

UPDATES:

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1 BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The purpose of this Collector Note “**CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY & THE MERCHANT MARINE**” is *an attempt* to document the full range of clasp knives that were in use by sailors of the Royal Navy and the civilian merchant marine from the early 19th century to the late 20th century. It is a companion collector note to other CASK Collector Notes, being: “Clasp Knives of the Boer War”, “Clasp Knives 1905 – 1939”, “Clasp Knives 1939 – 1945”, and “Private Purchase Military Clasp Knives” (all available at www.CASK.info). The inclusion of the civilian merchant marine is however possibly misleading, as it is based on the assumption that clasp knives used by sailors were common across both services. This assumption results from a total lack of evidence to the contrary, however it should remain open to question.

A note of caution: a review of the final draft of this Collector Note shows clearly that the words “*assumption*”, “*assumed*” and similar, appear on almost every page, and especially in the various discussions regarding the square point rope knife. This confirms that there is still a lack of firm evidence surrounding much of the “Clasp Knives of The Royal Navy & the Merchant Marine” narrative, particularly in the 19th century, resulting in perhaps an overuse of speculation in the absence of facts. This is inevitable in a First Edition; however it is hoped that knowledgeable readers will contribute additional information so that further editions that can replace speculation with facts. An additional way of contributing further information and/or examples of sailors’ clasp knives, is to post them on the Facebook pages: “Military Jack Knives from Around the World” and “BRITISH & SHEFFIELD”. In the few weeks between completing the first draft of this Collector Note and the final Edition 1, two very interesting example of RN clasp knives were posted, and, with their owners’ approval, they are now included in this first edition.

A useful definition of “sailor” for the purposes of this Collector Note is: “*In directories this generally applies to a labourer on a ship doing manual duties, but in general parlance was used to describe any person under officer class who sailed the seas.*”¹. In the late 19th & early 20th century the term “sailor” also came to be linked to those engaged in pleasure boating (i.e. sailing as a sport or recreation.), however this Collector Note is primarily limited to identifying clasp knives used by sailors of the British Royal Navy and the merchant marine. Note that King George V bestowed the title of “Merchant Navy” on the British merchant shipping fleets following their service in the First World War.

For collectors with an interest in all things nautical (and not just antique) I recommend Iñaki Isla Isla’s “THE BOOK OF THE SAILOR KNIFE” which is available on Facebook, and also on PINTEREST where I follow it, and where it is described as: “*It is a book in constant construction about the knives-knives-axes-swords of the Seafaring Field with photographs and pieces from Hundreds of Companions spread throughout the Planet, from different times*”.

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2 CONTEXT

There is a general distinction between sailors' clasp knives and the better-known clasp knives in use by the British military, especially for the period c.1860s – c.1905, being that clasp knives in use by the Royal Navy appear to have been commercially available knives whereas clasp knives supplied to the military were commonly stamped with the **W↑D** Government ownership stamp which suggests that they were supplied under Government contract and accord with a Government specification. This can perhaps be explained by the acquisition process in the 19th century where the Admiralty would put out tenders for the supply of knives probably based on a standard description for the supply of a specific knife that was known or already held in stock, rather than a detailed specification for a manufacturing contract, as was the process in the beginning in the early 20th century with the introduction of Admiralty Pattern 301. This is not an absolute distinction however as some such knives – for example the square point rope knife was in use by both the Royal Navy and the military possibly at the same time (i.e. c.1860s), but only the military knives were stamped **W↑D**.

For probably all of the 19th century, this square point rope knife was one of a range of patterns that can commonly be described as an English 'Jack Knife'², that is, a large usually single bladed knife of sturdy construction that was produced as an everyday hand-tool for workers in various trades, activity or service. The word "Jack" is possibly derived from common usage as being 'a knife for jack' – "jack" being a slang word for a manual worker such as a lumberjack, steeplejack, jacktar (i.e. sailor), "jack of all trades", etc. Pruning knives are another example of knives that were produced in vast quantities and styles as a hand-tool for workers involved in agricultural production, forestry, and orcharding for example. The most common sailor's clasp knife known to collectors is without a doubt the square point rope knife, as this is a pattern of a unique style that is easily identifiable, of which the following is a typical example.



Maker: "NON XLL JOSEPH ALLEN & SONS SHEFFIELD" stamped on the mark side tang, closed length of 4

11/16 inches, stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, hand-forged tapered backspring, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin, and probably dates c.1860 - 1880. Further information about this maker is detailed in section 5.1.2.6. [here](#). (source: Paul Stamp collection).

A common misconception amongst collectors is that sailors' knives were limited to such square pointed rope knives (especially in the 19th century). However, it is now recognised that sailors would normally own two or more knives, with the second knife usually being a medium/large sized (i.e. normally 4.5 inches +) clasp knife, commonly with a spear point blade. These were far more versatile than the square point rope knife in addressing the range of tasks that a sailor would need to deal with during his time at sea, whereas a square point rope knife served a single purpose as a hand tool for cutting rope by laying the cutting edge of the blade on the rope and belting it with a belaying pin (i.e. a wooden mallet). This is discussed further in section "5.1. Square point rope knives" [here](#).

An excellent description of the role of the clasp knife in the life of a sailor can be accessed in the Blog "British Tars 1740 – 1790"³, and included [here](#) as APPENDIX 2. What I really enjoyed about the article is that it gave a human perspective to seafarers whom we collectors only ever regarded as someone who needed a 'wonderful' knife that assisted them in working with rope. This desire of the authors to give a human perspective to the topic is further developed by reference to "APPENDIX 3: A World War 1 Sailors Prize Knife" ([here](#)), and "APPENDIX 4: Named Knives" ([here](#)).

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The following six clasp knife examples are intended to illustrate the broad range of styles or patterns that fall within the definition of “CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY & THE MERCHANT MARINE” as presented in this Collector Note:



Square-point rope knife. Used by the Royal Navy and the merchant marine, and also supplied to the British military – [see section 5.1 here](#).



Sheepfoot Blade Sailor Knives – available in a variety of sizes, and two styles of blade shape – [see section 5.2 here](#).



Clip-point sailor knife – more commonly found with a closed length of 4 inches, with the one shown above having a closed length of 5 inches – [see section 5.3 here](#).



Clasp knife with spear point or sheepfoot blade, used by sailors of the Royal Navy and merchant marine primarily in the 19th century – [see section 5.4 here](#)



Admiralty Pattern 301, came into service in c.1910 and appears to have remained in service until 1938 – [see section 6.2 here](#)



Royal Navy Seaman’s Clasp Knife, came into service in c.1939 and remained in service until 1986 – [see section 6.3 here](#)

As can be noted in three of the six knives described above, an indicator of a clasp knife that could have been used by a sailor in the 19th century is historically the provision of a hole at the butt end of the handle to secure the knife to a lanyard, as detailed in [APPENDIX 5 \(here\)](#), to prevent it from falling when the “jacktar” was working ‘aloft’ (i.e. in the rigging). However, such a requirement could also apply to other trades – a steeplejack for example, so it cannot be automatically assumed that a knife with a hole at the butt end is a sailor’s knife. Of course, it is not only the presence of a hole that is the possible indicator, as the provision of a strong shackle would serve the same purpose. Also, it is assumed that there were vastly more sailors in the Royal Navy and the civilian merchant marine than there were manual workers employed as steeplejacks for example. Therefore, it is perhaps probable that a large clasp knife with a lanyard hole or a sturdy shackle was indeed a sailor’s knife.

Finally, as noted by Ron Flook in his book “British and Commonwealth Military Knives”⁴ – (referenced throughout this Collector Note as “Flook’s B&CMK”) at page 126 in a letter from the Royal Naval Museum: “*In reply to your letter ... we have consulted the Seamanship Manuals back to 1883 and although knives are mentioned as part of a seaman’s kit issue, they are not generally illustrated. In the 1898 Manual for boys a knife is illustrated as part of a kit laid out for inspection, but on too small a scale to be of any help. However it could be a simple horn handled clasp type of knife*”. This correspondence does suggest however that the “*illustrated*” knife was not a square-point rope knife as such knives have a very distinctive shape that would be obvious even on a small-scale illustration.

Therefore, given the current absence of documentation such as a Royal Navy specification for a clasp knife, it means that it is difficult to determine whether a particular knife was a Royal Navy sailor’s knife, a merchant marine sailor’s knife, or a jack knife owned by a manual worker, that is until the introduction into service of the Admiralty Pattern 301 clasp knife in the early 20th century as detailed in [section 6.2 here](#). To date, we have noted only

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one example of an AP 301 knife in Thomas Turner 1925 cutlery trade catalogue (page 51) where it is described as a SERVICE KNIFE “6490, 4½”, *Stag. As supplied to His Majesty’s Navy*”. Similar designs were however produced by various manufacturers and marketed as better quality ‘private purchase’ items. Possible examples, including an illustration in an undated Jonathan Crooke’s Trade catalogue is shown in Tweedale’s “The Sheffield Knife Book” (page 72)⁵, and [here](#).

This Collector Note “CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY & THE MERCHANT MARINE” is specifically a reference to “clasp knives”. It is important to note however that sailors also used fixed-blade knives when undertaking marine associated tasks. These knives are generally referred to as “deck knives” and would have been regarded as a hand tool – in the same way that a carpenter regards a hammer. Such knives are not referenced in this Collector Note.



Adjacent is an example of a ‘private purchase’ sailor’s deck knife circa mid-19th Century. 9” overall, 5 ¼”

unmarked single edged blade, jugged bone grips. No sheath. (Source: Martin Cook collection). Interestingly, we have been unable to locate any documentary evidence about such knives – neither in the standard UK references quoted in this Collector Note, nor in the various works on US knives by Michael Silvey. This suggests that deck knives were possibly more associated with merchant shipping than with the British or American navies.

3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

As explained in the previous section, the main characteristics of a sailor’s clasp knife in the 19th century are difficult to define with a specificity that would enable a typology to be produced, except perhaps for the square point rope knife. One source that does provide details, to a varying degree, are the 19th century Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues – some of which provide both a written description and an illustration, whilst others provide just an illustration. Other sources of information are technical references - such as Ron Flook’s “British and Commonwealth Military Knives (B&CMK) as previously mentioned, Michael Silvey’s “Pocket Knives of the United States Military”⁶, Bernard Levine’s “Levine’s Guide to Knives and their Values”⁷, various magazine articles as detailed in the following text, Kevin Coleman’s “Military Clasp Knives”⁸, and most importantly – examples of clasp knives primarily in the collections of the joint authors, together with other examples that are separately credited.

3.1 Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues

The most important of these, in an attempt to establish a general chronology for the role of clasp knives used by sailors of the Royal Navy and the merchant marine, is the Mappin Brothers’ Illustrated Catalogue” dated circa **1860**. This is the earliest trade catalogue that the authors have access to and was sourced from a very informative article by Bernard Levine in the July 2019 edition of Knife Magazine – see [section 3.1.2](#) on following page.

3.1.1 Smith's "Key to Manufacturers"



Although "Smith's Key"⁹ is not strictly a Sheffield cutlery trade magazine, it is a valuable indicator of the type and style of clasp knives that were generally available from Sheffield manufacturers when it was published in 1816. Its full title is "*Explanation or Key to the Various Manufactories of Sheffield With Engravings of Each Article Designed for the Utility of Merchants, Wholesale Ironmongers published by Joseph Smith in 1816*".

Bernard Levine, in his September 1986 article in Knife World magazine "Warranted Really Good"¹⁰, provides the following explanation regarding the purpose of Smith's Key "In 1816 an enterprising Sheffield publisher names Joseph Smith tried to help rebuild the shattered American trade [following the 'War of 1812' .ed] by issuing the first ever illustrated catalog of Sheffield Cutlery and hardware. Smith polled cutlers, factors and merchants to find out what sorts of cutlery and tools had actually been selling in America before the war. It was these patterns, regardless of who made them that were included in his "Key to Manufacturers".

