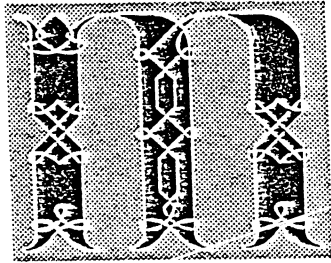
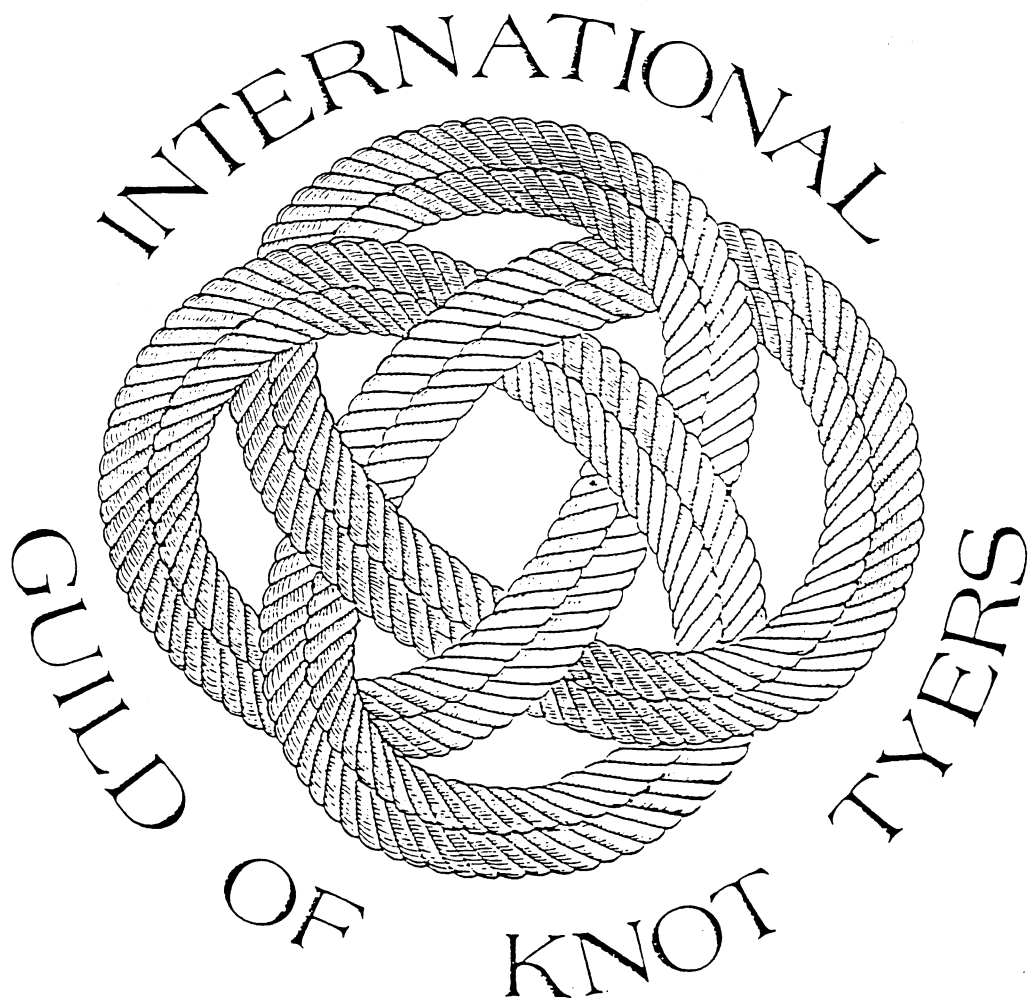


Knottings



Matters

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE



# "KNOTTING MATTERS"

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS  
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Issue No. 9  
October (Autumn), 1984

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## Editorial

A gentle reprimand was dealt me recently by a member somewhat miffed that I had referred to him as "overseas". This attitude - he teased me - surely depended upon where you were; to him, I was the foreigner!

It made me wonder. Was I thoughtless to presume that Great Britain is the Guild's heart, upon which all limbs depend? Perhaps not because it does happen to be so just now.

But this arrangement could certainly change. No doubt some of our future presidents will reside outside the United Kingdom. The American contingent grow apace and its influence and needs must be increasingly felt. The Guild's officers and committee might one day be so changed that meetings in some other country becomes only sensible.

These thoughts should hearten distant members. At the outset it was unrealistic simply to create a British Guild, leaving other nations to follow if they wished. Not all could. Some countries do not have populations large enough. Worldwide, however, I strongly believe there will emerge a force of thousands dedicated to knot-tying and ropework whose very existence has not until now been suspected. This Guild exists for them all. It's our gift and nothing can change that.

Also, the lingua franca must surely be English; but it seems to me immaterial where the administration may from time to time be located.

## Quotation

"After a course of protracted flapping in that violent wind, many pieces of the torn sails became so knotted and braided that a marline-spike could not penetrate them."

'THE ATLANTIC CROSSING', by Melvin Maddocks, pub. by Time-Life Books (1981)

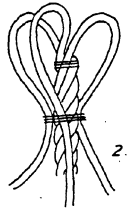
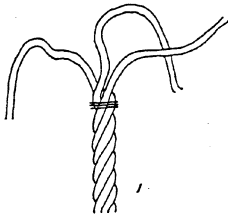
# A Page of Knots

by

Eric Franklin

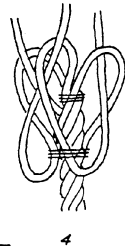
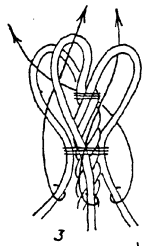
## THE END OF THE ROPE

The end of the rope is very important, but while most of us can make a simple whipping and quite a few can put in a crown and back splice, we seldom attempt anything more ambitious. Even the thought of trying to tie a Matthew Walker frightens most people and yet at one time this was considered to be one of the most important knots a sailor had to learn. To help and encourage you, I am going to show you a simple way of tying most of the rope end knots, using a single, basic method



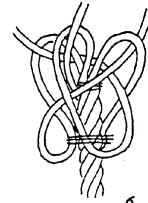
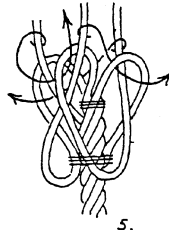
1. Unlay the end of the rope for a suitable distance and put on a seizing, i.e. two or three turns of twine tied tightly and finished with a Reef Knot.

2. Take each end down and seize to the rope a little way below the first seizing, forming three loops sticking up like rabbits' ears. This is the basis for the following knots



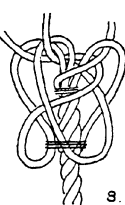
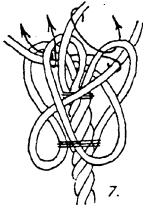
WALL KNOT

Working from your basis (fig.2) take each end in turn up through the next loop to the right. Draw up, remove the lower seizing and work tight, finally removing the first seizing.



