single loop (Fig.2) when pulling the double loops, that the single loop pulls right down. This knot can be adjusted so that it looks like the drawing shown, and so that the double loops cross in the middle.

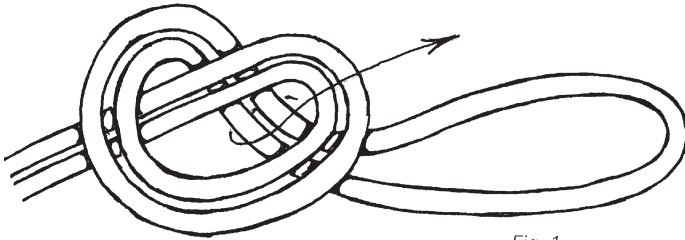


Fig. 1

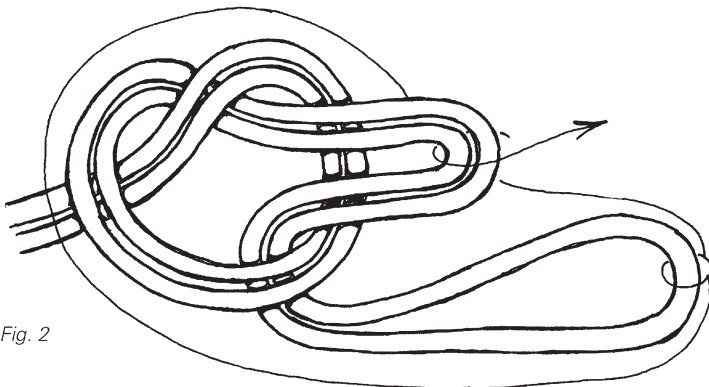
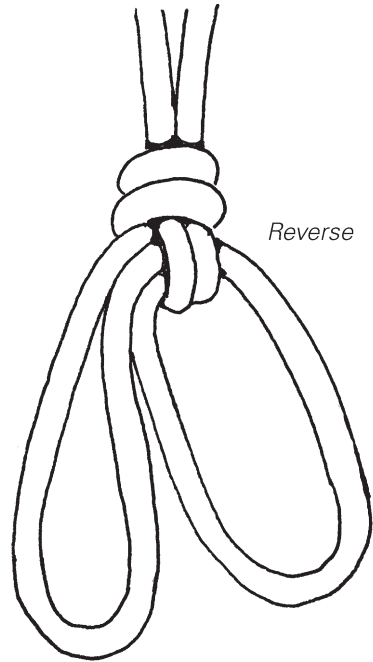
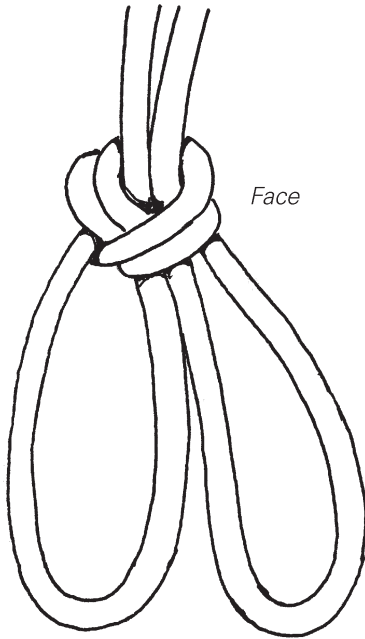


Fig. 2



Have fun tying and using them.

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## Knotmaster Series No. 22

*'Knotting ventured,  
knotting gained.'*

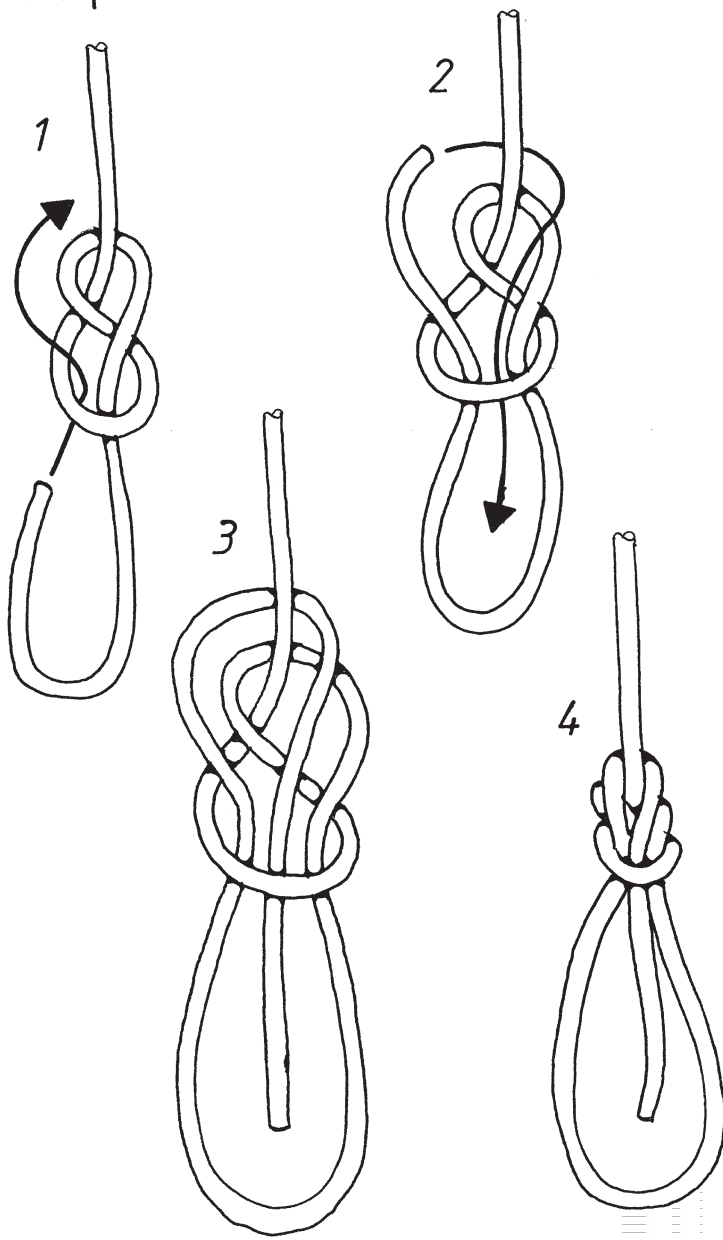
### **Compromise bowline**

There are scores of fixed loop knots, many of which are alternatives to the common bowline, but they often sacrifice elegance for ugly extra turns and tucks. This compromise - by Guild member Owen K. Nuttall, of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England - combines simplicity with reassuring grip and grasp. It was first published in issue No 67 (June 2000) of *Knotting Matters*.

Some distance from the end of the rope or cord, tie a figure eight knot (fig. 1). Bring the working end around to create a loop of the required size, then insert it into the knot just tied (fig. 2). Take the end around behind the standing part of the line and tuck it down through the lower compartment of the figure eight knot (fig. 3). Tighten (fig. 4).



# Compromise bowline



# The Six Lead by Four Bight Turks Head Knot

by Jesse Coleman

The six lead by four bight Turk's head knot is a two cord knot that is somewhat easy to tie because one cord may be laid down and the second cord woven through it. Thus, tying this knot is two easy steps instead of one more difficult task.

If two cords of contrasting colours are used to tie this knot, then the characteristic barber pole pattern is seen. Since the knot is rather long, the stripes go almost completely around the knot. As I write this, Christmas is a few weeks away and I tie the knot in bright red and green cords. The resulting knot is rather pretty.

The first cord is laid down according to figure 1. Notice that this resembles a 3L X 2B THK, but is not. This first cord follows an over two, under two pattern. I find it convenient to lay the first cord on a table and tack it down with tape.

The second cord is woven through the first cord according to figure 2, following the usual over/under pattern.