The two knives 226 and 227 (and maybe 224 and 225?) have characteristics in common with sailor's clasp knives featured in the following range of Sheffield cutlery trade magazines. With regard to the above illustration, Bernard Levine in his article "Old Sailor Knives"¹¹ which was published in the December 1986 edition of "Knife World" magazine, suggests that the 'scale' shown at the bottom of the page is in fact a reference to "... pattern number 227. It was available in eleven sizes, in quarter inch increments from 3 inches up to 5 ½ inches long closed". In fact, it is equally possible that this applies to all the "Pocket Knives" shown on this page.

3.1.2 Mappin Brothers (c.1860)

Following are the examples of the five "Sailor's Knives" detailed in the Mappin catalogue¹².



"Pattern 7754. Buffalo handle, 4 ½ inches, 1 Blade Sailor's Knife with hole in Handle".
Also available with stag handle



"Pattern 7736. Stag handle, 4 ½ inches, 1 Blade Sailor's Knife with hole in Handle".
7785 is the same as 7736 "but only 4 inches long".



"Pattern 8370. Stag handle, 4 ½ inches, 1 Blade Sailor's Knife with Copper Shackle".

Same as above

"Pattern 8370 ½ . Stag handle, 5 inches, 1 Blade Sailor's Knife with Copper Shackle".

Note there is an inconsistency between the pattern numbering of the above knives on pages 7 and 8 of this catalogue, however the text accompanying the illustrations above summarises the descriptions as best we can.

The significance of this c.1860 catalogue is that it clearly shows that, at that point in time, sailors' knives were available in two patterns, one being the distinctive square point rope knife – that would have been understood to be a 'hand tool', and three versions of a knife with a single spear blade that would have been recognised in the 1860s as being a 'pocket knife' suitable for more personal use, and commonly carried by men and boys in the 19th

and early to mid-20th century. In the following two cutlery trade catalogues, which are of a later date, two further clasp knife patterns were introduced based on the provision of a sheepfoot blade and a clip-point blade.

3.1.3 Lockwood Brothers' Colonists' Guide

The catalogue¹³ is undated and is tentatively dated by the authors as 'pre-1870'. It only consists of illustrations, and originally would have had an accompanying price list. Having a separate price list enabled the updating of quoted prices without the need to produce a comprehensive catalogue (i.e. including both illustrations and prices) every time there was a price increase. The following illustration shows the extensive range of probable "Sailor's Knives" shown in the catalogue, the distinctive feature being the provision of a hole at the butt end of the handle for attaching to a lanyard, or the provision of a stout shackle. Also, the shape of the handle with a straight top and curved bottom became standard for almost all following examples, compared to the straight lines of the Mappin & Webb Pattern 7745 shown above. See also "section 5.1.1 Typology of square-point rope knives" [here](#).



The 'lanyard hole' that was added as part of the original manufacturing process is evident in the illustrations as they were countersunk at both sides, whereas holes that were added as an owner-modification tended to be straight throughout. The distinction between the

two smaller clip point knives, which is not clear from the illustration, is that pattern 8267 has a lanyard hole and pattern 8267½ doesn't.

3.1.4 John Wragg & Son

(This is the assumed maker as that is the name rubber-stamped on each page.)

This is a vast catalogue¹⁴ of over 80 pages detailing a range of pen knives, pocketknives, knives for various trades, sportsman's knives, table cutlery, scissors, sheath knives, machetes, etc. It is not dated but appears to be relevant the mid to late-1880s. Note the several references to seafaring shown on the grip cartouches and on the blades.



3.1.5 George Wostenholm & Son,

This catalogue¹⁵ is undated but appears to date c.1885 – c.1892. It has a huge range of clasp knives but only one that could be classified as a sailor's knife due to the inclusion of a hole at the butt end, and notably, the catalogue does not include a square-point rope knife. The following illustration from the catalogue is pattern 78: the catalogue shows it with "Cocoa" scales and advises that it is also available as Black Buff., Bone, Stag, and all with the option "with Copper Shackles".



Note however that Michael Silvey in his book "Pocket Knives of the United States Military"¹⁶ (see section 3.2.4 [here](#)) has photos of three square-point rope knives that are stamped "GEORGE WOSTENHOLMS I*XL CUTLERY", which are described in more detail in section 5.1.2.10 [here](#).

3.1.6 Christopher Johnson & Co.

Similar to the Wostenholm catalogue immediately above, this catalogue¹⁷ is undated but is certainly **post-1892** and could extend to early 20th century. It has a huge range of clasp knives but only a small number that could be classified as a sailor's knife due to the inclusion of a hole at the butt end, and does not include a square point rope knife. The copy quality of the catalogue is poor however the following example is of interest.

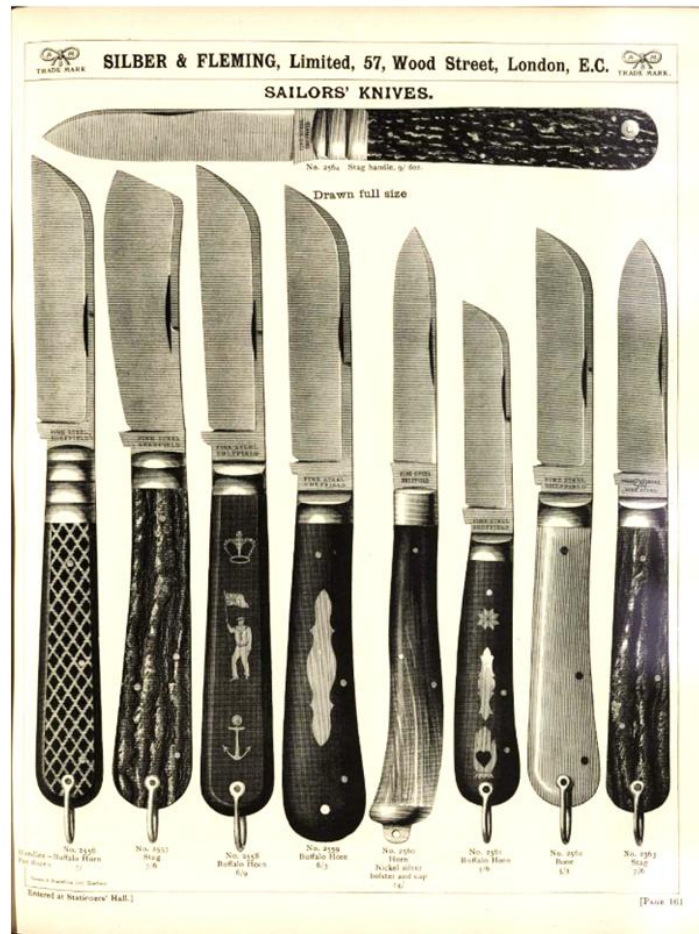


The accompanying text states “6807 4 ½ inch, black horn handles, Iron Shoulders”. There is also reference to

pattern 8127 “As 6807, but with Spear Point Blade”.

3.1.7 Silber & Fleming London

Silber & Fleming¹⁸ were a London based wholesaler of an extensive range of electro-silver-plated goods, ironmongery, and other household items. Flook’s “The London Knife Book”¹⁹ makes a very brief mention of the company on page 147 as “Silber & Fleming. Dealers, 56 to 62 and 71 Wood St., and 21 London Wall **1890 – 1895**”.



The adjacent plate is copied from the catalogue section “Table & Pocket Cutlery”. What is of interest is that this whole page is headed “Sailors’ Knives”

This version of the catalogue was created by UK cutlery collector and researcher Paul Stamp and is a consolidation of three catalogues downloaded from ‘online archive.org’ and then individual pages saved to one word/PDF file. Original Source – Victoria & Albert Museum that date the catalogues as 1889 and referenced it as: “*Illustrated pattern-book of silver goods, electro-silver plated goods, and cutlery; also japanned goods, bronze and ormolu, ironmongery, lamps, etc. by Silber & Fleming Ltd*”.

Some pages of the catalogue refer to Silber & Fleming as “Cutlery Manufacturers” however the extensive range of clasp knives on offer in the catalogue suggest that they were most probably made in Sheffield – as was commonly the case in the late 19th century. The tang stamping shown on the knives in the following illustration is mostly “FINE STEEL SHEFFIELD”, although the Silber & Flemming trademark is also noted on some of the knives illustrated in the catalogue.

3.1.8 Joseph Rodgers & Sons Ltd.

The following examples are illustrated in both a catalogue²⁰ dating “about **1900**” and possibly slightly earlier, and a catalogue²¹ that appears to date circa **1910 – 1915**; the pattern numbers and the illustrations are identical.



3.1.9 Thomas Turner & Co.

This catalogue²² is dated 1902. It does not illustrate a square point sailor's knife; however it does make reference to one – see following in red.



“Pattern 209. 4 ½ inch, iron Bolster”



“Pattern 310. Sheep. 4 ½ inch, Stag, Iron Bolster. Also available in 4 in. 4 ¼ in. 4 ½ in. 4 ¾ in. and 5 in. Also available with spear blade”.



“Pattern 1155. 4 ½ in. Black Buffalo. Iron Bolster”.



“AS NOW BEING SUPPLIED TO H.M. ROYAL NAVY”

“Pattern 9639. 4 ½ in. Stag. Iron Bolster. **P9840** is clip-pointed, as **P2180** following. **P9639 SQ** is Square Point Service Pattern”.

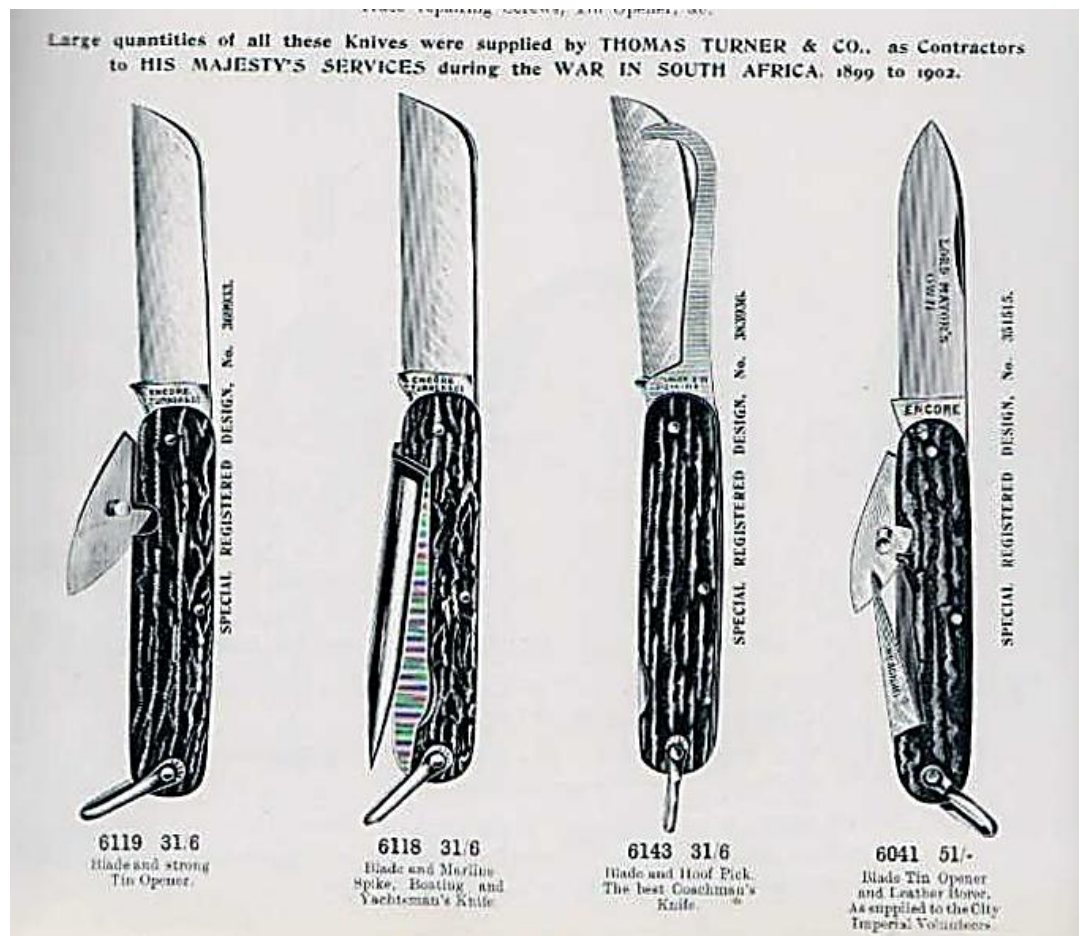


“Pattern 2180. 4- inch Black Buffalo, G.S. Bolster” [“G.S.” being German Silver and what is now referred to as nickel silver .ed]. This knife is also included in the T. Turner 1925 catalogue – see following.