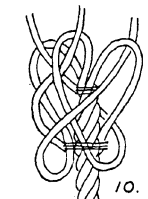
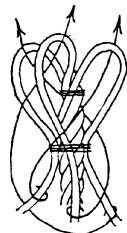
SINGLE MATTHEW WALKER

First make the first steps of the Wall Knot and then carry the work one stage further by taking each end in turn on and up through the second loop to the right. Finish as for the Wall Knot.



DOUBLE MATTHEW WALKER

Make the Wall Knot, carry on to the Single Matthew Walker and then go one step further by taking the ends in turn up through the third loop to the right, i.e. each end goes through all three loops and emerges through its own loop. Finish as before.



DIAMOND KNOT

For this knot go back to the basis (fig.2.) Take each end in turn, pass it over the next strand to the right and up through the succeeding loop. Work up firmly as already described for the Wall Knot.

## Isis (MOTHER OF ALL THINGS)

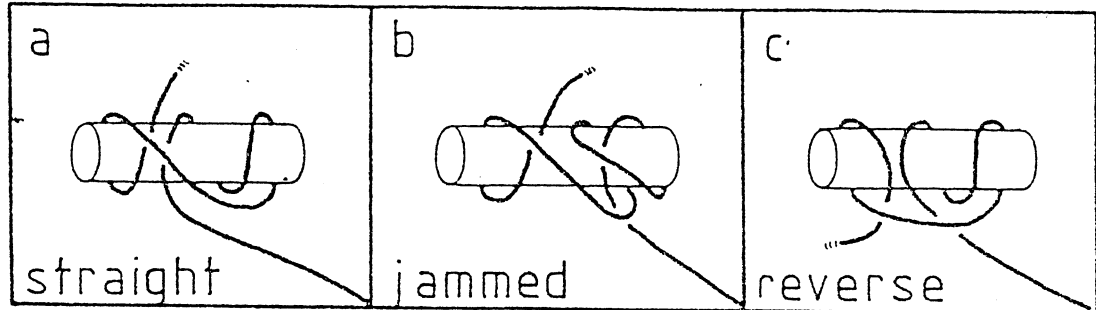
"Isis - who also possessed as fetishes the magic knot 'Tat', called "the Knot of Isis", and ..."

'EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY', pub. Paul Hamlyn Ltd. (1965)

# Knot Test

By PETER ROSS in New Zealand

## THE ROLLING HITCH



Whilst looking through Bigon & Regazzoni's "The Century Guide to Knots" I noticed that the only illustration they had of the rolling hitch (on page 63) was one of an unusual form (Fig. (c) above) with the final hitch reversed so that it came out beside the standing part. Innocently I tried this, out - on a spar at first - and was very surprised at the ease with which it came undone. I then tried it on a rope and found it to be secure under a steady pull.

I still wasn't happy and decided to conduct an experiment to determine which of the 3 forms (Fig's (a), (b) and (c) above) of the rolling hitch is the most secure.

During this experiment I used a fairly slick 33mm. diameter plastic pipe as the "spar", a 9mm. dia. staple polyethylene 3-strand rope as the "rope", and a 4mm. dia. braided nylon cord to tie the hitches in. The "spar" was 600mm. long, and with every hitch I left 120mm. of "tail" at the working end. Efforts were made to maintain similar conditions throughout the experiment.

- "Straight" (Fig. (a))= form of rolling hitch illustrated on p.105 - fig. 110B - "The Art of Knotting & Splicing" (C.L. Day).
- "Jammed" (Fig. (b)),= form of rolling hitch illustrated on p.77, "The Knot Book" (Budworth);
- "Reverse" (Fig. (c))= form of rolling hitch illustrated on p.63, "Century Guide of Knots";

In the results detailed on the next two pages, a star (\*) denotes when one version of the knot proved superior or equal best in a test; a cross (+) shows when that version was definitely inferior.

The results tables record the number of jerks, the percentage of "tail" remaining, and the distance slipped down the "spar" or "rope".

Attached to 600mm.working length of 33mm.dia. <u>SPAR</u>		
Type of hitch	Perpendicular jerks	Perpendicular steady pull
Straight	167, undid*	Secure*
Jammed	30, undid	Secure*
Reverse	1, undid+	V. insecure+
Attached to 600mm. Working length of 9mm.dia <u>ROPE</u> (3-strand, against the lay)		
Straight	After 220 still 70% tail*	Secure*
Jammed	After 220 still 70% tail*	Secure*
Reverse	212, undid+	Secure*
Attached to 600mm. Working length of 33mm.dia. <u>SPAR</u>		
Type of hitch	Parallel jerks in direction of round turns	Parallel steady pull in direction of round turns
Straight	170, undid after 36cm. Slide*	Slides with difficulty*
Jammed	63, slid 60cm. (all the way)	Slides with difficulty*
Reverse	1, undid and slid 60cm.+	V. insecure+
Attached to 600mm. Working length of 9mm. Dia. <u>ROPE</u>		
Straight	After 200 50% tail, no slip	Secure*
Jammed	After 200 50% tail, 24cm. Slip	Secure*
Reverse	235, undid after 18cm. Slip+	Secure*
Attached to 600mm. Working length of 33mm. Dia. <u>SPAR</u>		
Type of hitch	Parallel jerks in direction of hitch	Parallel steady pull in direction of hitch
Straight	16, undid after 15cm. Slide	Slide with great difficulty; un- does a bit
Jammed	57, slid 60cm. remained tied*	Slides with great difficulty*
Reverse	15, undid after 60cm. Slide+	Slides easily+

concluded on next page

Attached to 600mm. Working length of 9mm. Dia. ROPE		
Straight	After 200, 80% tail, no slip*	Secure*
Jammed	After 200, 93% tail, 9cm. Slip	Secure*
Reverse	After 200, 70% tail, 9cm. Slip+	Secure*

#### SUMMARY OF ROLLING HITCH RESULTS

Straight	10	0	3
Jammed	8	0	2
Reverse	3	9	0
	Overall score (*)	Score (+)	Superior to BOTH others

(NOTE - When applying a steady pull parallel to the ROPE in the direction of the round turns, whether working with the lay or against it, there appeared to be no significant difference in the amount of "twisting" of the heavy rope.)

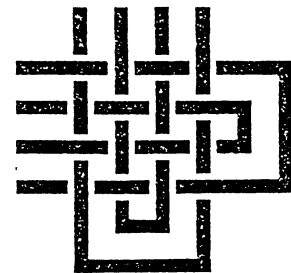
#### CONCLUSIONS

1. The "reversed" rolling hitch illustrated in "The Century Guide" is definitely inferior under most conditions and positively dangerous when applied to a spar;
2. There's not much between "straight" and "jammed" versions, but "straight" appears to be superior overall and - surprisingly - is definitely superior attached to a ROPE.