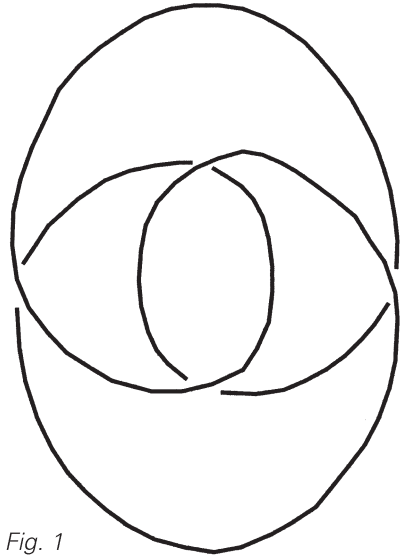


Fig. 1

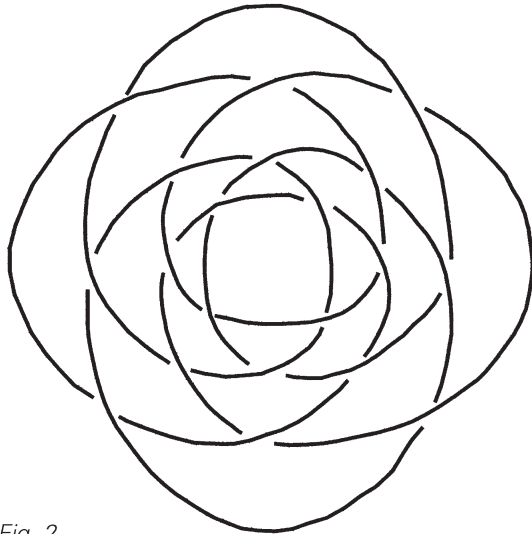


Fig. 2

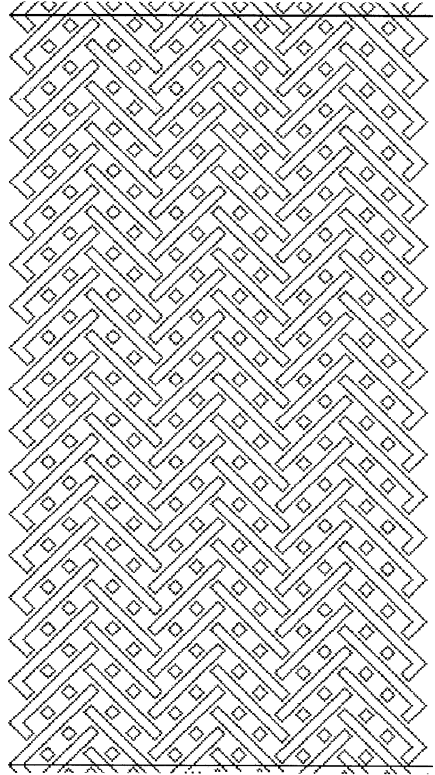
# The Head Hunter's Ring

by Derwent 'Tug' Shipp

Many years ago, I purchased *The Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Ropework* by Graumont and Hensel. Illustrated in this book is the Head Hunter's Ring (plate 286 fig 428) but its construction is not detailed. The only hint as to how it is tied is that the strand passes over three strands and under three strands. I have drawn the guide, which will enable the ring to be tied.

The method is as follows. Wrap the guide around a former to line up both the end lines. Note the former should be able to accept pins pushed into it. Start anywhere and wrap the cord round, pinning as you go, following the under and over sequence. Double or treble as required. Do not work up the ring at this stage. Slide the ring from the former onto the object to be decorated and work up the weave to tighten the construction. You can make the ring shorter or longer by turning back up before the bottom or by adding another copy of the guide below providing you follow the over three under three rule. Similarly to decrease or increase the diameter turn before the end or add further copies to one side, again observing the over three under three rule.

I published this guide in the newsletter of my branch of the Guild, the West Country knotters, and several members have tied the knot. Hope you have fun with this.



## ROPE ENDS

“Some have a flair for knotting and splicing.

To them I would say,  
Pass the good work on...

*Marline-Spike Seamanship*

by Leonard Popple (1946)

# The Hanson Patent Knot

reported by our UK stringer  
(and illustrated by GB)

**Patent:** *A grant from a government to a person or persons conferring for a certain definite time the exclusive privilege of making, using, or selling some new invention ... to the exclusion of other persons.*

(The Shorter O.E.D. of Historical Principles - 3rd edition, 1973)

The earliest known patent for an invention in England is dated 1449 and was granted by Henry VI to the makers of stained glass for Eton College. Since 1855 (when classified abridgements of UK Patents were first published) almost all patented knots have been for mechanisms - often complex - to do with automated net-making, sewing and weaving.

On December 8th 1987, however, the American inventor Alden W. Hanson, of Midland, Michigan, was awarded United States Patent Number 4,711,476 relating to:

*'A knot or bend for use with single or multiple lengths of material and comprising an overhand knot entwined with a crossing knot...'*

The patent document, consisting of some 5,000 words and 34 technical drawings, describes a single fixed loop (shown here in fig's 1 to 6), a sliding loop (fig's 7 to 10), a bend (fig's 11 & 12) and twin fixed loops (fig. 13).

Oddly, the patentee labels and names each and every sub-divided section of the knot layout after one or other of the

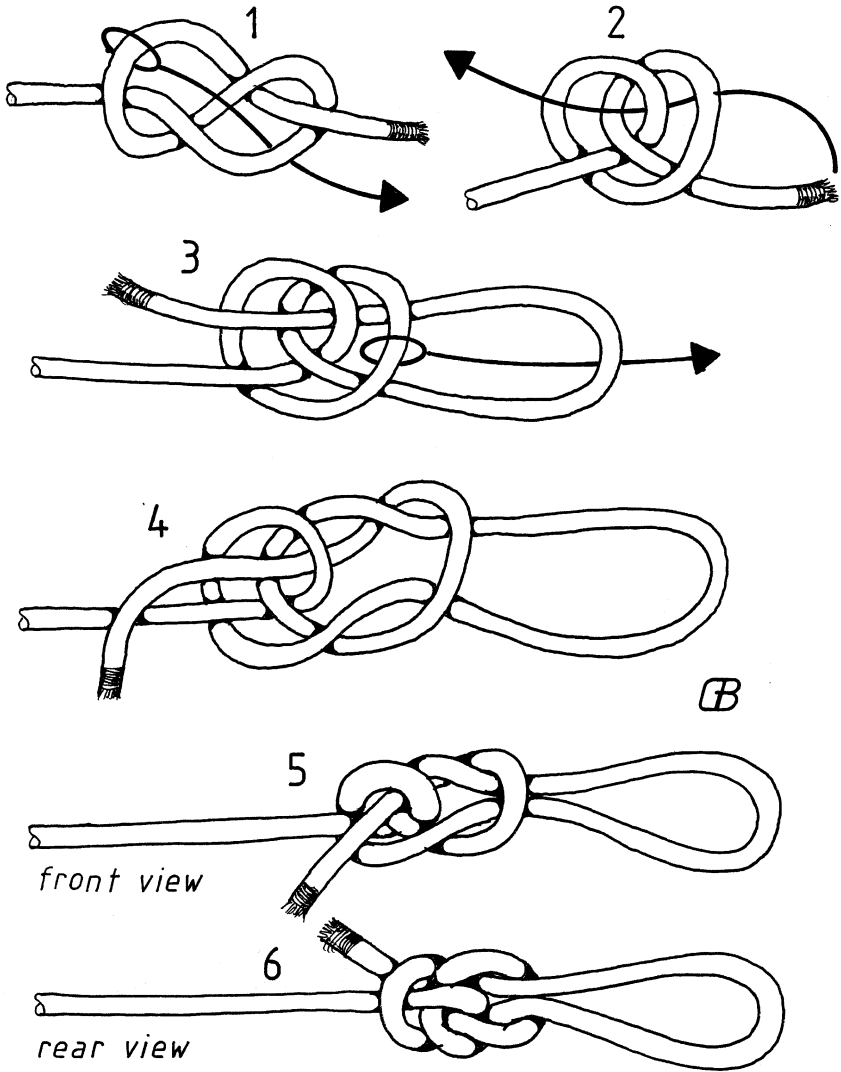
twelve vows taken by Boy Scouts. So, instead of the banal 'strand a goes over strand b and under strand c', readers are treated to such bizarre sentences as;

'The working end is passed under the segment Friendly and reeved upwardly through the bight Cheerful, and then is turned to parallel the section Clean and pass under the segment Thrifty to form the crossing knot Trustworthy.'

[For those unable to recall the other seven qualities of a Scout, all of which feature in this knot patent, they are: brave - courteous - helpful - kind - loyal - obedient - reverent.]

The US examiners had to search back to 1952 and 1957 (1961 in the UK) to find anything comparable, which suggests that patenting a knot for its own sake is rare in both nations. By granting the patent, they tacitly confirmed the patentee's belief that his knot is a discovery, since nothing that is not new may be patented. Yet to register the assertion in this way is as risky as playing leapfrog with a unicorn, because it is rare to be original with basic knotting. Then again, even if no proof emerges for an earlier existence, this knot may still fail to impress those who demand; 'So what?' and 'Who cares?'