This Thomas Turner 1902 catalogue was a post-Boer War trade catalogue displaying knives that were available for sale to the general public – including a page of which were most

likely based on earlier Boer War military contract versions. This was confirmed when examples of military contract versions (i.e. with **W↑D** stamps) were identified. The Boer War ceased in May 1902, and the catalogue was also published in 1902 possibly after the war ended. It is possible that this page (copied below) was included in the catalogue to exploit the popularity of such knives in wartime.

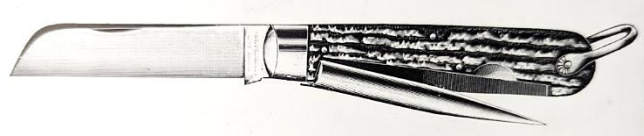
While it is noteworthy that this 1902 catalogue does not include an illustration of the square point rope knife that was produced in vast numbers by T. Turner & Co. earlier in the 19th century, it does make reference to it as part of the description of “**Pattern 9639**” (see above) which states “**P9639 SQ is Square Point Service Pattern**”. Further, the length of pattern 9639 at 4 ½ inches and the style of the handle is totally consistent with examples of Turner square-point rope knives detailed in [section 5.1.2.2 here](#). This suggests that there was a change of attitude regarding the role of a sailor’s knife towards the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century, ultimately leading to the development of the Admiralty Pattern 301 (see [section 6.2 following here](#)).



Specifically for this Collector Note, examples of Pattern 6118 (shown above) have been noted with **W↑D** tang stamps that indicates military issue, and an example is depicted on Plate 302 (page 32) of Flook’s “B&CMK”²³. It is described by Flook in the following terms: “This ... knife obviously saw Army service; the blade being stamped **W↑D 1**; this **WD** marking over-stamps the mark of Thomas Turner. The knife is unusual in that it has full stag scales, there being no bolster. The marline spike is stamped **RE 13165** (RE for Royal Engineers?)”. Further examples are noted with full Thomas Turner and ENCORE tang stamping which could be the commercial version, however there is also the possibility that they could be a Royal Navy version in keeping with the RN practice of not including stamping that indicates government issue. As mentioned above, it is also possible that this pattern 6118 was influential in the design of the Admiralty Pattern 301 clasp knife (see [section 6 here](#)) in that they both consisted of a main sheepfoot blade together with the introduction of a marline spike, that has not been observed in earlier Royal Navy examples.

3.1.10 Thomas Turner & Co. (1925)

This catalogue²⁴ is dated 1925. It does not include a square point sailor's knife. Apart from the pattern 2180 referenced in [section 3.1.9](#) above, the only knife that can be identified as a sailor's knife is the Admiralty Pattern 301 (see [section 6.2](#) following) which is one of two knives described as "Service Knives".



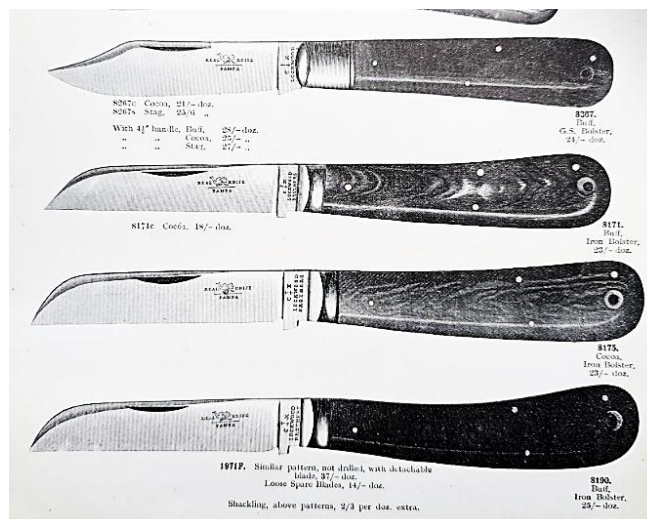
"Pattern 6490. 4 ½ inch. Stag. As supplied to His Majesty's Navy".

The other Service Knife is described as "**Pattern 6499.** 4 ¾ inch Cheqhorn, As supplied to His Majesty's Army" – being a pattern 6353/1905 clasp knife.

3.1.11 Lockwood Brothers (circa 1920s)

This is part of a vast catalogue – being pages 90 to 206. Compared with the circa 1870s Lockwood Brothers catalogue previously described at [section 3.1.2](#) above which references nineteen probable "Sailor's Knives" - their distinctive feature being the provision of a hole at the butt end of the handle for attaching to a lanyard, this Lockwood Brothers circa 1920s catalogue consists of only six such knives – all of which were also featured in the circa 1870s catalogue and having the same pattern number, but which doesn't include a square point rope knife.

These knives are described in the catalogue as "Heavy Pocket Knives".



Pattern 8267. Buffalo horn handles and nickel silver bolsters. Also available with cocoa and stag handles, and a 4 ½ inch option.

Pattern 8171. Buffalo horn (or cocoa) handles and iron bolsters.

Pattern 8175. Cocoa handles and iron bolsters.

Pattern 8190. Buffalo horn handles and iron bolsters.

Pattern 1971F. Similar pattern, not drilled, with detachable blade. Loose spare blades available.

Note: all the above knives are available with a shackle option.

The following two knives, also with a butt-end hole, are described in the catalogue as "Spear Blade Pocket Knives".



Pattern 8266. Cocoa, iron Bolster. Also available with Buffalo and Bone handle options.



Pattern 8266 ½. Cocoa, Nickel silver bolster. Also available with Buffalo and Bone handle options.

This Collector Note places a major emphasis on these Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues as an important source of information contributing to the sailors' clasp knives narrative. It is however recognised that such sources probably project a commercial bias in the

promotion of their individual products – in that they are sales catalogues primarily aimed at wholesalers/sellers, and that some of the knives may be “sailors’ knives” by association rather than in practice. Particularly towards the end of the 19th century, there was an ever-growing interest in the navy amongst the general public, who projected all the ideas of British greatness onto ‘the British Tar.’ There was a great flourishing of art connected to sailors & the sea and advertisers jumped onto this wave, using the sea, ships & sailor imagery in lots of products (e.g. Players Navy Cut cigarettes etc.). Sailor suits were very popular for children and lots of books were written featuring tales of the sea. This suggests that the catalogues featured from the late 19th century (particularly those of John Wragg & Son and Silber & Fleming,) may also have been influenced by these popular feelings to add seafaring imagery and association to their knives. The implication being that they may also have been targeted at customers who were not necessarily sailors, but were influenced by the popular imagery, in the same way that you didn’t have to be a sailor to smoke Navy Cut cigarettes, or to dress your children as sailors.

3.2 Reference Books & Articles

It is noteworthy that all of the documentary information on sailor’s clasp knives that is available to the authors has a singular focus on the square point rope knife, whereas the Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues, at least until the early 20th century, generally included the square pointed rope knife as one of a range of clasp knives with either spear blades or sheepfoot blades that were suitable for ‘sailors’ due to their common provision of a hole at the butt end or a solid shackle for attachment to a lanyard. A possible reason for this is that the distinctive shape of the square-point rope knife made them easier to identify, and that some of them were stamped with the Government ownership **W↑D** (and a number) stamp that indicated they were issued to the military, and consequently they were regarded as ‘highly collectable’. Whilst this is undoubtedly correct, at least one of the catalogues detailed above, being “**3.1.9 Thomas Turner & Co. ENCORE Suffolk Works Sheffield**” (dated 1902) features one knife (pattern 9639) that includes the information “AS NOW BEING SUPPLIED TO H.M. ROYAL NAVY”. It also states that “*P9840 is clip-pointed, as P2180 following. P9639 SQ is Square Point Service Pattern*”. To date, we have been unable to find any references that discuss or describe the role of spear blades, clip-pointed, or sheepfoot blades in clasp knives in use by the Royal Navy or merchant marine.

3.2.1 Levine’s Guide to Knives and Their Values

Bernard Levine’s “Guide”²⁵ was first published in 1985 and is considered a primary source for all matters associated with both folding knives and fixed-blade knives, albeit with a bias towards knives that are associated with the USA.

In that part of the Guide headed “Named Jack Knife Patterns” Levine has a section titled “Sailor’s Rope Knives (including U.S. and Foreign Military)”, and the first two paragraphs provide an excellent description of the rope knife:

“The ordinary sailor’s knife is a curved jack or a curved regular jack with a single sheepfoot or flaring ‘rope’ blade. These special straight-edged blades are used to cut rope cleanly. This is done by laying the rope on a wooden surface and hammering the blade through it with a belying pin [a type of wooden mallet .ed] Between this rough use and the hazards of salt water, it is not surprising that old sailor’s knives in good condition are rare.

Ordinary sailor’s knives are fairly large, at least 4 inches long closed. They usually have a bail so that they can be secured from falling overboard”.

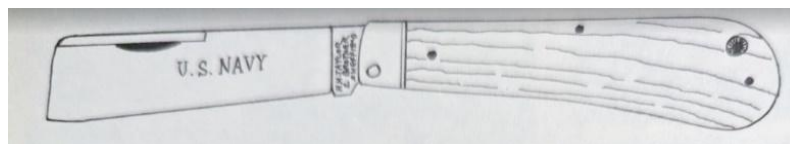
Of the accompanying illustrations in Levine’s Guide that are relevant to this Collector Note there are two knives, as follows:

1. “ENCORE T. TURNER & Co. BEST STEEL”, genuine stag, copper bail. An example of this knife is shown in section 3.2.2 on the following page of this Collector Note.

2. "BEST ENGLISH CUTLERY", 4-inch regular jack with horn handles, tapered back spring, lanyard hole, long square kick. Pewter shield stamped with an anchor and "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP". Circa 1815 – 1830. See illustration immediately below.



Further, there is a hand-drawing of a square point rope knife with the following details "U.S. Navy knife by H. H. Taylor & Brothers of Sheffield, recovered from the stores of the U.S.S. Cairo, sunk in the Yazoo River in 1862. 4 ¾ inches closed, genuine stag".



Two similar knives by the same maker are also detailed in Silvey – see [section 3.2.4](#) following.

3.2.2 "Old Sailor Knives" article

This article written by Bernard Levine was published in the December 1986 edition of "Knife World" magazine and was also included in the book "The Best of Knife World Volume III"²⁶ published in 1993. This article is interesting in that it provides observations regarding sailor knives made in the UK in the early 19th century to mid-19th century, including the following:

"Knives used by American sailors before the mid-19th century, at least those made in Sheffield, which would have been the overwhelming majority of them, evidently looked quite similar to the latter ones. However there are a few subtle but important differences.

Perhaps the most obvious difference is the blade shape. Many older Sheffield Sailor knives, instead of a straight back, have a curved upsweeping back. Actually this blade shape persisted past the middle of the 19th century as shown by a typical 1860s sailor knife This knife has its original copper bail and genuine stag handles".

The article includes a photo of such a Thomas Turner knife together with the following description:



It is now known that the undated “article” referred to by Flook is the booklet “*Handicrafts That Survive*” which is a company history of Thomas Turner & Co. published in 1902. This is the source of the above quote from Flook that “441,800 were supplied to the Admiralty over the last twenty years”. This booklet is further elaborated in [section 5.1 here](#), as some of the claims in the

document are questionable, in my opinion.