## Quotation

"You're a good lad, Jim," he said, "and you're all in a clove-hitch, ain't you? Well, you just put your trust in Ben Gunn - Ben Gunn's the man to do it. Would you think it likely, now, that your squire would prove a liberal-minded one in case of help - him being in a clove-hitch, as you remark?"

'TREASURE ISLAND' by R.L. Stevenson  
(1850 - 1894)



# HAWSERS

HAWSERS FROM HAWES - well almost!

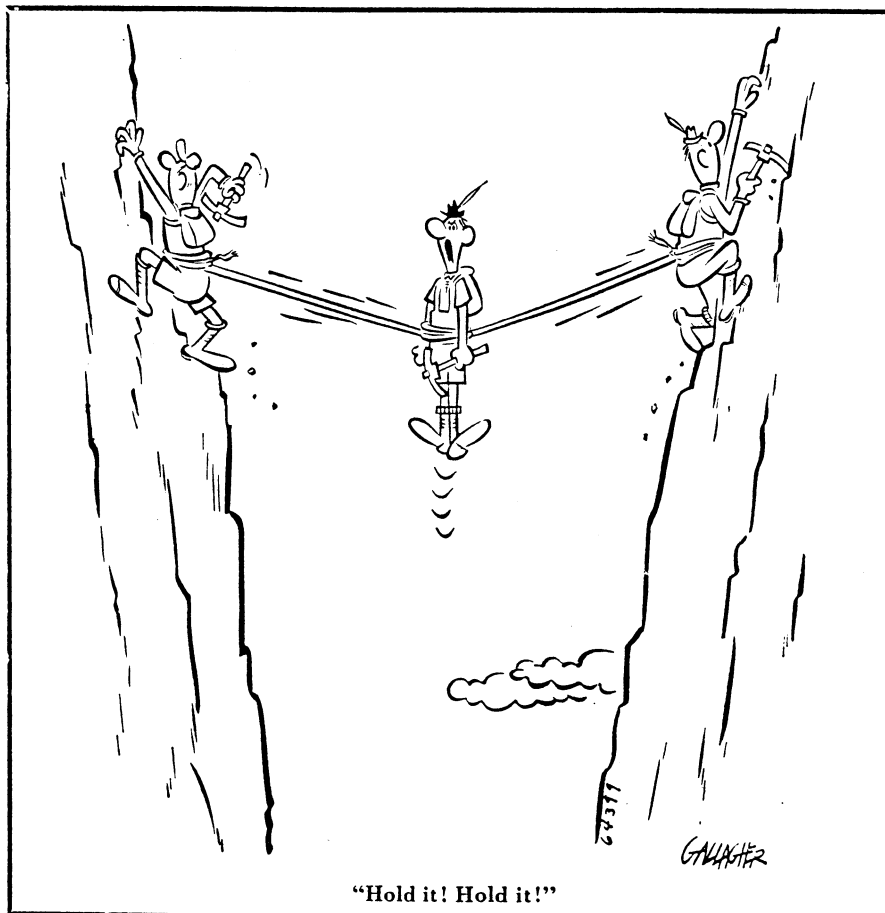
If you are holidaying in the Yorkshire Dales you should take in Hawes (on the A684 midway between Sedbergh and Leyburn), where you can visit W.R. Outhwaite & Son, Ropemakers.

This is in James Herriott country and alive with tourists. Many of them flock to the ropeworks at Town Foot (the east end of the town). This was not always so - the firm was established in 1905 and carried on the business of making ropes in the traditional way, until Peter Annison and his wife took over a few years ago. They still make bell ropes and ropes for many agricultural and other purposes, but they are wide open to public view every day during the summer and on market days (Tuesdays) during the winter. Besides production work going on behind the scenes, shorter ropes are constantly being made at the front of what is a combined workshop and retail store.

They are proud of their coloured bannister ropes and they offer many rope products over the counter to visitors, as well as some other products by local craftsmen and the obviously-expected variety of ropes and cordage that would appeal to our members.

The full address is: W.R. Outhwaite & Son, Ropemakers, Town Foot, Hawes, North Yorkshire DL8 3NT  
(Telephone Hawes (09697) 487).

P.W.B.



With acknowledgements to "BOYS' LIFE".

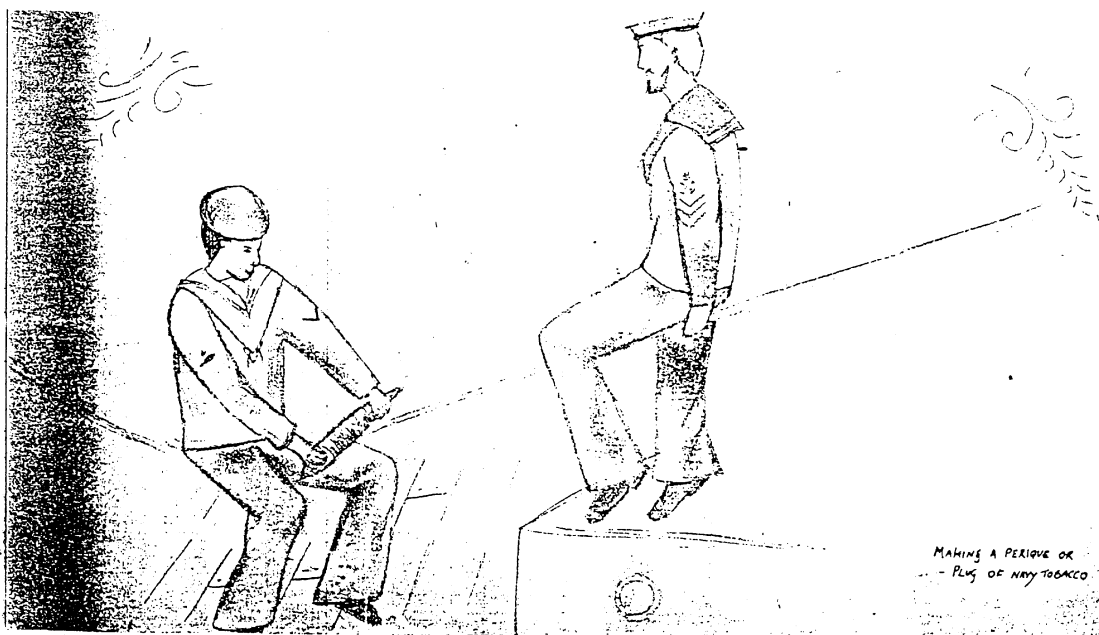
## Periques by Frank THOMPSON

In answer to the letter from Ken YALDEN (Issue 8, page 12) periques of tobacco were made up in the navy as follows:- The monthly issue of tobacco was one pound of leaf and - if I remember rightly - we used to buy this during the war for half-a-crown!! The leaves were removed from the stalk and the larger spines were then dampened with a little water (with perhaps a few drops of rum added) and laid on a rectangle of fine duck canvas or white linen approx. 18" x 12", the larger leaves at top and bottom of the pile and bits and pieces in between. The pile was made much thicker in the middle than at the ends and when complete was wrapped up tightly in the cloth and marled down with a piece of sailmaker's twine in the form of a cigar, tapering at the ends.