According to the patentee his knot is practical, being secure but easily loosened and untied. Each version may be made as a mirror image of itself and further variations created by swapping

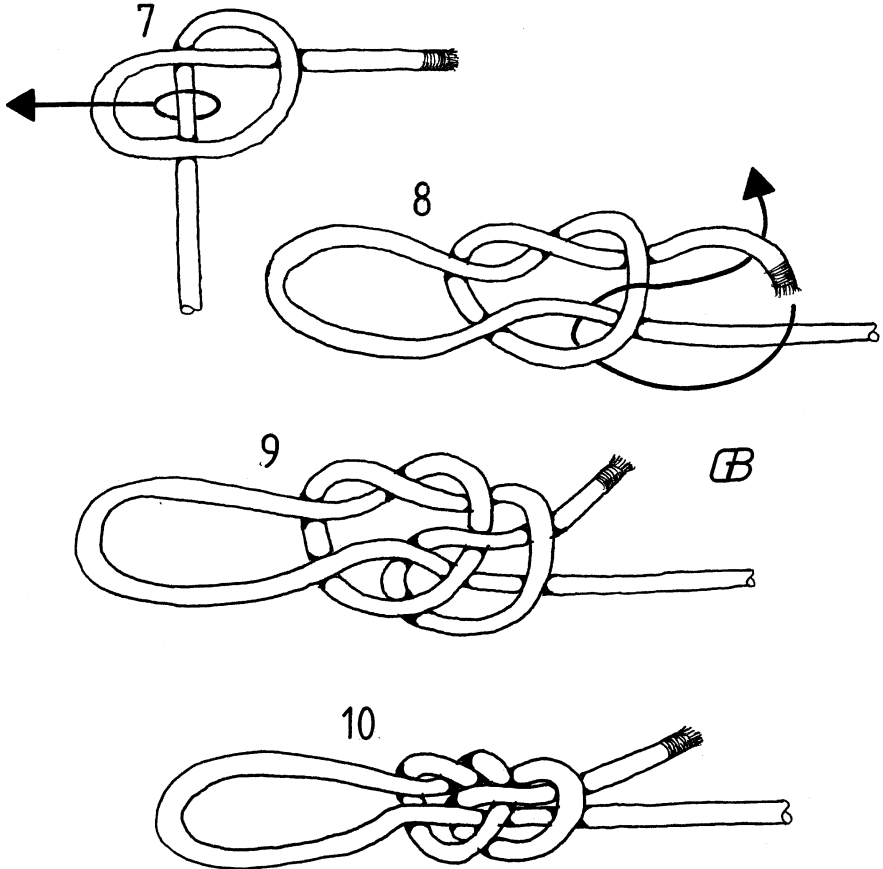


Hanson loop  
[fixed]

the working and standing ends. It is also, he suggests, decorative if tied in filaments of precious or semi-precious metals as a frog to adorn personal garments, or as an item of jewellery.

Nevertheless, why - I wonder - would anyone go to the trouble and expense of patenting a knot?

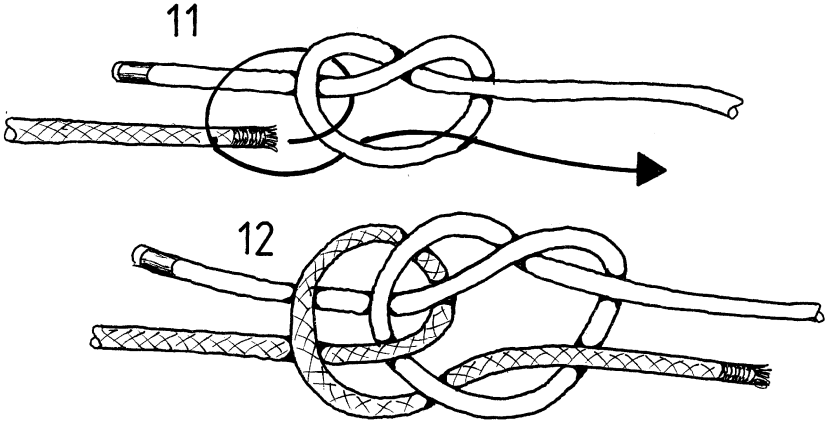
For two earlier reports of knots patented by individuals, see page 6 of



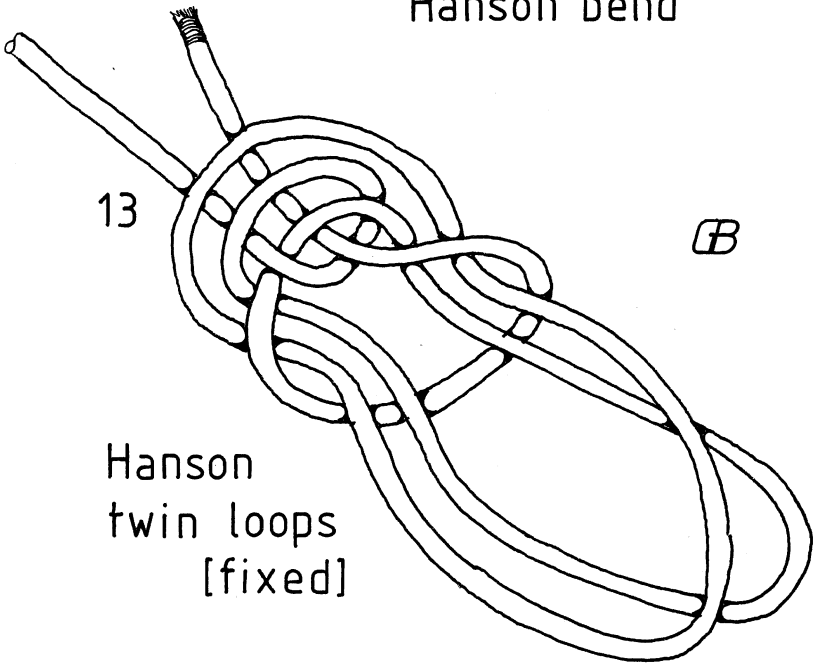
Hanson loop  
[sliding]

KM#6 (January 1984) and page 23 of  
KM#34 (January 1991). If anyone knows

of others, the editor of KM is keen to  
hear of them.



Hanson bend







# Knot Gallery



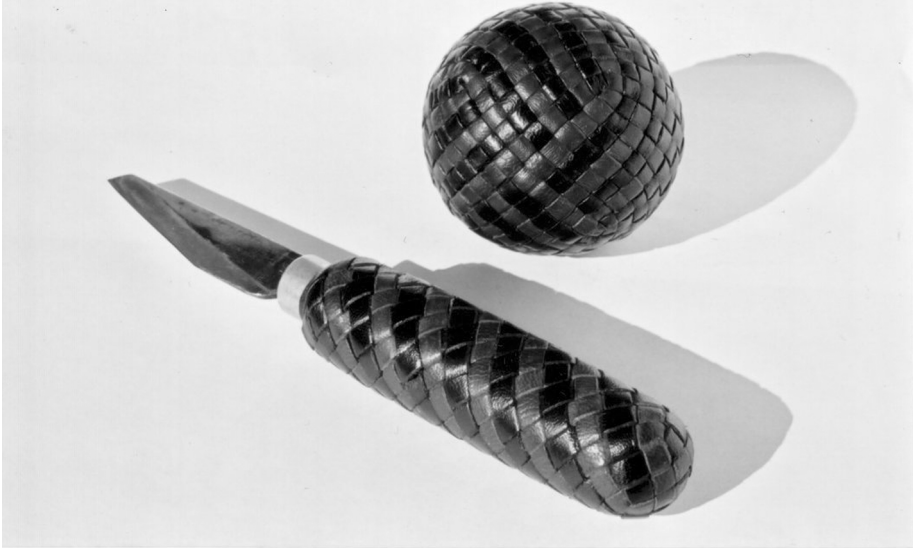
*Above - Another UK rope sculpture spotted by Geoffrey Budworth in the redeveloped bay area of Cardiff, Wales.*

*Facing - These covered bottles are made by cotton yarn - in Sweden it's called 12/24 yarn. Most of the bottles are macramé-work and one bottle is made by needle hitching. The corks are made by needle hitching or Turk's head - Ewa Thormählen*

*Overleaf - Two photographs taken by Don Burrhus at IGKT-NAB 2003. A sea chest with fine beckets and canvas work by Gary C Sessions, and a pair of intricate earrings by Supplies Secretary, Bruce Turley.*







*Above - The sphere is 55mm diameter Racquet Ball covered with two 13x12 interwoven spherical TH's. The trimming knife handle is covered with two interwoven 7x4 TH's. Covering is 4mm thong hand cut from Red Kangaroo hide. Jim Caswell*

*Below - They look like fenders, but in fact they are doorstops. Fenders crowned in manila and sizal around a core of lead sheet. Colin Grundy*

*Back cover - A "stem-table bell". The bow is of metal covered with braiding to the star knots then coach-whipping. Three 4L x 3B Turk's heads finish the stand. Peter Willems*





*A fine leather braided  
keyfob from the work of  
Geert 'Willey' Willaert*

# Square Knots and Plato's Forms

## Knot Tying and Dead Dog Platonism

By Dick Chisholm

*The Soul that rises with us, our life's  
Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we  
come  
From God, who is our home.*

William Wordsworth,  
"Ode: Intimations of Immortality"

As a sophomore in high school, long after I had mastered tying a square knot, I first encountered Platonic realism - in a somewhat attenuated version - in a course on plane geometry.

Mr. Dobbin, our teacher, explained that when he drew a triangle on the blackboard, he was merely trying to represent the real triangle. This was an ideal figure that had to be imagined existing about an inch out from the board, and it was perfect in every way. All of the theorems and proofs in geometry applied to that ideal triangle.

He explained that any triangle you draw or any that you see is merely a shadow of the real triangle that exists in the world beyond. He went on to say that for every physical object in this world, there is a real object in the world beyond, and the object that we perceive in this physical world is only an imitation of the real object.

Well, this explanation seemed to capture the imagination of Bobby Street, who sat next to me. He asked Mr. Dobbin about his dog. He wanted to know if there was a dog in heaven just like his own. Mr. Dobbin allowed that there was. It soon became apparent, though, that the dog in question had recently died, and that Bobby was really asking about his dead dog.

From Mr. Dobbin's reply, I understood that he believed that for every dog, of whatever breed, living or dead, there is an ideal dog, living or dead' in heaven. What an ideal dead dog would be, I couldn't imagine, but ever since then I have thought of Mr. Dobbin's mode of thinking about reality as "Dead Dog Platonism."