This is a trimmed copy of the illustration on page 39 of the booklet - an original copy of which is now in Paul Stamp’s collection.

The first example of a square point rope knife provided by Flook (Plate 228 page 127) is a Thomas Turner knife tang stamped over three lines: “ENCORE T. TURNER & Co. BEST STEEL”, and an identical example is illustrated herein on a preceding page above. This knife also appears to be the most-commonly found example by collectors, and there appears to be some consensus amongst collectors that the style dates from **c.1860s to c.1870s**, and possibly later. Full details of this knife are included in [section 5.1.2.2](#) of this Collector Note [here](#), where it is defined as the T.T. “second version”. Flook’s second example (Plate 289 page 127) is described as follows: “*This knife is unusual in that it has smooth horn scales stamped with a servicemen’s number. The Tang is marked J. IRELAND CONTRACTOR*” over two lines. The third example (Plate 290 page 128) reflects Flook’s recognition that square-point rope knives were also used by the U.K. military in the 19th Century, as follows: “*This was made by the Sheffield firm of Clarke Shirely and beside their name is marked W↑D 2 indicating Army issue*”. Full details of an identical knife are included in [section 5.1.2.4](#) of this Collector Note [here](#). Flook’s final “... *example is very unusual in that it is dated. The tang is marked with the maker’s name DEANE & Co. W↑D 19, and the date 1878. Examples bearing the name of Parkin & Marshall have also been noted*”.

Flook’s B&CMK is also important in the context of this “CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY & THE MERCHANT MARINE” Collector Note in that it documents the introduction of Admiralty Pattern 301 as the Royal Navy’s clasp knife in the early 1900, and its eventual replacement in 1939/1940 by the “Royal Navy Seaman’s Clasp knife” which remained in service until 1986. These matters are further elaborated in [section 6 here](#).

3.2.4 Pocket knives of the United States Military

Mike Silvey’s book “Pocket knives of the United States Military”³⁰ was published in 2002 and the first section “The First Folders” provides a general chronology (and excellent photography) of the role of the square-point rope knife in the U. S. Navy through to the

start of the World War 1 and provides confirmation that until late in the 19th century most such knives were purchased from Sheffield. Following completion of the final draft of this Collector Note I was advised by numerous sources that Michael Silvey in 2015 had published an extensively expanded edition of this book with the title "**The Complete Book of U. S. Military Pocket Knives from 1800 to the present**". Rather than delay the publication of this Collector Note on the CASK website, the authors decided to ensure that Silvey's new book should be comprehensively covered in the next edition of this Collector Note.

The following paragraphs detail the names of Sheffield cutlery firms identified by Silvey as the makers of square pointed rope knives exported to the USA in the 19th century based on the stamping on each specific knife photographed. Apart from the first knife, all other knives photographed have U. S. NAVY (or similar) stamped on the mark side blade face:

- (page 7) "**E.J. HIGGINS CAST STEEL**" also has "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP" stamped on the blade face, probably dates to the 1820's. A copy of Silvey's photo of this knife is included in [section 4.3](#) of this Collector Note [here](#). There is no mention of "E. J. Higgins" in "Tweedale's Directory of Sheffield Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2010"³¹ – referred to throughout this Collector Note as "Tweedale's Directory".
- (page 9) "**THOMAS TURNER & Co. SHEFFIELD** [with the 'three-diamond' trademark]", no date is given by Silvey however the [style](#) appears to be the same as other T. Turner knives that are assumed to date from the 1860s, albeit [without the 'three-diamond' trademark](#), and [with](#) the inclusion of "BEST STEEL". It appears probable however that this example dates **1880s – 1900s** based on the tang stamp – see further details [here](#) where it is defined as the T.T. "third version".
- (pages 10 and 11) "**H. H. TAYLOR & BROTHER SHEFFIELD**", Tweedale notes that this firm was operational in Sheffield in the 1860s and maintained a sales office in New York.
- (page 13) "**ENGLAND**" Silvey notes that this is the only mark on this knife so there is a possibility that it was in fact made in the U.S.A.
- (page 14) "**CHAPIN & PHIPPS CELEBRATED CUTLERY**". Silvey states that Chapin & Phipps "manufactured cutlery in England prior to 1900", however there is no mention of "Chapin & Phipps" in Tweedale and therefore it is assumed that they were a U.S.A. (wholesale/retail ?) company.
- (page 15) "**THOMAS FENTON**" on the mark side and "SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" on the pile side. Silvey states that "Little is known of this maker.", It is probable however, based on Tweedale, that this was the "Thomas Fenton" who prior to his death in 1893 "... re-established the family firm ...", being "Joseph Fenton & Sons Ltd."
- (pages 16 and 17) "**GEORGE WOSTENHOLMS I*XL CUTLERY**". Three knives are shown all having the same tang stamp with the suggestion that they were "*probably made around 1860*". Silvey notes another knife with a stamping that includes "SHEFFIELD" which he assumes was "*probably made at a later date*". As noted previously in [section 3.1.5](#) the undated (c.1885 – 1892) Wostenholm trade catalogue does not include a square-point rope knife. My observation also is that Wostenholm stamped square-pointed rope knives are not common in U.K. collections, as I have never seen (or seen reference to) one.
- (page 18) "**CAMBRIDGE & Co SHEFFIELD**", "**CAMBRIDGE CUTLERY WORKS SHEFFIELD**". Tweedale does identify a "Cambridge Cutlery & Tool Company that operated in Sheffield c.1939 – 1959, which does not appear relevant. It is therefore assumed that the knives were made in Sheffield under contract for an American company of that name.
- (page 20). "**TALLY-HO C. T. BINGHAM SHEFFIELD**". According to Tweedale this company operated in Sheffield from c.1852 to c.1863.
- (page 21) "**ALFRED FIELD & Co. SHEFFIELD**". According to Tweedale this company began in Sheffield in 1863 probably as a hardware business with roots in a related

business that began in Birmingham in 1836, and which had an established sales office in New York. Tweedale also observed that at least by the mid-1810s “*Field was a merchant not a manufacturer*”, and he also notes that Field “*had an office in Solingen ... from where Field sourced cutlery for the USA*”. Both Silvey and Tweedale note that Field’s was the U.S. agent for Joseph Rodgers & Sons, and Silvey considered it probable the knife was made by Rodgers under contract to Fields. Certainly, it is a contract knife however there are marked differences of style and construction when compared to the square-point rope knife pattern 1012 illustrated in the Joseph Rodgers c.1900 trade catalogue – see [section 3.1.8 here](#). Also, given that the knife does not indicate a country of origin and therefore was most likely made before 1890, it cannot be automatically assumed that it was made in Sheffield, or in fact the U.K.

- (page 23) “**F. WESTPFAL ACME ENGLAND**”. Silvey notes that F. Westpfal was a New York cutlery supply company and assumes therefore that the knife was a contract knife made for them by “*a manufacturer in England*”.
- (pages 23 – 25) “**ALFRED WILLIAMS SHEFFIELD ENGLAND**”. Tweedale notes that Alfred Williams was described as a “cutlery export agent” in the 1891 census. By the late 1890 he had developed extensive connections with cutlery companies in the U.S., particularly with Kastor Bros. Silvey provides details of four square-point rope knives with slightly different stampings, and he observes that “*My experience has shown that nine out of ten U.S. Navy rope knives found today bear their mark*”. This is perhaps indicative of the strength of those connections. Given that Alfred Williams was a trader rather than a manufacturer it is assumed that all the knives bearing his name were contract knives made for him by an unidentified Sheffield manufacturer(s). The following example in my collection has the makers name as for the third example (i.e. over two lines), however the stamp on the blade face is the less common “UNITED STATES NAVY”.



The knife has non-integral (i.e. separate) bolsters and liners, and the copper shackle is missing.

3.2.5 Military Clasp Knives

This book “Military Clasp Knives”³² (referred to throughout this Collector Note as ‘Coleman’) was self-published by Australian collector Kevin Coleman in June 2023 and covers “Australia, Britain, Canada and India – Second Boer to Present”. The section that is relevant to this Collector Note “CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY & THE MERCHANT MARINE” is “Part Two: British and Australian Military Clasp Knives” (starting at page 23), where Kevin addresses the question as to when was the square-point rope knife in service with the Royal Navy, and by default, what was its role in the British military at the same time? His conclusion, using persuasive evidence is recognition that the square-point rope knife had been in service with the Royal Navy from at least the **1850s** (quoting Silvey³³ as the source), and noting also that a square point rope knife is illustrated in the Mappin Brothers c.1860 trade catalogue [here](#). Concurrently, from the c.1860, the square point rope knife was the issued “clasp knife” of the British Army (see section 5.1.2.16 [here](#)), as evidenced by them being stamped **W↑D** together with a number. By **1872** however an alternative knife (“*Knife Clasp with Marline spike and Lanyard*”) was issued to “*Those who were eligible included Mounted and Dismounted men of the Royal Artillery, Army Service Corps, and Royal Engineers. In addition, troops of the Ordnance Store Corps and Cavalry Pioneers were issued knives*”³⁴. Further details of this knife (known to collectors as the “Boer War Jack Knife) are available on the CASK website (see www.CASK.info) in the companion Collector Note “BRITISH MILITARY CLASP KNIVES OF THE BOER WAR” in [section 4.1](#). Further, to-date no other candidate for the Army issue “clasp knife” in the 19th century (until the time of the 2nd Boer War in 1899), apart from the “square-point rope knife”, has

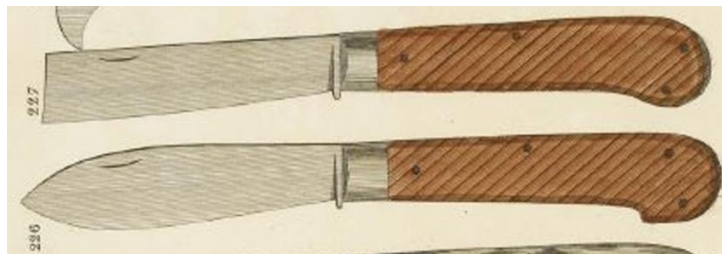
been identified – either by Kevin Coleman, Ron Flook, or any other commentator and/or collectors.

The indications from these various “Sources of Information” suggest a generalised timeline for the sailors’ clasp knife narrative can be applied based on a range of dominant features and by reference to specific examples of known or probable sailor’s clasp knives that reflect these features. This generalised timeline consists of four components:

- **Early 19th Century to c.1850s,**
- **1860s to early 20th Century,**
- **Early 20th Century to c.1939,**
- **1939 to 1980s.**

4 EARLY 19th CENTURY TO c.1850s

We have selected early 19th Century as our starting point based solely on the illustration in Smith’s Key³⁵ which shows a square-point rope knife as “227” and a spear point clasp knife as “226” (see section 3.1.1 for full page illustration [here](#)).



We have been unsuccessful in finding either illustrations or physical examples of clasp knives that have the distinct characteristics of the two knives illustrated above.

We did however have more success in identifying knives that may date from the c.1830s and **c.1850s** when the square point rope knife had developed the characteristics that were common through to the late “19th/early 20th Century”, and that were clearly illustrated, for example, in the Mappin Brothers – Queen’s Cutlery Works Sheffield catalogue dated to c.1860 (see section 3.1.2 [here](#)) which are assumed to reflect clasp knives that would have been commercially available in the preceding decade or two.

The following knife is considered to be a **c.1830s** square point rope knife, based on the provision of ‘scratted’ (incised) bone scales, together with the pistol grip style, which were common on this style of ‘hand tool’ in the early 19th century.

4.1 Elliot



Maker: unclear, however there is a name stamped on the blade face that appears to be “ELLIOT”. The “pistol grip” style of the handle is

similar to that illustrated in Smith’s Key as pattern 227 shown immediately above. It has a closed length of 4 ¼” with a 3 ¼” curved blade, tapered backspring, integral bolsters and scratted bone scales.

The second knife following, with smooth bone scales, is more likely date **c.1840s**.