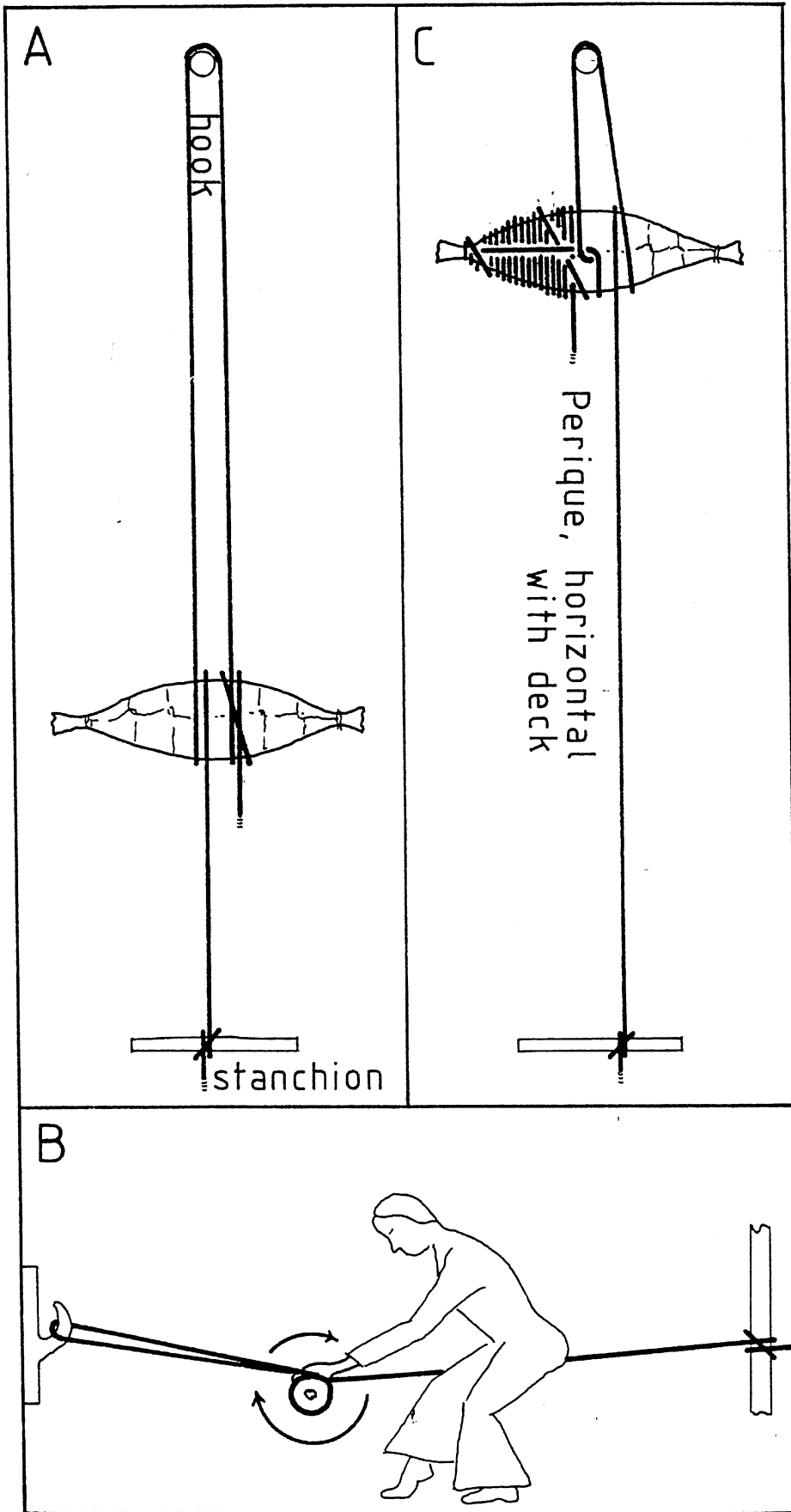
The end of a long length of spunyarn was tightly clove-hitched round the middle, led over a hook and back where it was hitched around the perique, then led to a stanchion where it was made fast (Fig. A). An ideal height for the perique was about 3 feet above deck with the hook and stanchion somewhat higher.

The operator then sat side-saddle on the spunyarn between perique and stanchion and rotated the perique in the direction shown (Fig. 13). This had the effect of serving the spunyarn onto the perique under tremendous pressure (enough to squeeze the tobacco juice through the serving).

At the end of the run a clove hitch was made, the spunyarn taken back to the centre and half-hitched (Fig. C) and the process repeated until the whole perique was served over. It was then left for about 6 months to mature after which the spunyarn was unwound a little at a time as required and the tobacco sliced off and rubbed ready for the pipe.







## Profile of E.(Ted) T. DAVIS, Guild member

The newspaper articles first appeared in December, 1979 (one), and November, 1981 (two), in the 'ECCsPress', in-house newspaper of the English China Clays Group. They are reproduced here with the Editor's kind permission.

### And still on a nautical tack....

MANY readers will remember seeing in the national press, and on TV, the story of the man who invented a new knot. Ted Davies, of ECU' Accounts Dept., who makes a hobby of knots, believes that he has done the same.

He says that finding new ways of knotting cord and rope is not difficult, but that hitting on one that is a significant improvement on the already-known knots is another matter. However, he thinks that this one passes the test because it enables two ends to be joined when one of them is much too short to be knotted in other ways.

#### 'Bends'

The drawings show how the new knot is tied. First make an ordinary overhand knot in the longer end, then twist it into the shape shown at 2. Lead the second end into this in the way shown in the third drawing, and close the knot with a pull on the end marked 'x'; not too tightly if you want to undo it later, but if you want the knot to be a fixture heave on the end as hard as you can.