### A Square Knot Helps Students Understand Plato's Forms

Two years later, as a senior, when I read Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, I began to suspect that Plato's metaphysics might be somewhat more sophisticated than the concept of an ideal dead dog. Much later, when I began to teach Romantic poetry, I searched for a way to help students understand Plato's concepts: What are the Forms? How are they related to the phenomenal world and to our customary way of thinking about reality? How are they related to Plato's value system? To the Creation?

At that point I discovered that I could use an ordinary square knot tied in ordinary rope to make clear the concept of the Forms. These objects could help students move beyond Bobby's idea about his dog.

Tying square knots is a very old technique. Humans have probably tied them since the Old Stone Age, and they are even tied by primates. For such commonplace objects, they have unusual properties. They have numerous practical applications, from tying down a load. They were used as a symbol by ancient Egyptians and Romans and are used in this way today by Boy Scouts. So far as I know, nobody has previously described how to use a square knot to explain Plato's Form

Square knots are highly useful for teaching about the Forms. They are familiar and attractive objects that are typical of the ordinary physical things of this world, while at the same time they embody properties of the ideal world in ways that make the concept of the Forms almost self evident. They are also interesting enough to prompt questions about other aspects of Plato's philosophy.

### **What is a Square Knot?**

A square knot is usually described as the result of a process of tying two rope ends together, perhaps following the mnemonic "Right over left, then left over right." But for our purposes, we need to think of the essential property of the completed knot, which is its structure.

To designate a square knot, we can simply describe its distinctive structure segment by segment. The essential features are the semi-circular loops (or bights) at each end of the knot and the

tails that tuck once under each other and lie parallel to the standing parts. These characteristics distinguish a square knot from its four closest relatives, a granny knot, a thief knot, a surgeon's knot, and reversed half hitches (Ashley #2552) as well as from all other configurations of rope.

### **A Square Knot Typifies Objects of This World**

A square knot typifies Plato's (or anybody else's) concept of the things of this world because it is a concrete physical object you tie, hold in your hand, and use. A triangle, on the other hand, doesn't seem quite so physically present - so really there - as a square knot. A triangle you draw on a blackboard often seems to exist nowhere except on the blackboard.

My experience is that while a triangle can help a teacher make Platonic Forms understandable a square knot makes learning about the Forms memorable.

### **A Square Knot Embodies Properties of the Forms**

According to Plato's philosophy, to reach the highest understanding of reality, we must not confine our thoughts to things of this world, that is, to things that are known to the senses. We must see beyond physical appearances to develop the concept of Forms and the ultimate realities that exist in their ideal form in the realm beyond, and which are known only to the intelligence.

Plato's two central concepts are that every particular physical object is merely a shadow of an eternal Form and that only the Forms, which are the foundations of existence, are really real. I would guess that these ideas do not

immediately recommend themselves to the imagination of most students. They are apt to seem somewhat abstract, if not far fetched. Students need help in making the intellectual leap from everyday experience with physical objects to the concept of Platonic Forms. The square knot provides a secure means for making this leap with confidence.

At the introductory level of instruction in Plato’s philosophy, we put aside questions about the effect on a knot’s performance of environment, materials, and mechanics as well as the uses of a square knot and the various methods for tying them. We begin by considering only the structural aspects of the knot.

**The Contrasting Characteristics of the Two Realms**

In Plato’s view, any object of this world, such as a square knot tied in a piece of rope, is characterised by the terms in the first column below, which is the realm of Becoming. Its counterpart in the world of the Forms, such as the properties that each individual shares with all square knots, is characterised by terms in the second column, which is the realm of Being.

<b>Objects of This World</b>	<b>Forms of The Other World</b>
1. Particular	Universal
2. Time-bound	Timeless
3. Changeable	Unchanging
4. Imperfect	Perfect
5. Dependent	Independent
6. Illusory	Real

A square knot makes a good model for teaching Platonic concepts of reality

because it so clearly reveals aspects of both realms, the objects of this world and the Forms of the other world. On the one hand, it is easy to see that a square knot is a particular object that is bound by time, changeable, imperfect, and dependent on a person who ties it and on the materials it is tied in. To the eyes of all observers, it embodies every appearance and every property of ordinary reality.

On the other hand, a square knot so nearly resembles the ideal that students can perceive that its structure is universal, timeless, unchanging, perfect, and independent, and that for these reasons that it is more real than any particular knot.

**The Characteristics of Plato’s Forms**

Contemplating the structure of a square knot helps students understand all six of these characteristics of the Platonic Forms.

**1. Square Knot Structure is Universal**

Students can readily see the striking fact that the physical structure of any particular square knot is identical to that of all other square knots.

As for physical triangles, no two of them are ever identical. To specify the properties of a triangle, we have to determine the position of every point on its three sides, so that even a minute deviation from the specified lines makes any particular triangle different from all other triangles. Because the number of points that you have to line up is infinite, the chance of creating two identical ones is infinitesimal.

In contrast, we specify the structure of a square knot by the relative position of each segment. No two square knots are



likely to be identical point by point, but when specified segment by segment, their structures are identical. This sameness of structure makes it possible for us to develop the concept square knot, and to name all examples of it “square knots.”

This identity between all square knots suggests that their structure is universal, which is a property of the Forms.

## **2. Square Knot Structure is Timeless**

In a similar way, it is easy to see that each square knot tied today has a physical structure identical to that of the first square knot ever tied and of all the subsequent ones. We can look at an individual knot and see that it embodies this same structure, which does not evolve or go through developmental stages.

This property suggests that square knot structure is timeless, which is an attribute of Plato’s Forms.

## **3. Square Knot Structure is Unchanging**

It is also a striking fact that no change in the structure of any square knot is possible without changing its identity. A square knot can be tied either loosely or snugly in any kind of cordage, so that while some of its physical characteristics may be altered, its structure remains the same. The description given above defines the limits. If you alter the configuration in any way, you might create one of its close relatives, but not a square knot. No square knot can be degraded or made worse and remain a square knot. Any configuration of cordage is either an unaltered square knot or not a square knot at all.

This invariable structure of square knots suggests that it is unchanging or permanent, a further attribute of the Forms.

## **4. Square Knot Structure is Perfect**

No particular square knot can be improved. Any example of it fulfils the specifications entirely and perfectly. No matter how many times I practice tying a square knot, the product does not become better, and it cannot become any more of a square knot. Even the President of the International Guild of Knot Tyers cannot tie a better one. In contrast, a triangle does not exemplify perfection quite so well. Any triangle you draw is an imperfect approximation of the ideal, not a perfect triangle. The lines in any triangle you draw are never quite straight and the angles are never quite exact. It is always possible to make it a better triangle.

By the perfection of their structure, square knots manifest a further attribute of the Forms.

## **5. Square Knot Structure is Independent**

While the structure of a square knot is present in all physical square knots, it does not depend for its existence on any particular knot or on any person who ties it. It is the same square knot whether it was tied today or ten thousand years ago and whether it was tied by a jungle gorilla or by a Chief Boatswain’s Mate.

This independence of square knot structure from any particular physical object or any agent is a further attribute of the Platonic Forms.

## **6. Square Knot Structure is Real**

The final attribute of a square knot is at once its most fundamental characteristic and the most difficult to understand. The structure of a square knot has a real existence of its own in a realm beyond sense perception. All particular square knots that we tie are derived from this structure and share in its characteristics, but they are mere

appearances, shadows, or illusions. The structure in the reealm beyond is the actual one

A distinguishing attribute of the Platonic concept of reality is the idea that the Forms actually exist. They are real entities, not mere intellectual concepts or figments of the imagination. All the properties of any particular square knot derive from the square knot Form.

### **Can Recognising these Properties Lead Students to Platonic Realism?**

Analysing these six properties of the structure of a square knot and clearly distinguishing the structure of the knot from its physical properties help us to raise the question about its reality.

Contemplating these aspects of a square knot does not lead inevitably to Plato's concept of the really real but it can stimulate the search for a solution. With the help of this example, students can make out a path to Plato's explanation, which was, of course, the existence of the Forms. Following this analysis does not require any great stretch of the imagination or philosophical sophistication. The example of the square knot may not convince the sceptical, but it makes the concept clear and the inquiry seem sensible.

After students have analysed the ontological status of a square knot, they can be led to see that the six properties of a square knot also pertain to all knots and to all other objects. Students can begin to understand what it means to say that the Forms are the ground of all reality and that objects of this world mislead us because they are but partial embodiments of the Forms and because

we perceive them only through unreliable senses.

When students see that the structural properties of a square knot do not depend on the existence of any individual knot, nor on any physical or mental activity, they are well on the road to understanding Plato's concept of the Forms and seeing that it was reasonable for him to posit the theory. They may even perceive Wordsworth's trailing clouds of glory.

### **Square Knots and Plato's Ethics**

Mr. Dobbin's lecture on the ideal triangle concluded with the notion that there is a universal reality. Plato's philosophy did not end there but went on to link the realm of existence to a higher realm, the realm of value. Once again, the square knot provides a means for grasping Plato's concept by illustrating the way that values are tied to the theory of the Forms. With the help of this knot, students can see the relation between Plato's ontology and his ethics.