4.2 Mappin Brothers



Maker: Assumed to be “Mappin Brothers – Queen’s Cutlery Works Sheffield” based on the partially visible “EEN/...LERY” stamped on the mark side tang. It has a closed length of 4 ½ with a 3 ¾” curved blade, swell tang, and steel liners with integral bolster which is narrow. The pivot pin has been replaced.

The following knife does have characteristics that are similar to knife “227” shown top in the illustration from Smith’s Key at the top of this page, being the blade shape and the pistol grip style of the handle, which Silvey states “...probably dates from the 1820’s”.

4.3 E. J. Higgins



Maker: “E. J. HIGGINS CAST STEEL”. The adjacent photo is copied from Silvey’s “Pocket Knives of the United States Military”³⁶ where it is described as follows: “This rope knife which probably dates from the **1820’s** has handles of checkered bone and a blade and a blade marked with the makers mark ‘E. J. HIGGINS CAST STEEL’. The blade face is marked ‘DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP”.

Tweedale makes no mention of a Sheffield cutlery manufacturer of that name and there is no reference to a “Higgins” in the “Late 18th Century Cutlers Marks” reproduced in Levine’s Guide to Knives and Their Values (4th Edition pages 86 – 93)³⁷. It is therefore possible that this knife was made in the U.S.A.

The following knife is considered to be a sailor’s clasp knife that was in common use in the **c.1830s and 1840s** based on the ‘pistol grip’ shape of the handle that is similar to the Smith’s Key rope knife illustrated on a preceding page above.

4.4 Snow Portsea



Maker: not known, the mark side blade face is stamped “SNOW PORTSEA” and I had assumed this to be the retailer. Research by Paul Stamp however has identified that there was a **James Snow** listed as a cutler at 32 Common Hard, Portsea from 1830-1863, and I assume now that he was most likely the maker of this knife. The knife has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, integral liners and bolsters, and cow horn scales with lanyard hole. The name “T. PRATT” is stamped (or incised) beautifully and precisely on the

mark side scale and each letter appears to have originally been impressed with a red filling compound. Such cow horn scales appear to have been replaced by stag scales in this style of knife as illustrated in the Mappin Brothers 1860 catalogue. The connection to "Portsea" which was/is part of greater Portsmouth with its extensive seaport and to His Majesty's Naval Base, Portsmouth (HMNB Portsmouth) confirms the high probability that this clasp knife was intended for use by seafarers.

The following two knives appear to date from the **late 18th /early 19th century** and there is a high probability that they were sailors' knives.

4.5 Sail Maker's knife?



Maker: not known, the only stamping is the word "TOR" stamped on the mark side of the needle. It has a closed length of 4 3/16 inches, probably ivory scales, integral liners and bolsters - with bolsters of a style commonly seen on knives of this era. It has a split backspring – the exposed face of which is slightly curved, and which extends to form a turnscREW. The main blade has an unusual shape and may be an early version of a sheepfoot blade. The secondary blade or

tool is a possibly a sailmaker's needle but could equally be a sacking needle or even a veterinary needle. It also has a pullout pick. Both sides of the scales are 'scorched-marked' with a name, placename, and date which appears to be as follows: "William Ronsley, "Revelinside", and "1802".



The blade shape and the minimal tang are very similar to Pattern 233 in Smith's Key but without the bevelled edge and the nail

nick.

The second knife in this section is of a much later date – probably **c.1830s and 1840s**.

4.6 J. Marks Portsea (T. Turner & Co.)



Maker: not shown, however the tang stamp is known to have belonged to "**Thomas Turner & Sons Sheffield**". It has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, polished cow horn scales, integral liners and bolsters, and a copper shackle with steel pin. The shackle has been twisted to ensure that the knife hangs flat against the wearer. The mark side face of the sheepfoot main blade is stamped "J. MARKS PORTSEA" and is assumed to be the retailer, and the mark side

tang is stamped "WARRENTED REALLY GOOD" in a curved banner. As with the knife stamped "SNOW PORTSEA" on the previous page there is little doubt that this clasp knife was intended for use by seafarers.

Bernard Levine, in his article "Warranted Really Good" originally published in the September 1986 edition of "Knife World"³⁸, suggests that knives with this "WARRENTED REALLY GOOD" stamping would date from "at least before about 1850", and given the lack of any actual mention of the Thomas Turner & Sons" company together with the absence of any reference to "Suffolk Works" which the Thomas Turner & Co. occupied in 1834, (and in fact the absence of any place name) suggests that this knife could date to the **early 1830s**.

5 1860's TO EARLY 20th CENTURY

This is the "golden age" for collectors of antique sailor's knives, particularly regarding the square point rope knife, but less so in regard to the range of clasp knives that were considered by sailors to have a more personal purpose.

It is also evident that a broad typology can be determined that suggests there were four distinct styles of clasp knives that were dominant during this period, that didn't carry-over to the next period in any meaningful way. This distinction is most evident in the blade shape, as follows:



Square point blade
"HUNTER SHEFFIELD"
[here](#)



Sheepfoot blade
"THOMAS WILSON
SHEFFIELD" [here](#)



Clip point blade
"THOMAS TURNER &
Co." [here](#)



Spear point blade
"LOCKWARD
BROTHERS" [here](#)

5.1 Square Point Rope Knife



This knife is, without a doubt, the most sought after of the four sailors' knives styles depicted above, probably because of its distinctive shape and because of a common 'armed services' (naval and military) connection. It is alternatively referred to as "Square Point Folding Knife" and "Square-pointed RN knife" (Flook B&CMK), "Square-point naval clasp knife" (Coleman), "Royal Navy Clasp Knife" (Thomas Turner & Co.) etc. There is no doubt that such knives were issued to (or available to) naval ratings and Flook notes that "... 441,800 were supplied to the Admiralty over the last twenty years" (B&CMK page 126 and assumed to refer to the period 1880 - 1900). Flook also notes on the same page, quoting from a letter to him from the Royal Navy Museum that "... we have consulted the Seamanship manuals back to 1883 and although knives are mentioned as part of a seaman's kit issue, they were not generally illustrated". The difficulty for collectors is that the Royal Navy did not mark their clasp knives, as noted by Flook (page 128), "...the marking of RN jack knives did not become common practice until World War Two, and then the only mark was the year".

SOURCE of illustration: "Handicrafts That Survive" a publication dated 1902 by Thomas Turner & Co. to commemorate their 200th anniversary.

What is not well documented however is the actual purpose of the square point rope knife and its role in the daily life of the sailor when at sea, during most of the 19th century. Given that the style of the knife changed very little during that time (and even then, mostly cosmetic changes), it must be acknowledged that the style was 'fit for purpose' - that is, the cutting of rope – being a constant activity on a sailing ship where rope was as fundamental to the working of a sailing vessel as were the sails and masts. It was in fact a single purpose 'hand tool' that had to be immediately available to address any problem involving the working of rope associated with all sailing and docking activities. Consequently, it was involved in rough treatment which commonly stressed the main pivot pin causing it to loosen and often break; the result being that such knives were often out of action while being repaired or replaced. Their critical role in the actual sailing operation suggests that their provision was the responsibility of the ship's owner (i.e. the Royal Navy or the civilian equivalent) rather than the individual sailor. Whether they were actually issued to each individual sailor at the start of a contract, or were available to the sailor when on duty, is not known. Also, a marline spike or fid ("*fid: wooden pin used for splicing or repairing rope; a marlin spike was used to do the same job on wire.*" Source Wikipedia) was never included in a square point rope knife as its singular purpose was to cut rope. The first example of a knife that incorporated a marline spike and was supplied to the Royal Navy that I am aware of, was the Thomas Turner pattern 6118 - see section "6.1 Thomas Turner & Co. Pattern 6118: [here](#).

Further, there have been suggestions that the square point rope knife was a multipurpose knife, including being an eating utensil (see quote at the end of this section 5.1 following), however I see no evidence in support of this suggestion, and the distinctive blade shape was of little use in undertaking activities other than its designated task of cutting rope. The Sheffield cutlery industry thrived on being innovative, however for the almost 100 years of its existence in the 19th century, I am not aware of any example where an additional blade (or tool) has been added to a square point rope knife to improve its utility. If there was a demand for such, it would have been a simple matter to produce. The answer appears to be that it was an impractical solution, and that the preference of sailors was to own and carry an additional knife that was far better suited to their personal daily needs (as was common practice with men in the UK at that time), and perhaps another for undertaking the tasks associated with their contracted responsibilities for maintaining the ship, including cleaning, painting, and repairing equipment and structures on the ship.

How this all worked out over the decades of the 19th century is complicated, as it was a time of significant social and technological change as wind power was slowly overtaken by steam power, commencing in the **1840s** and was almost universal by the end of the century. A critical date appears to be **1853** with the introduction of 'continuous service' in the Royal Navy, making the Navy a viable career option. Prior to that most seamen entered as volunteers and signed on for a limited number of voyages, and it is assumed were expected to provide their own cutlery equipment. This may have continued until **1857** when ratings were first issued a uniform which most probably included a clasp knife, however there is no evidence as to what the pattern or style of the issue knife may have been.

Research undertaken by UK collector Paul Stamp has identified a notice in the 'Sheffield Independent' newspaper dated 31 May **1871** of a Government Contract for 'Clasp Knives' which states: "*CONTRACT FOR CLASP KNIVES. CONTRACT DEPARTMENT ADMIRALTY WHITEHALL, S. W., 27th May 1871. TENDERS will be received on TUESDAY, 13th June, at Two O'clock, for the supply of SAILORS' CLASP KNIVES*". It appears probable that this is a reference to the square point rope knife, and therefore it can be assumed that it was in demand by the Admiralty at least by **May 1871**, and most probably much earlier.

Square point rope knives were also issued to the military, as evidenced by the stamping of the Government ownership W↑D mark, and five examples are detailed in [section 5.1.2.14](#) following, and [here](#). Kevin Coleman's "Military Clasp Knives"³⁹ (page 24) provides details to support the view that military usage extends back to at least **1863**. There is no apparent difference in the knives that were issued to the navy and the military, apart from the stamping of the Government ownership W↑D mark on the military knives.

In conclusion, an appreciation of the context surrounding the use of the square point rope knife is instructive. The following quote is copied from the booklet "The Victorian Sailor"⁴⁰

"The Victorian age saw a revolution in merchant shipping. By the middle of the century the square-built sailing ship, characteristic of the eighteenth century, was giving way to the more graceful lines of the clipper, and by 1900 huge iron and steel 'down-easters' dominated those ocean routes still plied by sail. But steam power was perhaps the most important innovation. Although still experimental in the 1840s, the steam compound engine was perfected by the 1860s and the more efficient triple expansion engine by the 1880s."

In addition to the adoption of steam power, the Royal Navy also introduced the "Ironclad" which was "a steam-propelled warship protected by steel or iron armour constructed from **1859 to the early 1890s**" (source: Wikipedia) which had the effect of reducing the use of sails and their supporting rigging. More significantly, and consequently, it resulted in a move away from natural fibre-based rope to steel wire rope; in **1883**, steel wire ropes were used for the first time in a suspension bridge - the historic Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. One consequence of these innovations is that the square point rope knives became increasingly redundant in the period 1880s – 1900s, which is evidenced by their apparent absence from many of the contemporary Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues. This suggests that there was a change of attitude regarding the role of a sailor's knife towards the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century, ultimately leading to the development of the Admiralty Pattern 301 as previously discussed in this section.

Regarding the previously mentioned ([here](#)) "**Handicrafts That Survive**" a publication dated 1902 by Thomas Turner & Co. to commemorate their 200th anniversary, there is a statement which claims that "... 441,800 were supplied to the Admiralty over the last twenty years". Assuming that "the last 20 years" is the period 1880s – 1900s and acknowledging that this quote is a reference to square-point rope knives, it is at odds with my interpretation of the information provide in the paragraph immediately above, being "that the square point rope knives became increasingly redundant in the period 1880s – 1900s". I could accept it if the period was 'the last 40 years' which included the boom years of the c.1860s – 1880s and then a gradual tapering off of supply to c.1900, or if the reference was to the full range of knives that Thomas Turner & Co. may have provided to "His Majesty's Services" over that period (which included the Boer Wars), not just to the Admiralty. Further, the same publication makes the claim (copied here from Tweedale's Sheffield Knife Book⁴¹ page 72) that:

"Jack's knife is, indeed, an indispensable possession ... [with which] ... he eats his dinner, for jack is not allowed the luxury of a table knife and fork, he scrapes the paint off a boat, he cleans an iron rail, cuts his own tobacco, and does innumerable other things besides".