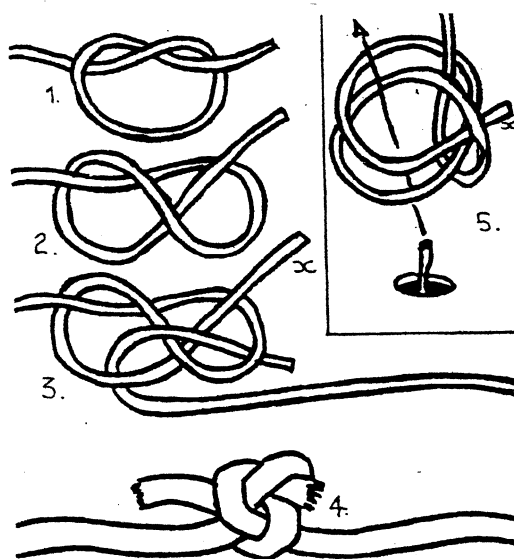
The finished knot, drawn to a bigger scale, looks like 4. The inset drawing (5) shows how to shape the knot for snaring a short end, and this shape is easily made by folding together the twin loops made at 2.

The new knot is one of the type known to sailors as "bends." It will function, and make a secure join, when a length no more than four diameters of the cordage is available, but nimble fingers will be needed in these circumstances.

A curious property that the still un-named bend possesses is that its holding power does not seem to depend on its being tightly drawn, and it will hold against a strain even though considerable slackness is present within the knot itself.

Whilst I would not recommend anyone to trust life and limb to this new knot," says Ted, "I can say that my tests have shown it to be very secure. I think it can be of use, mainly in those annoying situations where a snapped string or lace has left a nearly useless short end."

Ted says that he "collects" knots, and believes he has between two- and three-hundred.



Ted DAVIS calls his short -end bend a "technical hitch"(!)

'An Introduction to Knots' by E.T. DAVIS was reviewed in 'Knotting Matters', issue 5, page 19. His interest in knots these days finds its expression in his involvement with the Sea Cadet Corps working as an Auxilliary Coastguard around St. Austell, Cornwall. He is a civilian instructor with the local unit, subject -ropework and rigging. The practice of decorative knotting interests him hardly at all, but he likes to, see other people's fine results.

(concluded overleaf)

# 'Bottle Sling' man writes

SIR, — May I have the courtesy of your columns to invite readers to 'get knotted'? But please don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to get my own back on erstwhile colleagues, merely inviting them to consult a new book, 'An Introduction to Knots.'

The author, none other than the Editor of ECCSPRESS, is, I am sure, far too modest to mention it himself.

I, for one, am busy practising the 'Bottle Sling' which could come in handy: others may prefer to concentrate on their 'Grannies,' possibly with the addition of a little 'whipping.'

Was the author, I wonder, apprehensive of a rush of suicides, for the Hangman's Knot has been omitted. But perhaps it is an official secret, subject to the 30 year rule. The Japanese influence seems to have crept in instead and those with nefarious ideas will have to make do with the Honda Knot. Owners of noisy motor bikes start practising now, please.

For the record, 'An Introduction to Knots,' by E. T. Davies, is published by Brown, Son & Ferguson Limited, price £3. — John Lamb, Burrow House, Tywardreath, Par.

(Thank you, John. A look at page 2 in this issue will reveal that modesty is (still) not characteristic of the

ECCSPRESS' editors. 'Honda' is not from the Japanese, but is Spanish for sling. Ed).



John Lamb

Of course, no-one in his senses would set out to tie a Theodore Knot in this way. Ted DAVIS presented it as a not-serious challenge to readers.

READERS with a recollection of the trifling will not need reminding that my hobby is knots and splices.

This was revealed to a startled world in the ECCSPRESS of December, 1979. John Lamb (then Editor), perhaps in a month when good material was

## Tie yourself in knots!

unusually scarce, gave space to some of my observations on the subject.

It continues to interest me, for a number of reasons.

First is the dexterity element, allied to the admirable suitability of the traditional knots, each to its different purposes.

Second is its usefulness.

Next is the great number of knots that there are; several thousand. I have successfully experimented with most of the practical ones, but I find it hard to remember more than about 250. If I learn a new one, I forget one which I formerly knew.

Lastly, there is the intellectual element; almost NONE — which I find highly satisfactory.

Emboldened by the former

by  
Ted Davies

mention of my hobby in the ECCSPRESS, I went on to complete an illustrated booklet on the subject. Entitled "An Introduction to Knots," it has now been published by Brown, Son and Ferguson, of Glasgow.

In it I have tried my level best to make the first learning of knots easy and interesting. The booklet can be obtained from bookshops; in St. Austell, ask at "Just Books," in Truro Road.

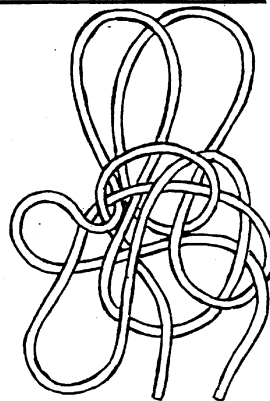
(Mindful of the importance of matters other than knots, I have ascertained that the booklet's paper is made with "our" china clay. The paper is Kingsbury,

made for Spicer Cowan by the Inveresk Paper Company.)

I was interested to learn what a professional might think of my approach, and I gave a copy of the booklet to Len Whetter, Chief Rigger at ECC Ports, Par, who was kindness itself.

"Diagrams excellent," he said, "and the illustration of the knots' uses are unique in a booklet of this sort. It is a good introduction for anyone wanting to know the correct knot, bend, or hitch."

I am sometimes asked which is the most "difficult" of the knots in any degree of common use. It is probably the Theodore Knot, a decorative knot used by Wild West fans on their horse gear. So difficult is it that they buy the



rope (it is a throat latch) ready knotted.

The accompanying diagram shows how to tie the Theodore Knot. It is rather easier than the Rubik Cube. String, anyone?

# Turks' Heads

by Charles H.S. THOMASON  
Queensland, Australia

(Writers of erudite knotting articles aren't always practical ropeworking craftsmen. Charles THOMASON is one. His beautifully ornate and complicated bellropes adorn Royal Australian Navy warships and the Royal Perth Yacht Club, as well as H.M. Royal Yacht 'Britannia' and the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, England.

Publication in 'Knotting Matters' of this insight into the mind of a knot-master has been delayed and delayed because of the difficulty in illustrating his ideas. His letters are usually accompanied by magnificent practical samples of the work under discussion.

So - finally - here it is. . . without a single drawing. There's a tip or two for beginners and a lot of good stuff for you Turk's Head buffs, perhaps one or two bits that none of us will fully understand. Never mind... .let' s be stretched for once!)

- - - oOo - - -

TURKS' HEADS may be divided into three (3) distinct types. Each type has at least one distinctive feature which is unique to its own particular type. A proper appreciation of these unique features readily enables each Turk's Head to be classified into its own type and being given its own individual designation within that classification.

I see these types as:-

- (i) Common,
- (ii) Complex (series)
- (iii) Compound (parallel)

TURKS' HEADS may generally be described as a diagonal interlacing of line which describes a distorted screw thread pattern around the circumference of a cylinder. This pattern may either advance or retreat; however, the advancing pattern should be considered the orthodox practice (the retreating pattern introduces complications which will be dealt with in the compound section).