#### **1. Square Knots Provide a Standard of Utility**

In Plato's view, everything in the world has a purpose. It is not just good in the abstract but good for something. Because square knots are used for such diverse practical purposes, they manifest utility in many ways.

Square knots are extremely useful tools for sailors aboard square-rigged vessels, who use them for reefing sails, that is, tying them up temporarily to reduce the area of sail in high winds. Then, when the winds become calmer, they yank on the tail of the knot, the knot deforms and comes apart, and the sail unfurls. This manoeuvre is one of the marvels of maritime technique

In sharp contrast with this technique, if a square knot is used to join two free ropes in sports such as rock climbing, it can be extremely dangerous, and for the same reason that makes it so useful for sailors. If the knot deforms and fails while bearing life or load, it can precipitate a disaster. In the first use, the knot's instability is a virtue, in the second, a liability. The contrast between these two assessments of one characteristic of a square knot makes it easy for students to understand Plato's view that the value and excellence of an object can depend on its use.

## **2. Square Knots Symbolise Growth toward Maturity**

Use of knots presupposes a degree of mastery of the technique. Learning to tie your shoes with a double bowknot, which is a square knot that has sprouted wings, has come to symbolise a child's entry into the adult world. Tying this knot is one of the proudest accomplishments of childhood and among the simpler graces of adulthood. In this potent symbol of the growth to maturity, students can observe practical utility serving as a measure of value.

The structure of a standard bowknot distinguishes it from a granny bow. The difference is easy to spot. The tails and bows of a double bowknot lie parallel to the standing part in the same way as the tails in a simple square knot. In striking contrast, the tails and bows of a granny bow emerge at right angles to the standing part.

Usually during Kindergarten or the first grade, children learn to tie a proper double bowknot that will keep their shoes laced up all day. So important is this skill that even some one-armed persons have mastered a way to tie their own shoes. Nevertheless, children are to

be seen clomping down the hallway or the street with their shoelaces flapping. The reason is that they have not tied a double bowknot but a granny bow.

Among my acquaintances are three adults who have never learned to tie their shoes in the usual way with a double bowknot, so their shoelaces often come untied. These persons include, remarkably, a shoe salesman in a well-known department store, a cross-country bicyclist, and a leader in sports education. Some people cope with this deficiency by tying a granny bow, then adding another half knot on top. Tied that way, the knot is inconvenient to adjust, and it displays none of the elegant simplicity of the standard knot. Those who never learned to tie a double bowknot probably can't tie other knots either, an inability that limits activities that rely on knot-tying skill, such as mountaineering, sailing, and fishing.

By observing the interaction between utility and value in a double bowknot and the development of personal skill in tying it, students can come to understand the interconnectedness of Plato's system.

## **3. Square Knots Symbolise Spiritual and Moral Values**

In Plato's scheme of things, understanding the ontological status of the Forms and the utility of objects are only preliminary steps toward approaching the realm of the values that Plato most esteemed, Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.

Square knots often appear as images in art because of their simple and beautiful classic form induces a positive aesthetic response. They have been illustrated in world art for thousands of years and today are displayed in numerous media, from a knot board at a

Navy recruiting centre to the networks in Celtic interlace and decorations on gift parcels.

Square knots have been used to represent values and meanings beyond the pragmatic and the aesthetic. For ancient Egyptians, the square knot symbolised the political unity of Upper and Lower Egypt. In ancient pictures of the figure Hercules and in images on heraldic badges during the late Middle Ages, square knots symbolised heroic values. For the Boy Scouts, the square knot has come to symbolise honour and achievement. So powerful is its appeal that ability to tie it has become a shibboleth. Students can understand something of the nature of Plato's system of values by inquiring why the square knot was chosen to represent these diverse values.

### **Tying a Square Knot Simulates the Act of Creation**

Tying a square knot can even be used to dramatise Plato's concept of God and the creation of the world. Plato's concept of the creator God was significantly different from the all-powerful God of some types of Biblical theology, who created the world out of nothing, by divine fiat. Plato thought of God more as an architect who built the world out of existing materials.

Students can come to understand Plato's view of the creative God by simulating this act of creation. Let a length of rope stand for Chaos or unformed Matter, and let the structure of the square knot stand for Form. By tying a square knot in the rope, the knot tyer is imposing Form on lower-order matter. Tying a square knot with this analogy in mind, a student can consciously

participate in a model of the Creation itself.

### **Square Knots Lead to Further Questions**

Studying Platonic aspects of square knots can lead students to greater understanding of the fundamental aspects of Plato's philosophy, but it can also open up areas for further contemplation and speculation.

1. Did the Form of the square knot exist before there was a physical square knot (a Realist or Platonic view), or did the examples exist first, and we merely generalise about their similarities (an empirical, Aristotelian, Nominalist, or existentialist view)? Does essence precede existence, or existence precede essence? What is your view? How did you arrive at it?

2. Did the first person-or animal-who tied a square knot invent its structure? Or did he discover it? Was it there all along, ready to be discovered, like the planetary structure of an atom or the double helix of DNA? Or was it created by the first act of tying? If it was invented, how do you account for the identical structures of all square knots and the repeated invention of exactly the same structure? If it was discovered, what was its ontological status before it was discovered; that is, where did it exist, and in what form?

3. In Plato's scheme of things, would there be a Form for each individual knot? Or for the individual structures of knots (bights, parallel strands, tucks, and so on)?

4. How can tying and untying a square knot help us understand characteristic 6, the relation between illusion and reality? Where was the knot before you tied it? Where does it go when you untie it?

Where does Grandma's lap go when she stands up?

5. You can loosen a square knot and distort the bights and the parallel strands only to a degree before it ceases to be a square knot and becomes another knot, or no knot at all. How much deformation can a square knot undergo before it is transformed to something else? How would a mathematical topologist think of this change from a square knot to, say, reversed half hitches?

6. Knotters often think of a granny knot as a poorly-tied or imperfect square knot. In the Platonic scheme, is a granny knot a faulty square knot?

7. Can concepts of Platonic Realism help us understand physical knots? By drawing attention to knot structures, would a Platonic analysis help climbers, cavers, and rescue personnel deal more safely with knotted ropes?

8. How would Plato have understood the effect on a square knot's performance of environment, materials, and mechanics? How would a Platonic view of reality affect the various methods for tying knots?

## No Better Object

The square knot provides an excellent object for helping students understand Plato. It also helps them understand the numerous philosophers, artists, and poets who wrote footnotes to Plato. These characteristics of a square knot are, of course, properties shared by every object, triangles included, but in a square knot, they are more manifest, more accessible, more unambiguous, and more interesting to contemplate. While analysing a triangle can intimate the concept of the Forms, a square knot actually seems to embody the Form

itself, and not merely in some abstract or theoretical way, but in an object that is closely related to what we customarily think of as physical reality. And the square knot can help students see that there is a good deal more to Platonic realism than prototypes of dogs, either living or dead.

In *The Compleat Angler*, Izaak Walton quotes a comment by Dr. William Boteler (or Butler) about the strawberry: "Doubtless God could have made a better berry," he observed, "but doubtless God never did." Paraphrasing Boteler, we can say that for teaching Plato's concepts, doubtless God could have made a better object than the square knot, but doubtless God never did.

A square knot has uses beyond the ordinary tasks such as tying up a parcel. In my Republic, everyone would study this utilitarian device. It may help them emerge from a dark cave.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the numerous suggestions and the continued support of Ray Perkins, Herb Otto, David Haight, and John Strang, all of the Department of Philosophy, Plymouth State University, as well as the advice and counsel of Jean Chisholm, Geoffrey Chisholm of New York City, Laura and Dan Saddler of Portland, Oregon, and Genevieve Tomlinson and David Braun of Bellevue, Washington.

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An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual conference of the Northern New England Philosophy Association at Saint Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire, October 22, 1999.

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# Cover the End

by Roy Chapman

There is an almost unbearable desire to cover every surface with knots or hitches. Fortunately all those around me have been spared by my lack of a Turk's head with a perfectly closed end. Alas. They are now doomed. After meeting Pat Ducey I began working with his fascinating cruciform, pear and chalice form single strand Turk's heads. It is amazing how far you can see when you stand on someones shoulders. Why not tie a flat mat and a cylindrical Turk's head combined to create a closed, flat end on your Turk's head? I started with ABOK #2390 as my flat mat, giving three central bights and six rim bights. I chose a 5Lx6B Turk's head. Writing of complex Turk's heads CWA says, in ABOK #1397, "An easy way to build up elaborate knots of this sort is to cut the

bights of several knots and then tie the ends of the cords together to form a single large knot. When completed, substitute a single cord for the knotted cord. However, unless care is observed, more than one cord will be required." After proving the "However" to myself several times I finally arrived at the knot shown in the accompanying diagram. This is the briefest form I could find. Working the knot is slower than cylindrical Turk's heads. I found it helpful to put it on the intended foundation as soon as I took it off the pin board. I don't find quite as much leeway in "adjusting" the fit as you would with a square Turk's head. Using the idea of a flat mat end on a six bight knot it can be stretched to any of the six bight knots (following the "Law of the Common

Divisor”). To do that I found it easiest to tie this knot as a “clue”. I do this by placing it on a cardboard tube and putting six bight pins beyond the clue for seven, 11 or more leads then drawing the leads on the tube with a marking pen. Now I have almost no limit to the things I can cover with a single strand Turk’s head. Think of bicycle handlebar grips! Sweat free drinking glasses! Needle cases! I hesitate to think where this may lead. What will happen if I “raise” my knot the way other Turk’s heads are expanded? What will happen if I use other flat mats from ABOK Chapter 30? Will I create oval bottomed baskets? Will my obsession become an addiction?