In my opinion, this sentence, written in 1902 shows a total lack of knowledge of the life of a seafarer in the 19th century.

5.1.1 Typology of square point rope knives

The following illustrations (and three photos) are copied primarily from the Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues detailed in the preceding [section 3](#). and are intended to show the stylistic variations that are apparent in square point rope knives.

Ref. No.	Illustration	Description
1		Mappin Brothers – Queen’s Cutlery Works Sheffield (c.1860). “Pattern 7754. Buffalo handle, 4 ½ inches, 1 Blade Sailor’s Knife with hole in Handle”.
2		“U.S. Navy knife by H. H. Taylor & Brothers of Sheffield , recovered from the stores of the U.S.S. Cairo, sunk in the Yazoo River in 1862. 4 ¾ inches closed, genuine stag”.
3		“ENCORE T. TURNER BEST STEEL” stamped on the mark side tang. The blade has lost some of its profile as it was originally more convex, similar to 5 and 6 following
4		Lockwood Brothers’ Colonists’ Guide to the selection of Cutlery. Circa pre-1870
5		John Wragg & Son , mid to late-1880s.
6		Silber & Fleming Ltd. 57 Wood St. Cheapside London, circa 1889.
7		Joseph Rodgers & Sons Ltd. No.6 Norfolk Street Sheffield, pattern 1620, dated c.1900 and also c.1910–1915.
8		Thomas Turner & Co. Illustration copied from a T. Turner 1902 publication and possibly sourced from a mid-19 th century T. Turner trade catalogue.
9		Alfred Williams Sheffield England stamped on the mark side tang. the blade face is “UNITED STATES NAVY”.
10		Premier, F. Newton stamped on the mark side tang. Swell-point blade is stamped “The Sailors Friend”. <u>Source:</u> Ron Flook.

It cannot be assumed that this is a complete typology, however as further examples are identified, hopefully they can be posted here.

5.1.2 Examples of Square point rope knives

The following examples are in the collections of the authors unless otherwise specified. There is an attempt to place them in chronological sequence, but it is totally based on guesswork, mostly derived from dates associated with the Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues detailed in [section 3 above](#). Those examples identified as military issue (see [section 5.1.2.14 here](#)) have their **W↑D** stamping acknowledged, all others are presumed to be associated with the Royal Navy or the merchant marine, however it must be acknowledged that, on currently available information, all square-point rope knives, irrespective of the maker, were available for private purchase and therefore may possibly have originally been used for non-seafaring associated activities, although it is unlikely.

A further matter that needs to be acknowledged in dating of square point rope knives generally is that their production appears to have been in decline in the later years of the 19th century, perhaps from the 1880s. This is suggested by the absence of illustrations of such knives in Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. This absence can be noted in the following catalogues: “[3.1.5 George Wostenholm & Son, Limited, Washington Works, The I*XL cutlery](#)” dated c.1885 – c.1892 (see [here](#)), “[3.1.6 Christopher Johnson & Co. western Works Sheffield](#)” undated but is certainly post-1892 and could extend to early 20th century (see [here](#)), and “[3.1.9 Thomas Turner & Co. ENCORE Suffolk Works Sheffield](#)” dated 1902 (see [here](#)), although the square point rope knife is mentioned in the catalogue as “pattern 9639 SQ” so it was most likely kept in inventory.

5.1.2.1 Hunter Sheffield

The following knives are stamped “HUNTER SHEFFIELD” in an identical style over two lines. They have a closed length of 4 ½ inches (approximately), stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, hand-forged tapered backspring, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin. The ‘best-fit’ for these Hunter Sheffield knives appears to be style No. 8 above, being “Thomas Turner & Co.”, with a slight concave curve on the back of the blade and a slight convex curve on the back of the handle and backspring. It appears probable that these knives can be dated **c.1860s**. Tweedale’s Directory has seven listings for the name HUNTER, and it appears that M. Hunter & Son is the most likely manufacturer. The first two knives were supplied to the military and have the relevant **W↑D** stamp.



Maker: Michael Hunter Sheffield

Closed length: 4 5/8”

Tang mark side: HUNTER SHEFFIELD

Tang pile side: Bugle Trademark over-stamped with **W↑D 4** (possibly, as part obscured).

Serial number on scale: 66709



Maker: “HUNTER SHEFFIELD”. The blade face is stamped “C&M

1863”. The pile side tang is stamped **W↑D**. This military knife appears to be an earlier pattern than the other examples. It is possible that the **1863** stamp on the blade is a reference to the date of manufacturer.

The blade profiles of the following four knives display considerable wear most likely due to regular sharpening as was required of a rope knife. A similarity is evident when compared with the two examples of the ‘second version’ Thomas Turner knives shown in the following [section 5.1.2.2](#).



Maker: “HUNTER SHEFFIELD”. Note the different shaped bolster compared to the first example, that appears to be

common for such knives manufactured in the mid-19th century. The following three knives appear to have the same characteristics.



Maker: Michael Hunter Sheffield
 Closed length: 4 3/4"
 Tang mark side: HUNTER SHEFFIELD
 Tang pile side: Bugle trademark.
 (Paul Stamp collection)



Maker: "HUNTER SHEFFIELD".
 The knife has been personalised by its keeper with notches cut into the horn grips on both sides.



Maker: "HUNTER SHEFFIELD".

5.1.2.2 Thomas Turner & Co.

Thomas Turner & Co. were a prolific manufacturer of square point rope knives. As quoted previously a T. Turner company document dated 1902 states that "441,800 were supplied to the Admiralty over the last 20 years" (assumed to be 1880 – 1900 – see further comment later in this section). This same document is the source of the illustration of style No.8 "Thomas Turner & Co." in [section 5.1.1](#) above ([here](#)), and this is the only trade catalogue illustration of a Turner square point rope knife that has so-far been identified. What is apparent however is the slight difference in the wording of the tang stamp and the style of the blade on the following examples, whereas the style of the handles appears to be identical across the range. The first example is "ENCORE T. TURNER BEST STEEL" and the second is "ENCORE T. TURNER & Co. BEST STEEL" using a smaller font. The reason for the absence of "& Co." in the tang stamping in the first example is unclear, as the "Thomas Turner & Co." name was in use from at least 1837 (according to "White's Sheffield Directory"), although it is highly unlikely that this knife precedes that date, and a date of **early 1860s – 1870s** is considered more probable – as explained later in this section. It is important to note that, apart from "Tweedale's Directory", the information on Thomas Turner & Co. in this Collector Note is derived from just two 'T. T. & Co.' cutlery trade catalogues - both dated to the early 20th century. It must be acknowledged however that there would have been numerous 'T. T. & Co.' catalogues that were published in the 19th century that may provide a different perspective to the 'T. T. & Co.' square point rope knife narrative described herein.

Based on currently available examples, there appears to be three versions of the Turner square point rope knife, with the difference being associated with the blade shape and/or the tang stamping; the style of the handles appears to be consistent throughout the range. The knives have a closed length of 4 ½ inches (approximately), Stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters (in the first two versions at least), hand-forged tapered backspring, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin. The following two knives are examples of the first version.



Maker: T. Turner Sheffield. The pile side of the tang is stamped "W↑D 1" which indicates that

it was a military issue knife. The blade profile shows sharpening wear to the tip and significant sharpening to the adjoining section of the originally convex-shaped blade which is more clearly defined in the following photo. Because of this unique

blade shape, this style is defined as No. 3 in the typology table in [section 5.1.1 here](#). Coleman⁴² (page 23) provides evidence that a clasp knife has been included in the 'field kit' of British soldiers since at least **1871** and concludes that since that date there is a high probability that such knife was the square point rope knife, and consequently it is likely to be this style. Why a soldier would universally require a knife that is really only suitable for cutting rope needs to be explored further.



The knife in the adjacent photo was posted on eBay in July 2019 and appears to have identical characteristics as the knife immediately above, including the tang stamp, with the convex-shaped blade showing little use and minimal sharpening. The seller didn't provide any additional information, and thus it cannot be determined as to whether the knife had a **W↑D** stamping, or not. The tang stamp is clearly "ENCORE T. TURNER BEST STEEL". As with the preceding knife, a date of **1860s – 1870s** is considered probable.

The following two knives are the second version of the T. Turner square-point rope knife, which have the same handle style as the preceding knife, but with a different blade shape and tang stamping - notably the inclusion of "& Co." as shown in the following photo.



Maker: Thomas. Turner & Co. Sheffield. The blade shape appears to be identical with "No.8" as shown in the typology table in [section 5.1.1 here](#).



These two knives shown immediately above are probably the most common of the T. Turner knives available to collectors. Flook's B&CMK shows one on Plate 288 (page 127) and Bernard Levine shows one in his article "Old Sailor Knives" shown at [section 3.2.2 here](#). The cutting edge of the blade on the knife on the right-side photo has lost most of its curve due to use and sharpening. These knives possibly have a date range of c.1870s – 1880s, which is consistent with them having integral liners and bolsters – a practice that was being phased out in the 1880s. If the information in the booklet "[Handcrafts that Survive](#)" (see [section 5.1 here](#)) that "... 441,800 were supplied to the Admiralty over the last twenty years" is to be believed, much of the supply would have been this second version, probably in the period 1880 – 1890.



Illustration copied from the original booklet "Handicrafts that Survive". The visible part of the tang stamp is "ENCORE T. TURNER & Co. BEST STEEL"

Maker: Thomas Turner & Co Sheffield. Closed length: 4 11/16".
Tang mark side: "ENCORE T. TURNER & Co. BEST STEEL"

The third version of the Thomas Turner square point rope knife is more difficult to define, as I have never seen one and its existence is more based on hearsay, being:

1: the previously mentioned "*Handicrafts That Survive*" a publication dated 1902 by Thomas Turner & Co. to commemorate their 200th anniversary, states that "... *441,800 were supplied to the Admiralty over the last twenty years*" (source: Flook's B&CMK page 126). Given that the publication is dated 1902, I have assumed that it generally relates to the years c.1880 – c.1900. This is a significant number of knives and therefore, even 120 years later, you would expect to commonly see them in square-point rope knife collections – which doesn't appear to be the case.

2: Silvey⁴³ (page 9) has an excellent photo of a square-point rope knife with the following description "*THOMAS TURNER & Co. SHEFFIELD* [3-diamond trademark]. *This is the mark found on this Turner rope knife. The blade is etched 'U. S. NAVY'. Thomas Turner & Co. was established about 1802 and continued in Sheffield until the mid-1900s. Turner rope knives are noted for their dramatically curved spine*". While the shape of this knife appears identical to style No.8 being 'Thomas Turner & Co.' shown in section 5.1.1 here, the tang stamp mark of "THOMAS TURNER & Co. SHEFFIELD [3-diamond trademark]" is not one that has (yet) been noted on knives issued by the British military or in use by sailors of the Royal Navy. Further, Silvey's observation that "*Turner rope knives are noted for their dramatically curved spine*" is perhaps just a slight exaggeration unless there are other examples that do have a "dramatically curved spine".

3: It is assumed that this third version of the Thomas Turner square-point rope knife dates to the period c.1880s – c.1900 and would therefore most likely have separate liners and bolsters, as was becoming increasingly common during the 1880s. This appears to be borne out with regard to such knives that were exported to the USA during this period by Thomas Turner, and others such as I*XL Wostenholm.