THE ADVANCING PATTERN is formed by the tail of the initial bight crossing the start to form the first intersection before commencing the second bight.

THE OPTIMUM ANGLE OF INTERSECTION is a right-angle (90 degrees). Any error should always be on the side of too few bights for the circumference of the cylinder. This produces obtuse angles in the transverse segments of the intersections. Too many bights for the circumference produce obtuse longitudinal segments. This causes difficulties in tensioning the line which in turn causes bunching and eventual abandonment of the Turk's Head.

BEGINNERS should aim at an angle of 100 deg's for the transverse segments and only aim at the right-angle when they can be reasonably sure not to exceed it in the longitudinal segments.

Where there are restrictions on the transverse spread in relation to the circumference, the complex type has to be used. Where a large transverse spread is desired on a limited circumference, the compound type has to be used.

THE ONLY THING that remains constant in all Turks' Heads is the desired angle of intersection (ideally 90 deg's but obtuse transverse segments for the less experienced).

"The number of bights, the number of leads, and the type of Turk's Head used, vary with the circumference being worked upon, the size of line being used, and the transverse spread required. Only the desired angle of intersection remains constant."

(i) COMMON TURK'S HEAD - Distinctive feature is that the number of leads is always one more than the number of bights. The 'part' designation is the same as the number of leads; e.g. a 5-part common Turk's Head would have 5 leads and 4 bights.

(ii) COMPLEX TURK'S HEAD - Distinctive feature is that the number of bights exceeds that of the number of leads. The number of leads is the part number of the Turk's Head. The complex Turk's Head is a series extension of the basic part number Turk's Head. The number of basic part number patterns in series is determined by the formula:

$$\frac{\text{NUMBER OF BIGHTS} + \text{ONE}}{\text{NUMBER OF PARTS}}$$

e.g. a 7-lead x 27-bight Turk's Head would be a 7-part complex Turk's Head with 4 basic patterns in series. It should be referred to as a 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 complex Turk's Head.

(iii) COMPOUND TURK'S HEAD - Distinctive feature is that the number of leads greatly exceeds that of the number of bights. The part number is determined by the number of bights, plus one. The compound Turk's Head is a parallel extension of the basic part number Turk's Head. The number of basic pattern Turks' Heads in parallel is readily determined by the following method:-

$$\frac{\text{NUMBER OF LEADS} - 1}{\text{NUMBER OF BIGHTS}}$$

e.g. a 26-lead x 5-bight Turk's Head would be  $26 - 1 \div 5 = 5$ , so it would be a 6 x 5 compound Turk's Head.

THE 3-LEAD, 4-BIGHT TURK'S HEAD (the ordinary Lanyard Turk's Head) can be tied by any of the following four methods: -

- (a) Ashley, 1305;
- (b) Ashley, 2242 (the ends follow each other back into the knot and the cylinder goes through the centre);
- (c) Form a 5-part common Turk's Head which then has another piece of line follow around 3 of the leads. The 5-part is untied, leaving the 3-lead 4-bight secure in place;
- (d) Form a 5-part with a retreating screw thread and stop when 4 bights have been formed. This will have only 3 leads so the 3-lead 4-bight Turk's Head will have been formed.

NOTE 1 -The retreating screw thread will always reduce the number of leads by two (2) for the same number of bights as compared with the advancing screw thread. This method produces wholesale extrapolations and interpolations of the standard designations.

NOTE 2 -Method (c) is the best way to attempt any interpolated or extrapolated compound Turk's Heads for which no rule-of-thumb method is known. Its results will prove beyond any shadow of doubt as to whether or not any particular numbered combination of leads and bights is possible.

"WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT TO SEE IF HANDED

A 5 x 3/5 COMPOUND TURK'S HEAD?"

In the course of putting all this on paper I classified the old 3-lead x 4-bight Turk's Head. It is not a 'common' Turk's Head because in common Turks' Heads the number of bights is one less than the number of leads.

It is not a complex Turk's Head because it would have to be a 3 + 3 (longitudinal extension, i.e. an increase in circumference). This would give 5 bights according to the rule ( $3 + 3 - 1 = 5$  bights).

So it must be a compound Turk's Head; and in fact it's a modified 5-part Turk's Head. In a compound Turk's Head the part number is one more than the number of bights. So, as it has 4 bights, it must be a 5-part Turk's Head.

Now the number of leads in a compound Turk's Head is the part number x the number of transverse patterns (minus 1) for each extension of the pattern excluding the initial pattern . . . .

e.g.a 5-part with 14 sideways extensions and the initial pattern makes 5 patterns side-by-side;

therefore, No. of leads =  $5 \times 5 - 4 = 21$  leads.

It would only have 14 bights no matter how many extensions.

Our Turk's Head is not an extrapolated compound but is the infinitely more unique interpolated compound.

So now, 3 (No. of leads) = 5 x 'n' - 0 (as there are no extensions);

therefore, 'n' transverse extensions = 3/5;

and the common-or-garden 3-part Turk's Head is actually a 5 x 3/5 compound Turk's Head.

Similarly:-

the 8-lead x 5-bight Turk's Head is truly a 6-part Turk's Head which has been extended by 1/2 a pattern;

$$\begin{aligned} \text{No. of leads} &= \text{No. of parts} \times \text{No. of patterns} - 1 \text{ extension;} \\ 6 &= 6 \times 1 \frac{1}{2} - 1 \\ &= 9 - 1 \\ &= 8 \end{aligned}$$


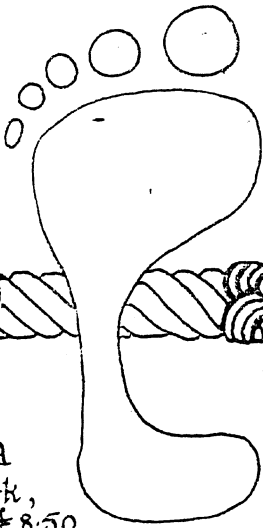
I would call this a 6 x 1 1/2 compound Turk's Head.

\* + \*

## FOOTROPE KNOTS

Des. & Liz Pawson  
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## Cod's Nose Hitch

Steen KREOGH, a Danish marine engineer wrote to Guild member Morley Kennerley (who is connected with publication of 'The Ashley Book of Knots') and he passed the letter on to the editor.

A "cod end knot" is very important, as Jim GARSIDES of Airdrie, Scotland, showed us (see Issue 2, pages 13-14). It has to secure the valuable catch of fish yet be quickly released by one man who needs to be far enough away to avoid burial under a ton or two of cascading cod!

Steen KREOGH writes:-

"You see, when you are trawlfishing -in the North Sea of course - you gather the fish in the outermost part of the trawl, namely the cod. When you empty the cod for fish, you have to open the outermost end of the cod by opening a hitch called a binding hitch, Danish: bindestik.