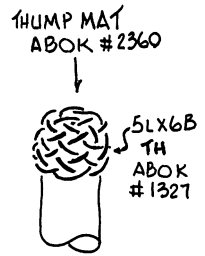
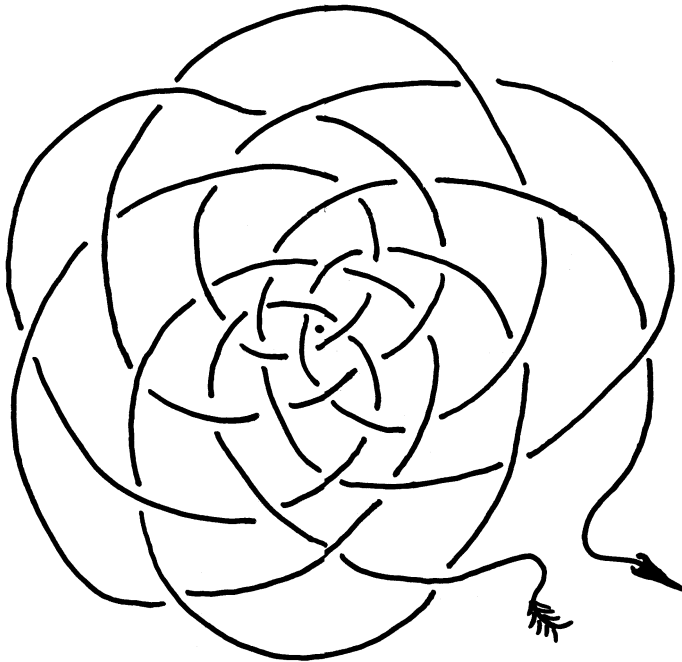
Two pieces of string were on a pub crawl along Edinburgh’s Rose Street They had nearly made it from one end to the other, there was just one pub to go.

The pieces of string were noisy rowdy drunks and immediately annoyed the barman when they came crashing through the door of the tavern. Ignoring their call for a pint he told them in no uncertain terms - “We dina serve pieces of string here, get oot”

Regrouping outside, one of the stringy duo ruffled his longish hair into a rightful mess and marched back inside - “Two beers please,” he asked politely.

The barman eyed him suspiciously - “you look like that piece of string I just chucked out”

Shaking his new hairdo the other replied “No, I’m a frayed knot”



# Knot Tales

by Gino Pietrollini

*A thief who had stolen a cow was led in front of a judge and accused of the theft. The thief justified himself saying, "When on earth I am become a cattle thief? I have seen a rope on the road, I took and carried it to my house. The cow that was hitched followed me her own free will."*

## The murder of Matthew Walker?

The Matthew Walker knot in the Italian language is: *piede di pollo per corridore* = foot of chicken for walker (runner or similar).

If the knot is invented by Matthew Walker, why in Italian the name changes? In the French language is the same: *noeud de ride*.

In the Italian language is also: *nodo per bigotta, manico per tinozza, nodo d'arresto*. The Italian word *mezzo* (half) heard by an English maybe written Matthew.

Maybe the name is originated from a bad transmission (or translation) between sailors of different nations. After some people wrote it with capital letters making (or inventing) a man. This is only a hypothesis, I don't want to kill Matthew Walker.

In Australia I have read: Jamieson (Jameson), supa mart (super market), ti-tree (tea-tree), dip (deep), cheepaa (cheaper), eagleby (eagle bay), allea

(alley), tarace (terrace), land 4 sale (land for sale), atcherley (at Charley), hilanders (highlanders), snak (snack), ton (town), dauntaun (downtown).

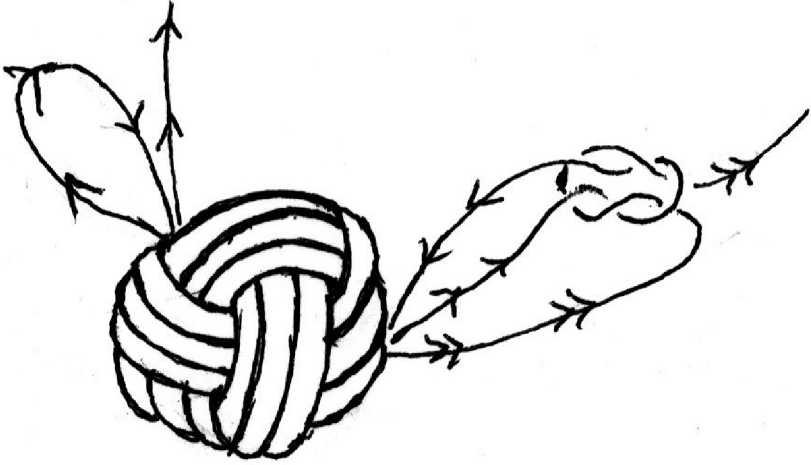
## Monkey's Fists

I reply to Sten Johansson *KM62* p21. I found in George Devillers

*Manuale di Arte Marinaresca* 1977, Italian edition, for Monkey fist knot the name: Pigna per Alzanella. In the French edition is: Pomme de Touline (from the English throw and line). In the Spanish language is: Pina de cabo de guia. All this names in English may be: pine, pinecone (or apple) for mooring, or throwing line. Many Italian seamen call it (may be) wrong: "nodo sacchetto", but this name is referred to a little sack fill of sand, now often used instead of the knot. Only an old seaman says me: *Nodo di Salomone* (Salomon's knot). For the time being I have not see this name in a book. It seems that Italian seamen make the knot putting (or burying) an end in the knot. I have tied a monkey fist knot indissoluble. After tying a monkey fist knot send a bight of a working end to the other side, near the other and tie an overhand knot. Bury this knot in the monkey fist before tightening it. When the two knots are tightened cut the working ends. It is better to sign the direction of the two bight as shown in the drawing.

The workers of Telecom make an eye in galvanised wire with a particular



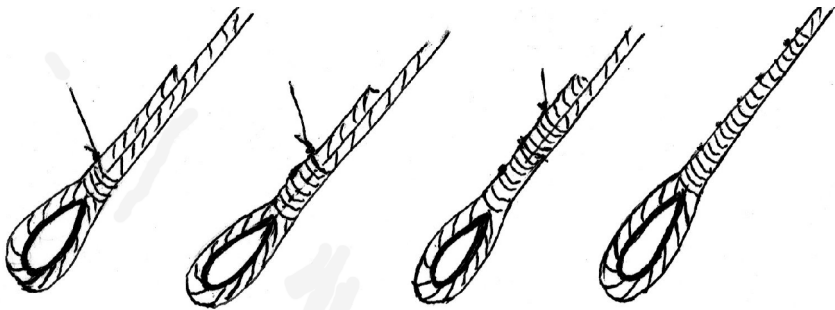


whip. They fold the wire rope for about 50 cm and put a thimble, after take one wire and whip the 2 ropes. When the wire is at the end, they use pliers to twist it with another wire. They cut the long wire and draw the twist on the ropes. After they take another wire and whip the two ropes covering the twist. When the wire is at the end they twist it using pliers with another wire. They follow to the end of wires, meanwhile the whip decreases. This eye is used for the links of the poles to anchor to the ground.

### Interesting Museum

In Italy, in the Navy Arsenal of La Spezia (via Amendola, closely at the main gate) there is a Naval Museum. At the first floor in the room of naval rigging there is an interesting exhibition of boating and sailing knots and other. No books on the knots are available.

In Marina di Camerota, a little town in the province of Salerno (Campania-Italy), since to 1960 were handmade rough ropes. The fibres were taken from "erba sparta" (*lygeum spartum*, *graminaceous*). The ropes were used for tunny-fishing nets and mussel farming.



# A Knot-Tier's Story

by Rudi Petschek

Throughout my youth my knowledge of knots was pathetic, limited to the overhand knot and the granny knot. I was an adult by the time someone told me to reverse my granny's second half-knot to convert it into a more reliable square knot. The improvement from such a simple change was impressive.

My first defining experience in knot tying occurred in college and involved animal surgery in the physiology lab. Professor Leslie Bennett explained and demonstrated the merits of the surgeon's knot. It seemed so simple and basic—just adds a tuck to each of the square knot's half knots to increase friction and security. Again I was impressed with the improvement from such a simple change.

Regrettably, in explaining the knot, Professor Bennett had told us that this was the best knot. Surely he must have meant best for the purpose, but I was too ignorant at the time to grasp this subtlety. All he said was best, and I believed my excellent professor implicitly.

I felt empowered by knowing the best knot. I relied on it for years and it never failed me until 15 years later, already in my forties, I became a white water guide on the Colorado River. The first time I rowed a boat through Grand Canyon and two weeks into the trip, we camped at River Mile 202 where the low water had exposed a wide beach. It turned out my boat's painter was too short to reach the tie-up. No problem, I thought at the time,

I have an extension and I know a good knot. In fact, I know the best knot.