In regard to Thomas Turner & Co. generally there is no doubt that they were a prolific supplier to the Admiralty and the War Office in the twenty years leading up to and including the Boer War, and for which in 1905 it received the warrant of "Cutlers to His Majesty". Paul Stamp has provided a copy of an article in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph dated November 10, 1911, which provided full details:

"Messrs. Thomas Turner and Co. were one of three firms out of 5,000 contractors who in the last 20 years have been granted the service warrant, and it was on this account that the coveted distinct was obtained rather than for service to the Royal Household, for which it is more commonly granted".

5.1.2.3 Atkinson Brothers

According to Tweedale's Directory, Atkinson Brothers began trading in 1872, and by 1876 "*it was operating ... as a merchant, and manufacturer of pen and pocket knives ...*" etc. By 1880, The "*Brothers ... claimed ...to be a major supplier to the British Army*". This was certainly the case with regard to the "*Knife Clasp with Marline spike and Lanyard*", known to collectors as the "Boer War Jack Knife" that from 1872 was being issued to "*Those who were eligible included Mounted and Dismounted men of the Royal Artillery, Army Service*"

Corps, and Royal Engineers. In addition, troops of the Ordnance Store Corps and Cavalry Pioneers were issued knives”.

The following knife is the only example available to us of a square point rope knife made by Atkinson Brothers. Given that Atkinson Brothers began trading in 1872 it appears that the square point rope knife was being supplied to the military at the same time as the “Boer War Jack Knife”. This suggests that a date or **mid-1870s** would apply to this knife.



Maker: “ATKINSON BROTHERS SHEFFIELD” is stamped on the mark side tang, and the pile side tang is stamped

“W↑D 18” in an unusually small type size. The knife a closed length of 4 ¾ inches, stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, hand-forged tapered backspring, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin. The ‘best-fit’ for these Atkinson Brothers knives appears to be style No.1 above, being “Mappin Brothers”, with a straight edge on both the back and cutting edge of the blade. The mark side scale has been incised with a service number that is somewhat obscured.

Given that only two examples of Atkinson Brothers knives are available for inspection, (being the above knife and a “Boer War Jack Knife” in my collection, both of which are military supply knives), it is possible that Atkinson was not a supplier of square point rope knives to the Royal Navy.

5.1.2.4 Clark Shirley & Co. Sheffield.

Tweedale’s Directory provides a history of the company from which it appears that it was (re)launched in c.1876 following the liquidation of an earlier version of the company, and certainly by 1880 it was trading successfully, and survived until 1928.



Maker: “CLARK SHIRLEY & Co. SHEFFIELD” is stamped on the mark side tang, and “W↑D 5” is

stamped on the pile side tang which indicates that it was a military issue knife. The knife has a closed length of 4 ¾ inches, stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, hand-forged tapered backspring, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin.



The adjacent appears to be identical to the one above, although with more wear of the blade due to sharpening.

Maker: Clarke Shirley & Co. Sheffield

Closed length: 4 ¾ inches

Tang mark side: CLARKE SHIRLEY & Co SHEFFIELD

Tang pile side: W↑D 2 (with the W missing off left edge of the tang)

The following knives are stamped identical to the above. The blade on the right-side example appears to be in unused condition. Both knives have integral steel liners and

bolsters, hand-forged tapered backspring, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin. Both knives are stamped **W↑D 9** on their pile side tang.



Ron Flook's B&CMK (page 128) features two examples that appear to be identical to the above knives, being:

*"290. This was made by the Sheffield firm of Clarke Shirley and beside their name is marked **W↑D 2** indicating Army issue. I have seen similar Clarke Shirley knives which carries the same **WD** mark but which has had its staple flattened and stamped 6495"*

*"291. This example is very unusual in that it is dated. The tang is marked with the makers name **DEANE & CO, W↑D 19**, and the date 1878. Examples bearing the name Parkin & Marshall have also been noted".*

The 'best-fit' for these Clark Shirley knives is probably style No.7 Joseph Rodgers, given the slight concave top edge of the blade, although with much less increase in the width of the blade extending from the tang which is more similar to style No. 8 Thomas Turner and Co.

It appears that Clarke Shirley square point rope knives would date to the **c.1880s**.

5.1.2.5 R. Rodgers & Son, Norfolk Works

Note: this should not be confused with the famous Sheffield cutlery firm of Joseph Rodgers & Sons.



Maker: "R. RODGERS SHEFFIELD" is stamped on the mark side tang. The blade face is stamped "R. RODGERS & SON, NORFOLK WORKS". It has a closed length of 4 ½ inches, stag horn scales, non-integral steel liners and bolsters, hand-forged tapered backspring, and a hole drilled for a lanyard. The firm was R. Rodgers & Son, the 'R' being Rhoda, widow of Charles William Rodgers who died in 1860. Her son Joseph

became a partner in 1865. Rhoda later began referring to her workshop as Norfolk Works, which angered the well-known 'Joseph Rodgers, 6 Norfolk St' firm who took legal action. This was unsuccessful but ultimately Joseph Rodgers acquired the mark after R. Rodgers ceased to trade (last listing was 1905). The 'best-fit' for the blade style is No.8 with a parallel back and blade edge. This style is associated with Alfred Williams (see section 5.1.2.7. following) and it is noted that Williams knives also had "*non-integral steel liners and bolsters*". A similar date range of **late 19th century – very early 20th century** would appear to be appropriate for this 'R. Rodgers' knife.

5.1.2.6 Joseph Allen & Sons Sheffield

Tweedale's Directory notes that "In **1883**, Joseph Allen & Sons acquired the 'NON-XLL' mark from Unwin & Rodgers, which it stamped on razors and other cutlery". This indicates that the following knife was made sometime after that date.



Maker: Joseph Allen & Sons Sheffield. Closed length: 4 11/16", integral liners and bolsters, mark side tang stamping: "NON XLL JOSEPH ALLEN & SONS SHEFFIELD". The near parallel edges of the blade are similar to style No. 2 of the H. H. Taylor & Brothers knife.

5.1.2.7 Alfred Williams Sheffield England

Tweedale notes that Alfred Williams was described as a "cutlery export agent" in the 1891 census and that by 1893 he was listed in the City Directory as a "Cutlery Manufacturer" who specialised in selling cutlery to America. Given that Alfred Williams was a trader rather than a manufacturer it is assumed that all the knives bearing his name were contract knives made for Williams by an unidentified Sheffield manufacturer(s) on behalf of the U. S. Navy. It is probable that Williams was not a direct supplier to the Royal Navy as he was not a manufacturer in his own right.



Maker: "ALFRED WILLIAMS SHEFFIELD ENGLAND".

The knife has a closed length of 4 ½ inches (approx.), Stag horn scales, non-integral steel liners and bolsters, and a hand-forged tapered backspring. The shackle is missing however the photo in Silvey shows a copper shackle with a steel pin. The stamp on the blade face is "UNITED STATES NAVY" which is the less common of the three blade face stamping styles identified by Silvey. The 'best-fit' for these Alfred Williams knives is style No.9, noting that the blade back and cutting edge appear to be parallel. A date range for this knife would appear to be **late 19th century – early 20th century**.

5.1.2.8 Smith Brothers

Determining the narrative to describe this knife was difficult, there is no mention of a "Smith Brothers" in Tweedale nor in the "Late 18th Century Cutlers Marks" reproduced in Levine's Guide to Knives and Their Values⁴⁴ (4th Edition pages 86 – 93). Fortunately there is a mention of a "Smith Brothers Hardware Co." in the "Pocket Knife Brand List" in Levine's Guide who were based in Columbus Ohio U.S.A. and who were described as a hardware wholesaler from 1893 to c.1959. This attribution is certainly speculative however the 1893+ date fits the timeframe for square-point rope knives with non-integral steel liners and bolsters.



Maker: "SMITH BROTHERS" is stamped on the mark side tang. The knife has a closed length of 4 ½ inches (approx.), Stag horn

scales, non-integral steel liners and bolsters, a hand-forged tapered backspring, and a

copper shackle with a steel pin. The handle component of this knife appears to be identical to the Alfred Williams knife immediately above, so it is probable that it was made in Sheffield for Alfred Williams as agents for the U.S. hardware wholesaler Smith Brothers. The blade shape is also identical although slightly shorter. Given the similarities between this knife and the Williams knife immediately above, a similar date range would apply to this knife, being **early 1890s – early 20th century**.

5.1.2.9 Premier, F. Newton “The Sailors Friend”

This is an interesting knife in that, as yet no other examples have been noted. This example was posted on the ‘Military Knives and daggers of the World’ website on May 15, 2014 by UK author and collector Ron Flook.



Maker: “PREMIER F. NEWTON” is stamped on the mark side tang, and the blade face is

stamped “THE SAILORS FRIEND”. In his post Ron described it as being “... a swell-point blade, steel bolsters, and staghorn grips”, and he also advised that there were no dimensions available. Clearly it does not have a square-point blade however the handle construction and style appear to be consistent with the other knives shown in the section. It is noted that two knives in the Mappin Brothers catalogue dated c.1860 are shown with a “swell point” blade.

5.1.2.10 George Wostenholm I*XL Cutlery

The following two photos are copied from Michael Silvey’s “Pocket knives of the United States Military”⁴⁵ (pages 16 & 17).



The knife on the righthand side is described by Silvey as “GEORGE WOSTENHOLMS I*XL CUTLERY” [over three-line lines. ed]. “*This is the mark of one the venerable cutlery of Sheffield, England. Wostenholm began making cutlery in the 1740’s and remained in business until 1971. This knife was probably made **around 1860***”. The knife on the lefthand side has the same tang stamp and Silvey observes “*Both these knives are by Wostenholm, and both exhibit the quality attributed to that brand. The heavily used knife on the bottom has had its blade reshaped by a previous owner probably with the idea of producing a more usable tool*”.

Interestingly, Silvey also observes that “*There is another similar to the two above but probably made at a later date and it is marked GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD*” [over three-lines .ed]. In common with the Alfred Williams knives, the ‘best-fit’ for these knives appears to be is style No.9, noting that the blade back and cutting edge appear to be parallel; style 2 is also a strong possibility given that the knives have integral liners and bolsters, which would date the knives to **c.1860s – 1880s**.

As noted in [section 3.1.5. here](#), the “George Wostenholm & Son, Limited, Washington Works, the I*XL cutlery” catalogue is undated but appears to date c.1885 – c.1892. It has a huge range of clasp knives but only one that could be classified as a sailor’s knife due to

the inclusion of a hole at the butt end, and notably the catalogue does not include a square point rope knife. Therefore, it is possible that Wostenholm marked square point rope knives were made exclusively for the United States Navy which would extend their date range from **c.1860s to C. 1900s**.

5.1.2.11 James Tidmarsh "Excelsior"

This knife was posted on the Facebook page of "**Military Jack Knives from Around the World**" in July 2024 by UK collector Daren Nicholson. Tweedale's Directory has no record of James Tidmarsh, and Flook's B&CMK has a very brief reference in "Appendix Four – Knife Makers and Retailers" being: "*J. Tidmarsh: Marked on Boer War period knife*".



Maker: "JAMES TIDMARSH" stamped on the mark side tang, together with "EXCELSIOR" on the blade face. The pile side tang is stamped **W↑D 3** (although the 3 is shown in part only), together with the 'sold out of service' mark, being ✕. The knife has integral bolsters and liners, and copper shackle secured by a brass pin. It has a blade thickness of 5mm which has not been noted on other square point rope knife examples.

Source: Daren Nicholson collection

To the best of my knowledge all known examples of Tidmarsh knives have "EXCELSIOR" stamped on the mark side of the blade face. Given Flook's reference to the "*Boer War period Knife*", which I assume is a reference what collectors refer to as the 'Boer War jack knife' (see section 3.2.5 Military Clasp Knives here) that was introduced into military service in 1872, it is probable that this square point rope knife is from an earlier date, being the **c.1860s**

5.1.2.12 Jonathan Crookes & Son

The following knife is known only from its inclusion in Geoffrey Tweedale's "The Sheffield Knife Book"⁴⁶ (page 72) where it is one of three knives on an illustration described as "*Jack-knives from a Jonathan Crookes' catalogue*", see Appendix 1 here to view the illustration.