First a half hitch, as shown, thereafter:

bight 1 has to be tucked in, and the end 2 has to hauled taut,

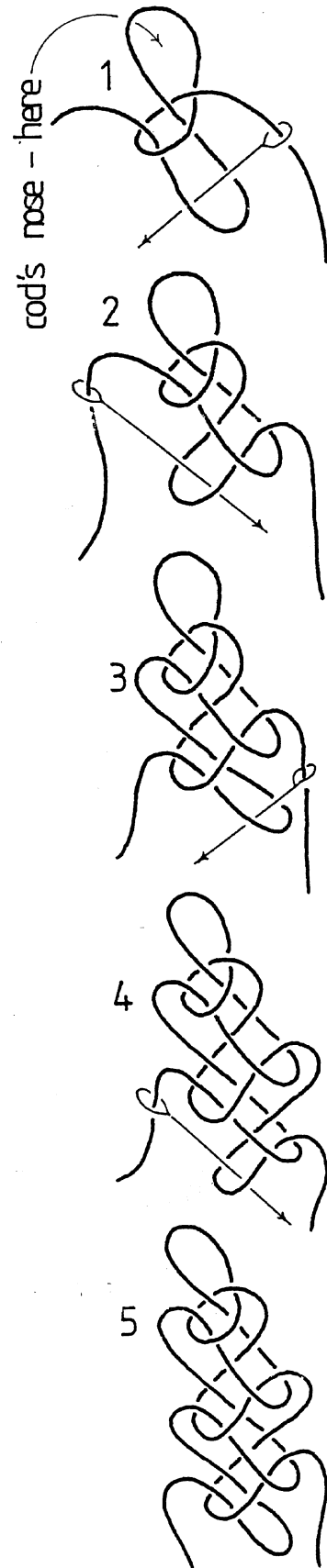
bight 2 has to be tucked in, and the end 1 has to be hauled taut, etc.

You have to make about 8-10 tucks.

This hitch or knot is easy to tie, but the point for the leading fisherman is not to forget to tie it just before the trawl again is put overboard.

It is also the leading seaman's duty to open the cod. It is very easy, in a hasty pace, he alternately heaves in the two rope ends until the catch falls out on the deck, alternately by right and left hand."

The making of this "cod's nose hitch" is - of course - Ashley's 2896 (Idiot's Delight) but news of its use by trawlermen in this way will be fresh to most of us, I guess.





# Cutting It Fine!

by Thomas SOLLY

The knotsman uses a variety of tools for his work, but surely the most important equipment he possesses is his knife. With such variety available, we take a look at the choice, maintenance and use of knives.

The pocket knife is one of the most versatile tools available for the use of man. It is also the most abused item in the inventory! The instrument for all seasons, it can be used for slicing fruit, carving timber, scraping fish, scribing initials, boring holes, extracting splinters, castrating lambs, removing screws, trimming wicks, testing hardness, opening locks, grafting roses or smoothing plaster; a device ranging from precision instrument to brute force tool.

The buyer has plenty of displays tempting him to choose good looking knives but some thought at this stage can ensure a suitable purchase. A lock knife is safer than one with a freely folding blade, a blade collapsing onto an unsuspecting finger can inflict sickening wounds. Knives with multiple accessories like scissors, corkscrews and tweezers are best kept for camping or for impressing friends; for practical use a simple knife is best, and a light one is kind to the linings of trouser pockets.

The material used for the blade is important: a blade made of high carbon or tool steel carries an edge longer than stainless steel or Rostfrei, but S.S. does not rust like tool steel.

A knife with two or more blades allows the user to have the large blade honed for general use and a small blade at razor sharpness for precision cutting purposes only.

A knife should be tested for keenness by passing the ball of the thumb across the cutting edge at right-angles: a keen edge "sucks" at the flesh and gives a perfect indicator without blood and stitches. Never in any circumstances pass a finger ALONG the edge, particularly when someone else is holding the knife, as the slightest slip or change in pressure can slice through the flesh.

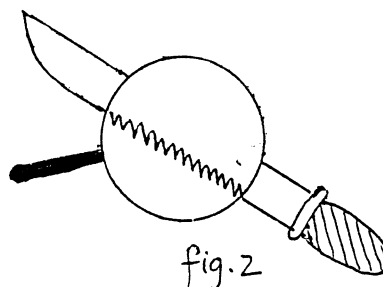
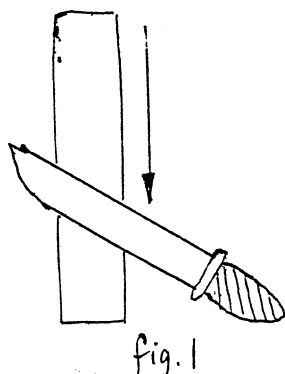
A visual check on a blade's sharpness may be made by glancing along the cutting edge obliquely so that the light will reflect on any dull sections or nicks in the edge.

The initial sharpening can be tedious especially when a heavy "backing" hone has been made to remove the burr caused by grinding and honing the cutting edge. Patience at the start of a blade's life is essential.

For general or rough use a knife should be sharpened with the coarse textured side of a sharpening stone, since the razor sharp edge produced by the fine grit on the other side of the stone can be lost easily when cutting harsh materials such as rope or wood.

Sharpening may be two-sided or one-sided, depending on the type of knife. Hollow ground blades should be honed on both sides equally, but straight sided blades are more efficient for most purposes when

sharpened on one side only in the fashion of sharpening a chisel. When sharpening a knife the blade should be held at an angle to the stone (Fig. 1). This is done so as to produce a set of minute cutting teeth as the grit particles "bite" into the steel edge. These teeth, seen under a magnifier (Fig. 2), should look like the teeth of a hacksaw blade, but - unlike a hacksaw - the teeth should point backwards towards the operator because the cutting motion with a hand-held knife is usually towards the operator and not away as with a hacksaw.