I extended my boat's rope with a length of flat nylon webbing, joining them with a surgeon's knot, of course. I confidently went to sleep and woke up to discover that this was not, after all, the best knot for the purpose. Rising water overnight had floated the boat and tugged at the knot, eventually untying it and floating my boat into the river's current as I slept so unsuspectingly. The vessel meandered downstream through two major rapids, unattended and unscratched, before being pulled ashore and secured by good Samaritans. A note explaining the rescue ended, "... I finally got serious about learning knots.

Upon scrutinising books at a marine store I stumbled upon Ashley's *Book of Knots* and realised at once that I was not ready to glean useful information from this vast encyclopaedia that includes weak, insecure, and impractical knots along with their more desirable counterparts. Ashley would have to wait, I told myself, until I had enough basic knowledge to tackle it profitably. After two idle years on my bookshelf, ABOK finally became a constant companion and inspiration to many fulfilling knot projects.

In two decades of rowing the 273 river miles through Grand Canyon for a distance equivalent to the Equatorial circumference, I never again lost my boat to an improperly tied knot.

# Branch Lines

## Meeting at Bremen Vege sack

On behalf of Peter Willems here follows the oversight of our meeting at Bremen Vege sack on 7th - 9th May. Leaving home on Friday morning in a terrible rainstorm, which lasted all day. After five hours drive we arrived at our destination. A fine example of a sailing-vessel *The Deutschland*, a training ship

of 1320 tons, where we would stay aboard

At 2 o' clock we went visiting the rope-factory of Gleistein. Very modern and making all the new sort of ropes used today and including the natural materials of days-past like hemp and manila. The explanations were straight to the point and clear. We liked the splicing lesson with braided rope and eye fixing. Loaded with information we left to set up our exhibition in the shopping centre opposite the training ship, all very shining and enormous. We had food in the restaurant on the quayside with our international group of 11 members from five countries with their wives and children. They were Peter Willems (organiser), the family Luiten, Fusi Tybor, the family Boeving, fam Karl Bayreuther, fam Gerd Heinrich, fam Jurgen Schwalm, Dick Hollander and me





Jan Hoefnagel, fam Yon, Anna Ekdahl with their delightful puzzles and a hammock-maker

Next morning we had a good breakfast with plenty coffee and then directly out from the galley aboard after which we went to our places in the shopping centre. All day we had plenty visitors and in the evening some colour local in the form of a birthday party on the training-ship with an active drummer, who gave examples of his ability of making ear shattering noise until after midnight that made sleeping impossible but we survived. Sunday at 1600 we left after saying good-bye.

It was a delightful meeting and we were glad we went to Vegesack and we thank Peter for his well-cared organisation and will be present at his next one at Lubeck next year?

*Jan Hoefnagel*

## Pacific Americas Branch

We did it! We have a big beautiful Branch and now we have one each of a new President, Secretary, joint Treasurers and confirmation of our acting Librarian, and we have two Board members (Joe and myself) to help hold it all together, all in one weekend of fun and frivolity in beautiful, bare Bellingham, WA. Not that we were bare, you understand - more explanation later, perhaps! Bellingham, Washington is a rather lovely port in northern Washington State in the extreme Northwest of the United States of America. The port is host to the ferry terminal that takes hundreds of travellers to and from Alaska and Canada and intervening islands and islets every week. We believed that there would be hundreds of travellers but we were wrong! The members who did turn out (24 brave souls, members, spouses and all) outnumbered the visitors on many hours by a large margin for the entire weekend. Not to worry, because we had a very wonderful time with all of our members, as well we held a simultaneous event at the Newport Harbor Nautical Museum in California at which we were blessed by our members Tom Mortell and Joe Soanes in attendance, who saw and entertained several hundred visitors!

Our new President is the highly accomplished knotter and writer, Roy Chapman (see his writings in *Knot News*, *KM* and below), our new Secretary is Pat Ducey who specialises in Turk's Heads of a cruciform shape and is now working on knotted chess pieces, our joint Treasurers are Dan Callahan of the Knot Museum fame and his co-Alaskan friend and metalworker, wire splicer and blacksmith new member George Pollitt.

Rounding out our troupe is former acting and now confirmed official Librarian, the indomitable Jose Hernandez-Juviel, a rigger and biologist who took the time to teach George how to perform the Liverpool Splice at our Bellingham weekend under the admiring gaze of one Brion Toss, of rigging fame. The talent at our weekend was absolutely staggering! We brought with us over 400 years of collective knotting, rigging, wire and fibre-working expertise to show off to ... a sometimes-bare hall!

So what went wrong? Was it even wrong? We consider that we had a great weekend with a visit to Samson Ropes, a visit to Puget Sound Ropes, a formidable chandlery visit, rope tales everywhere, sea-shanty singing, Marc Chardon and his daughter Marie (Marc, you may remember, is the grandson of Clifford Ashley) visited with us, Brion visited and talked with us, we got to show off our great collections of everything from Chinese knotting and split-ply braiding through ditty bags that make you cry with their elegance (thank you Gary and Barbara for visiting from Texas!) to the varied collection that Roy has put together in the form of a museum-quality collection that rivals our own! However, to appreciate the enormous talent, it takes advertising and people who appreciate the quality of our collective works. We had at least 24 of them, but we are rather greedy and want to share that selection with hundreds of others, so that the skills are not lost on this world. Was the venue wrong? Not with a putative potential of hundreds of visitors! Was the timing wrong? There was a soccer tournament that weekend, and a flying display, and a classic car display....! Normally I might think of that as collecting potential viewers and

participants rather than dissipating them. So was our expectation wrong? Admittedly there has to be some motivation on the part of folks we would like to share our passion with, other than through posters around town. Would I do it again? In a heartbeat! Better luck next time or maybe fewer displayers and a more productive venue? What would you do, if anything, differently? Write and let me know, do! I was happy, our members were happy and incoming President Roy Chapman was happy! Meantime, Joe and Tom also did very well, so I am definitely not complaining.

On to other areas of interest... Roy has put together this letter on behalf of the new Branch officers:

### **Greetings from the new Branch president, Roy Chapman.**

“Our June AGM, in Bellingham Washington, was a great success! It was wonderful to have so many members in the same place at the same time! We realise that is one of the routine joys for many other Branches, but it is a rare treat for us in the PAB. Now that I have met Lindsey face-to-face, I can tell you that his feet don't look very big but that filling his presidential shoes will be very daunting. We also installed our new secretary, Patrick Ducey. We created a co-treasurer position, with Dan Callahan and George Pollitt serving together. We confirmed acting Librarian Jose Hernandez-Juviel as our official librarian. Now that our new officers are spread across 3400 miles of the Pacific coast, we really feel that we are the Pacific Americas Branch! One of the necessary changes will be to hold our monthly meetings and AGM in a chat-room & telephone conference call

environment. We anticipate some teething pains for the first few months. The bright side is that we are moving forward with many more shows and displays, wider member participation, more opportunities for expanded public exposure and a well-earned rest for our former officers. Joe Schmidbauer will continue as the most excellent editor of our paper *Knot News* (welcoming contributions now from all quarters). I personally will have been dragged, kicking and screaming into the current century (hard to run a chat room meeting if I don't get internet access?) but will still continue my pen and ink contributions to *Knot News* and *Knotting Matters*.

Our two day show at the AGM was a success with continuing demonstrations of Chinese Knotting by Carol Wang, wire rope splicing by Jose Hernandez-Juviel, split strand braiding from Maggie Machado and coachwhipping from Dennis Armstrong. Brion Toss delivered an engaging talk on rope making and the changes which modern materials have brought to our craft [or which our craft can give to modern ropes]. This dovetailed nicely with the two tours of local rope making facilities on Friday. Our venue at the cruise terminal was excellent and the Port Authority personnel most helpful. We might have wished for more public walk-through traffic since the rotunda isn't in a direct line from ticket to boat. The many visitors who came in spent far more time with us than they would have if rushing to catch their sailing. Most guests ended up coming directly to the event, due to advertising or word of mouth with some coming back to us after their harbour tour or island trip. Our raffle also did quite well [and our thanks

to all our contributors!]. Many guests expressed interest in membership, further involvement in knotting and more than a few left with the distracted look of a person planning a project and dreaming a dream.

We are anticipating a very good show at the "Fall Fisherman's Festival" in Ballard, Washington on September 11th. We also will have a presence at the Wooden Boat Festival in Port Townsend, Washington the same weekend. The California folks will have opportunities to display at the Tall Ships Festival on September 11th and 12th as well as at the Cabrillo Aquarium Fall Festival October 24th.

Lastly, I am investigating the possibility of having cast brass belt buckles made displaying the Guild logo. When I ask "How much?" the first question the foundryman asks is "How many?" Well, I know that I want one! However, I am not going to proceed if there is no market interest. If you have any interest please let me know and suggest a fair market price. I see little point in making any \$300 buckles! Also, if you do cast work yourself or have contacts in the trade I would like to talk with you about this project.