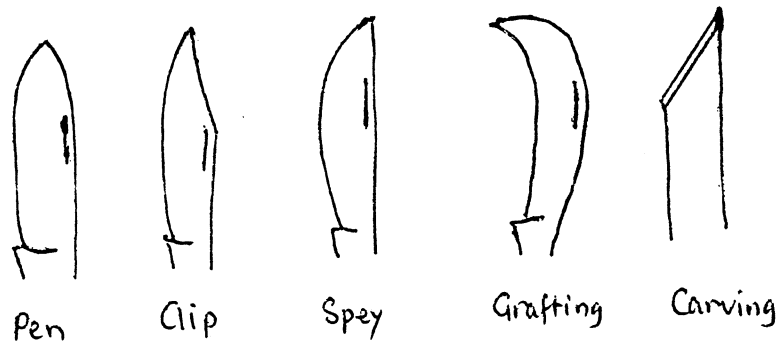
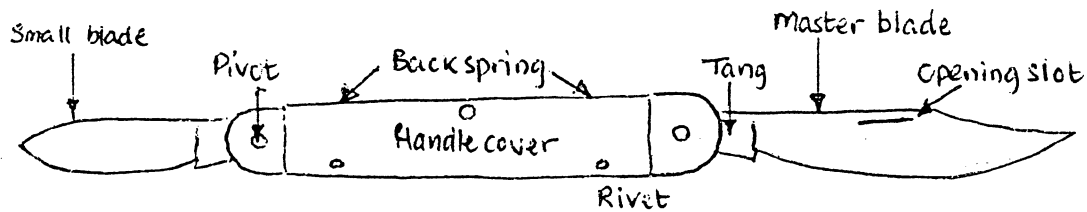
Oilstones are preferred for sharpening, ideally the two grade variety. It is sound sense to buy a good stone and to use it regularly; it repays the initial cost many times over and will last for a 'lifetime' when used with care.

The stone is best kept in a wooden case which will support it during use and also protects the stone from breakage and chipping during storage.

After several honings have been made on a stone using machine oil, it is advisable to wash out with paraffin the sediment that accumulates between the grit grains. This sediment of dislodged grit and debris of steel removed from the blades, if allowed to remain, decreases the cutting power of the grit and so renders the stone inefficient.

A glance at the parts of a knife (see diagrams overleaf) will help to understand the importance of correct care and use.

The backspring is an often neglected part of the knife. It is the backbone and controls the rigidity. The spring needs lubrication to allow it to move freely, otherwise the blade will not lock into position for use nor will it retract safely for stowage in the pocket. The rivetted pivots sometimes need to be checked, oiled, and - if necessary - tightened by tapping carefully with a punch so as to avoid "headache" which allows the blade to rock sideways. The handle cover should be solid: cheap knives have a metal shell covered with a thin plastic sheet which soon works loose.



The operator should cut towards himself when the situation is suitable because arm and hand muscles can control the knife and restrict its movement more easily than when cutting away, especially if the knife slips. A slipping knife moving away from the operator moves point outward into a stabbing motion to cause dangerous puncture wounds but if the knife slips when cutting towards self the blade tends to remain roughly at right-angles to the body and so makes the risk of a stab wound less likely.

Remember that rope is better cut obliquely and wood is better cut along the grain rather than across the grain. Wet rope tends to be as tough as hardwood.

A clasp knife retained by a lanyard will not plummet over the gunwale to a muddy fate, nor will it transfix an unfortunate working below the user. The lanyard should be sufficiently long when worn around the neck to allow a one-handed movement of opening the blade at full extension of the arm.

A sheathed knife for a right-handed user would normally be worn on a belt at the right hip, but when worn in the centre of the belt at the back it becomes available with equal ease to either hand.

The oldtime sailorman regarded his knife as a third hand but the skipper frowned on potentially dangerous weapons before the mast ready to be brought out to substantiate an argument, so at the start of a voyage the pointed end of a blade was snapped off to stabilize the balance of power situation.

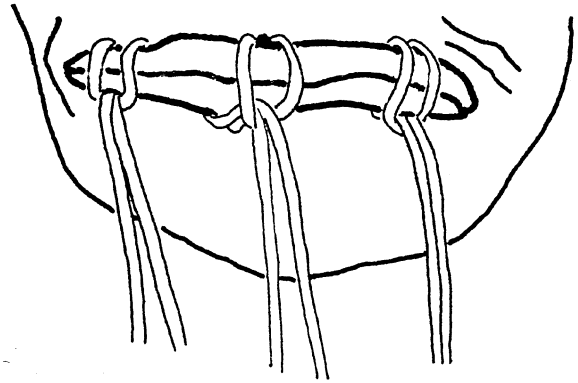
There is an old adage which says; "Sharp knife - lazyman!" to imply that an idle fellow has little better to do with his spare time than to whet his pocket knife; but the sailors had a saying; "Sharp knife - clear conscience" which suggested that a seaman may never know

the moment when his life or that of his shipmates would depend on having a keen blade at hand to cut free an obstruction threatening disaster.

Finally, remember that a dull knife is dangerous; so, if a knife is meant to cut, let it cut keenly and safely.

**"Shut  
your  
mouth!"**

Barrel hitches have been stitched through the lips of this shrunken head (or "tsantsa"), a trophy of the Jivaro tribe of the upper Ucayali River in Peru.



from 'THE AMAZON' - A  
photographic survey by Emil  
Schuithess, pub. by Wm. Collins & Co. (1962)

## Quotations

"Under Lance's tuition his son and younger daughter became expert ropers, excelling in cowboy hops - spinning a rope standing on a horse's back and hopping through the twirling arcs of rope."

'THE ROUGH RIDER', by Jack Pollard, pub. Angus & Robertson Ltd. (1963)

"At Connamulla, Queensland, Lance called on his sister Carrie, who showed him her son Harold, a small, delicate boy of eleven who would not eat. Lance advised Carrie to let him take the boy with him in the show. She agreed, and Lance taught the boy, whose father as Lance's one-time manager, to be one of the best trick ropers in Australia...As 'Buffalo Vernon', Harold Sullivan remained in show business all his life.

(ibid.)

"Esteban Clemento, a great Mexican roper, who had been a lieutenant on General Vija's staff in the insurrection."

(ibid.)

## New Members, etc.

(1-6-84 to 31-7-84)

BATCHELOR G.	"Merravay", Hoimpton Road, nr. Withernsea, N. Humberside HU19 2QW;
BOOTHROYD H.M.	1, Botley Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts;
BULLEMENT, Harry	1, Jervis Road, Hull, HTtJ9 4BP;
COLEMAN K.F.	53, Westbourne Road, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts. NG17 2FB;
KLAIJ, Bram	1624 G.K., Hoorn, Holland;
ONTETT N.J.	17, Tunkers Lane, Bury, Huntindon, Cams. PE17 1LA;
QUILL, John L.	1021 Shire Court, Crofton, Maryland, 21114, U.S.A;
PERRY G.J.	171, London Road, Horndean, Hants. P03 OHH;
SMITH J.R.	50, Arethusa Way, Bisley, Woking, Surrey GTJ24 9BX;

### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

DEVINE, Ann	c/o P. Devine, 18, East Beeches Road, Crowborough, E. Sussex TN6 2AY;
MOTT, Graham	23, Seymour Gardens, Twickenham, Middlesex;
SCOTT H.	20, Oathill Close, Brixworth, Northampton;
THOMASON, Charles	8, Spartan Close, Edmonton, Queensland 4869, Australia;
WARD, Brian	40, Willow Crescent, Chapelton, nr. Sheffield, Yorks;--



### DELETE

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