**Roy S. Chapman**  
**President, IGKTPAB**

Thanks Roy and *Bonne chance!* - that's all that I have for now, except to say that this weekend I am going to join 38 other souls for a two-week trip aboard the brig *Pilgrim* sailing up the Santa Barbara coast of California to visit that most excellent town on a good will visit, our first in two years and our first since we installed the new mast! Square-rig sailing is a most excellent sport and we

are looking forward to a great time - news next time!

*Lindsey Philpott  
IPP, IGKTPAB*

## West Country Knotters

In March we held our 9th AGM. At this annual meeting we look back on the year and also forward to the next

One event, which we reviewed, took place in September 2003. The branch took part in a local fair, The Keynsham Craft Fair. Several members made items for sell and Richard Hopkins, Ken Bird and Tug Shipp ran the stall on the day. Although many people stopped and spoke to us and we gave out a lot of information on the branch and the Guild, commercially the day was not a success. We sold very few items and without Ken's generous payment of the cost of the stall we would have made a loss. This led us to reflect on the notion of making items and the general public's appreciation of hand made goods. Can we get realistic prices for the items we make cognisance with the work involved?

The guest speaker at our AGM meeting was Tony Fisher, who until recently was President of the New Zealand 'chapter' of the IGKT. Tony is a highly

skilled rigger and accomplished educator who has spent much of his working life up masts, antennae and cranes. He talked to us about his life and also demonstrated a practical way of doing a short splice in a 30mm rope. A very interesting and enjoyable afternoon ensued.

At the start of our May meeting we held a one-minute silence in memory of our friend and fellow knotter *Jumper* Collins who died three days after attending the March meeting. Vernon Hughes, our chairman, true his resolve held the formal part short. The rest of the meeting was put over to the tying of a bell rope. Each member present was given a diagram and six metres of 3mm cord and let loose on the activity. At times you could have heard a pin drop as we all concentrated on the task

July saw us back at Almondbury, for our mid summer meeting. As the annual Bristol Harbour Festival was taking place as we met and news of the Sea Britain 2005 was tabled, thoughts of participating in such events were expressed. The consensus was that we should join in with these activities and maybe next year our July meeting could be held at the Bristol dockside. At this meeting Richard Hopkins showed a hammock made in Northern Argentina from cactus fibres. Who said you can't sleep in a cactus bed.

*'Tug' Shipp*



# 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.**

## Safety First

I enjoyed issue #83. A couple of things to add:

Regarding the library. My girlfriend is a weaver and the weavers have scanned the old books past their copyright onto CDs that they sell. It generates income for the organisation and provides easy access to the old books that are limited in number and fragile. Even the current Guild publications can be made available on disk and considerably cheaper to produce and mail.

I enjoyed Tony Fisher's articles on working high. Parachute riggers have a sign in the rigging loft that reads "*I will be sure always*". Plus there is the wonderful quality control process by which a rigger can be asked to jump anything they have packed or repaired - focuses the mind powerfully! The diver's safety practice he quotes from Geoffrey Budworth is similar to that used by people working with explosives. When you go down range to work on an explosive charge the master blaster always disconnects and carries the handle to the blasting machine with him.

**Joe Barry**  
**Randolph, Vermont, USA**

## It's a Monkey's Aunt

In KM 82 page 33 Thomas Simpson asked the question- *Rare Knot, or Not?* And named the knot a Double Monkey's Fist.

As ever a one-page article has provoked much discussion. I have been reliably informed by Gordon Perry and Tony Doran - much hot air and theories has been on the Knotting Groups on the Internet, to say nothing of the Friday night before the Chatham AGM in May of this year.

Having listened to all of the evidence, I decided to find out for myself; in the style of the late Harry Asher, I thought the best way was to tie the knot, and within, would lay the answer. It did and one thing is for sure, it is not a Turk's head.

Being at the edge of skilful knot tyers, from around the world, some of it rubs off. The first thing I required was to free up both hands, so I made up a jig out of a wire coat hanger, I did remove the garment first. Having shown my finished knot to more than one guild member-I have been badgered into writing this letter, even after I found out that this knot





is Ashley's #2207. Have a look, you can make up your own mind which one is easier to tie.

Monkey's fists in the main, have three cycles or phases of loops interlocked, with the last or third phase tied as a frapping to give the fist its form. In simple terms the knot or fist on page 33, has three phases, but each phase is split 50/50. To make it an even divide, logic would be, to have an even number of strands on either side. This is not the case, stay with me I shall explain.

Before you start, I must advise you this knot is related to the Rubik's Cube: you work with all the windows open, so no glass is broken when you throw it out.

If you lay up an even number of strands, to give you a 50/50 split for the double monkey's fist - beware! The fist will finish up with not one, but three, riding turns, one on each face. When you retrieve the fist from the street, or shrubs, you will find the riding turns are caused as the strand transfer from the left half of the split to the right half. To overcome the riding turns problem; the extra strand must pass under both parts of the 50/50 split as it runs at right angles to it. This enables the strand to change from the left half of the split to the right half, unseen.

As this is not rocket science, but a good hands-on project; I intend to give no more details. As to how many turns to cover a sphere and what dimensions the materials used- a good knot tyer does not go out just to buy a practice piece, you use what is in your box, and the rest is trial and error. In my photograph please note I have not allowed enough turns to cover the sphere, and this is the main learning part of this letter. A true monkey's fist can not be expanded, in the same way as a Turk's head. The fist must be completely untied, and then re-

laid, after you recover it from outside the window.

This knot is clearly a monkey's fist in structure; but to tie it is a 'Monkey's Aunt'.

**Ken Yalden**  
*Cowplain, Hampshire, UK*

## Macramé Pattern

I used to have a macramé pattern that I did not save. I do not remember where it came from and I used it for teaching Girl Scouts to macramé years ago. It was a cute owl necklace pattern. I was wondering if you have ever come across this pattern as

I would like to have it again.

**Margaret Wagner**  
*tittertatter@rascals.org*

## Bollard Loop Saga

I have a photocopy of part of a booklet published by the Japan Publications Trading Company in January, 1965. Unfortunately, I have lost the title page. However, the author is Mr. Sueko Otsuka and the translators are Mr. Masatsugu Tsuzawa and Mr. Donald C. Mann. The booklet, shows a loop named *Tori-No-Kubi* (Bird's Neck). It is a mirror image of the Bollard Loop p34 KM83.

The application of the *Tori-No-Kubi* knot mentioned is "to fasten the lid of fishing bags or the feed bag of hawks". Without seeing the details of the "fastening", I am uncertain whether this application is a loop or a binding knot.

**Brian Grimley**  
*Ontario, Canada.*

# Knotting Diary

## AGM's & 1/2 YEARLY MEETINGS

### Half-Yearly Meeting

8th - 10th October 2004  
Pitsea.  
Contact: Don Woods  
Tel: 01708 229178[

### 23rd AGM

13th - 15th May 2005  
Beale Park, Pangbourne.  
Contact: Ken Nelson  
Tel: 07836 722198

## BRANCH MEETINGS

### Midlands Branch

11th October 2004  
The Old Swan (Ma Pardoes), Halesowen  
Road, Halesowen  
Contact Nick Jones  
Tel: 01384 377499

### Solent Branch

5th October 2004  
St Jude's School, Fareham, Hants  
Contact: Ken Yalden  
Tel: 023 9225 9280

## EVENTS

### Model Boat Show

9th - 10th October 2004  
Beale Park, Pangbourne.  
Contact: Ken Nelson  
Tel: 07836 722198

### SECRETARY:

Nigel Harding  
16 Egles Grove,  
Uckfield,  
Sussex, TN22 2BY  
Tel: 01825 760425  
E-mail: nigel@nigelharding.demon.co.uk

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Seniors	£18
Families	£22

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### EDITOR:

Colin Grundy  
115 Upper Eastern Green Lane  
Eastern Green,  
Coventry CV5 7DJ  
Tel: 0794 6841157  
E-mail: knotting\_matters@btinternet.com

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	Members	Non-members
Full page	£32	£49
Half page	£19	£22
Quarter Page	£10	£15

# Guild Supplies

## Price List 2004

<b>Item</b>	<b>Price</b>
<b>Geoffrey Budworth</b>	
Notlore <i>a miscellany of quotes from fact and fiction</i>	£2.50
The Knot Book	£4.99
Plaited Moebius Bands	£2.50
Knot Rhymes and Reasons	£1.50
<b>Brian Field</b>	
Breastplate Designs	£3.50*
Concerning Crosses	£2.00*
Eric Franklin	
Turksheads the Traditional Way	£1.50 *
Nylon Novelties	£2.00 *
<b>Stuart Grainger</b>	
Knotcraft	£4.00 *
Ropfolk	£1.30 *
Turks Head Alternatives	£2.20 *
Creative Ropecraft (Hardback - 3rd Ed.)	£9.95
Knotted Fabrics Hardback <i>price includes UK postage</i>	£9.00
<b>Colin Jones</b>	
The DIY Book of Fenders	£9.95
<b>Skip Pennock</b>	
Decorative Woven Flat Knots	£12.50*
<b>IGKT</b>	
Knotting Matters copies of past editions	£2.50
(Some past editions available - contact the Secretary for details)	
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