Maker: "JONATHAN CROOKES ['heart & pistol' mark]" stamped on the mark side tang, with the 'heart & pistol' trademark also stamped on mark side face of the blade. The style of the blade has no direct similarity to any of the styles detailed in "section 5.1.1 Typology of square-point rope knives" (shown here)

however the parallel lines of the back and the cutting edge of the blade does reflect the profile of No. 9 Alfred Williams. One of the other knives in Tweedale's illustration is of an Admiralty Pattern 301, that was introduced into service in the first decade of the 20th century as the standard issue knife for sailors. This indicates that the undated Jonathan Crookes' catalogue would date from c.1910 at the earliest and could extend into the 1920s when the AP301 appears to have been available as a 'private purchase' item.

The following two knives were copied from the July 2022 catalogue of NorthWest Knives, and this is the only information we have on the makers. The descriptions are based on the catalogue listings as the knives themselves have not been inspected by the authors of this Collector Note. A tentative date for both these knives is **c.1860s to c.1880s**.

5.1.2.13 Oxley Liverpool



Maker: "LIVERPOOL. I OXLEY".

Closed length 4 3/8 inch, 3 1/2" flat ground square point blade, Mark side tang marked

"LIVERPOOL", and blade face marked "I. OXLEY" who was possible a retailer. Rat tail steel bolsters, dark wood scales, steel liners, drilled near the pommel with thick nickel silver bail (which appears to be a previous owner modification). Date range c. 1870-80s. The 'best-fit' for this knife appears to be style No.5, recognising that significant use and sharpening has changed the profile somewhat.

5.1.2.14 J. COPLEY & SONS



Maker: "J. COPLEY & SONS".

Closed length 4 3/4 inches, 3 3/4 inch flat ground square front blade. Ricasso marked "J.

COPLEY & SONS WARRANTED." steel rat tail bolsters. Fine dark wood scales, date range c.1840 - c.1860 As with the Oxley knife immediately above, the 'best-fit' for this knife appears to be style No.5, recognising that significant use and sharpening has changed the profile somewhat. Tweedale's Directory notes that "By 1852, John Copley & Sons was making pocket knives and sailors' and gardeners' knives at Richmond Works, Creswick Street, in Walkley".

5.1.2.15 Gunnery and Torpedo Division

U.K. writer and collector Ron Flook posted details of these knives on the Military Knives & Daggers of the World website on Jun 04, 2017, as follows: "Three RN Rope Knives marked GTD for the Gunnery and Torpedo Division. The Gunnery and Torpedo Division of the Royal Navy only existed between 1918 and 1920 which must make these knives pretty rare, noting also by that time the RN were in general using the AP301. The top example is by John Sellers and Sons the other two by Thomas Turner".



This last example of three square point rope knives pictured below is an interesting indicator that, although such knives were not generally featured in Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues dated from c.1900, they appeared to

have been kept in inventory, possibly as parts, for much longer, which enabled the Royal Navy to source (from separate manufacturers) such knives for an apparent specific purpose, almost 20 years after they had been replaced as the standard issue knife by the Admiralty Pattern 301. One possible scenario is that the "Gunnery and Torpedo Division" (and most likely its predecessor) was a working environment that involved explosives and working with ropes (and the associated wooden mallets) was a traditional safety practice to reduce the possibility of sparks.

All three knives are stamped “G. T. D” – the first and third on the pile side tang and the middle on the mark side blade face.

The best-fit for the top example John Seller’s knife blade is style No.2 being H. H. Taylor & Brothers, and for the bottom example Thomas Turner & Co. knife blade is style No. 8 being Thomas Turner (as illustrated in their 1902 catalogue). This knife appears identical to the two knives shown in section 5.1.2.2 [here](#), being the T.T. second version which have a date range of **c.1860 – 1880**.

The middle example, also by Thomas Turner & Co. is more difficult to define - the tang stamp is the mark of “THOMAS TURNER & Co. SHEFFIELD [3-diamond trademark]” which is described at section 5.1.2.2 [here](#) as being the T.T. third version and which is therefore assumed to date **c.1880 - 1900**. The blade appears almost identical to style No. 9 being “Alfred Williams” with the main characteristics being a straight back and generally parallel cutting edge. The minor difference is that the Alfred Williams blade has definite swage for half its length whereas the middle G.T.D knife appears not to have a swage. Further, the handle shape is not one that is represented elsewhere in this section “5.1 Square Point Rope Knife”. Both the T. Turner 1902 catalogue and the 1925 catalogue however include pattern 311, the handle of which appears identical to the handle of the middle G.T.D knife, is available in both stag and buffalo, and in sizes ranging from 4 in. to 5 in.

5.1.2.16 Military Square point Rope Knives

The following are examples of square point rope knives made by the five Sheffield companies currently identified as makers of such knives for the British Army. They all stamped with “W↑D” together with a number on the pile side tangs which indicates military issue.



Thomas Turner Best Steel,
W↑D 1, dated to c.1871.
See “5.1.2.2 Thomas Turner & Co.” [here](#).



Michael Hunter Sheffield, **W↑D 4,** dated c. 1860s. See 5.1.2.1 “HUNTER SHEFFIELD” [here](#).



Atkinson Brothers Sheffield., **W↑D 18,** dated to mid-1870s and later. See “5.1.2.3 Atkinson Brothers” [here](#).



Clark Shirley & Co.
Sheffield. W \uparrow D 5, dated
c.1880s. See “[5.1.2.4](#)
Clark Shirley & Co.
Sheffield” [here](#).



James Tidmarsh
Excelsior. W \uparrow D 3, dated
c.1860s. See [5.1.2.11](#)
“James Tidmarsh
Excelsior” [here](#).

Both Thomas Turner & Co. and Michael Hunter Sheffield are known to have supplied square point rope knives to the both the Admiralty and the military, whereas the other three companies appear to only have supplied knives to the military based on currently known examples. There does not appear to be any difference between these knives and the other square-point rope knives of various blade styles detailed elsewhere in [section 5.1.2](#) above that were purchased either singularly or in bulk by the Royal Navy, the merchant marine, or by individual seafarers. An exception to this observation may apply to the first knife shown in the above schedule, being the “Thomas Turner Best Steel” pattern. The profile of the blade has significant differences when compared to the other four examples. It is possible that this pattern was only made for the military.

The matter that remains unresolved is the chronology of issue of square-point rope knives to the British military. In [section 3.2.5](#) of this Collector Note, Coleman suggests that the square-point rope knife had been in service with the British Army from c.1860, and that by 1872 an alternative knife (the “Boer War Jack Knife”) had been issued to specific eligible units such as “*Mounted and Dismounted men of the Royal Artillery, Army Service Corps, and Royal Engineers. In addition, troops of the Ordnance Store Corps and Cavalry Pioneers*”. To-date no other candidate for the Army issue “clasp knife” in the 19th century (until the start of the Boer War in 1899) has been identified, apart from the “square point rope knife”, this matter is further addressed in the following [section 6 here](#).

Finally, it is important to note that there are most likely other ‘known’ makers of square-point rope knives who are not mentioned here. As details and examples become available it is hoped that they can be included in further updates of this Collector Note.

5.2 Sheepfoot Blade Sailor Knives

A review of the Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues detailed in [section 3.1](#) above (and [here](#)) indicates that there was a far greater variety of sheepfoot blade sailor knives than there were square-joint rope knives – at least during the 19th century. Further, it is possible that the style of sheepfoot blade sailor knives evolved during the 20 – 30 years of the mid-19th century to reveal a blade style that was dominant by the end of the century. This is evident in the Mappin Brothers c.1860 catalogue where there is a range of knives with blades that can be generally recognised as a sheepfoot, but which has a gentler slope to the point (with similarities to the Wharnccliffe style blade), and others which have a less gentle slope, as illustrated below:



This distinction may be more apparent by reference to three of the Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues that are featured in [section 3.1](#) of this Collector Note, as follows:



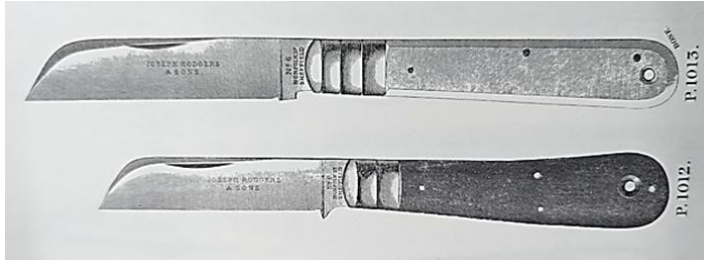
Lockwood Brothers'
Colonists' Guide c.1860 –
see section 3.1.3 [here](#)



John Wragg & Son (assumed) dated mid
to late 1880s – see section 3.1.4 [here](#)



Silber & Fleming Ltd. 57 Wood St.
Cheapside London
c. 1890s - [here](#)



Ultimately, it is the adjacent two Joseph Rodgers & Sons examples that best reflect the style of sheepfoot blade sailor knives that are most commonly available to collectors.

The following is a small collection of knives that appear to reflect the characteristics that determine whether a knife can be considered a sheepfoot blade sailor knife.



The full details of each knife are described below:

5.2.1 Thomas Turner Sheffield

Knife No. 1 - from the top.



Maker: "THOMAS TURNER SHEFFIELD [and 'three linked diamonds' trademark]" is stamped on the mark side tang in a very small font size. It has a closed length of 4 1/8 inches, stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, and hand-forged tapered backspring. The butt end is drilled for a lanyard. The tang stamp does not include 'ENCORE' trademark. The following illustration is for the same knife copied from the Thomas Turner & Co. 1902 trade catalogue.

"Pattern 310. Sheep. 4 1/2 inch, Stag, Iron Bolster. Also available



in 4 in. 4 ¼ in. 4 ½ in. 4 ¾ in. and 5 inch. Also available with spear blade”.

5.2.2 Joseph Tarratt & Sons

Knife No. 2 – second from top.



Maker: “JOSEPH TARRATT & SONS” is stamped on the mark side tang in a very small font size. It has a closed length of 4 ½ inches, stag horn scales,

integral steel liners and bolsters, and hand-forged tapered backspring. The butt end is drilled for a lanyard. The blade has lost 40% to 50% of its profile due to wear and sharpening however most likely started out as a sheepfoot blade with “a more gentle slope to the point (with similarities to the Wharncliffe style blade)”. Tweedale makes no mention of the maker and no other details have been discovered.

5.2.3 Buck & Hickman

Knife No. 3 – third from the top.



Maker: “BUCK & HICKMAN LIMITED LONDON” is stamped on the mark side tang. It has a closed

length of 4 5/8 inches, stag horn scales, non-integral steel liners, nickel silver bolsters, and a steel shackle and pin. Ron Flook in his “The London Knife Book”⁴⁷ notes that the company had been in business in London from at least 1839 and were operating as “saw and tool makers”. The style of the knife, such as the nickel silver bolsters, suggests a date of **early – to mid-20th century**. It is also possible that the knife was made in Sheffield for Buck & Hickman.

Below is another Buck & Hickman knife with identical dimensions but with some differences, notably a steel bolster and copper shackle.



5.2.4 Thomas Wilson Sheffield

Knife No. 4 – second from the bottom.



Maker: “THOMAS WILSON SHEFFIELD” is stamped on the mark side tang. It has a closed

length of 4 5/8 inches, hard wood scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, and hand-forged tapered backspring. The butt end is factory-drilled for a lanyard. Tweedale has an entry for Thomas Wilson which indicates that “the business apparently began in 1889” The entry includes a copy of an advertisement that includes reference to “Butcher Knives, etc.” This suggests that this knife was probably marketed as a less expensive ‘hand tool’ as it lacks much of the finesse of the other examples in this section of the Collector Note. A suggested date for the knife is **mid-1890s**, however a complicating factor is that the knife has “integral steel liners and bolsters” which is rare for knives of this date. One explanation is that Thomas Wilson shared a premises with the established firm of John McClory & Sons which may have provided Wilson access to old ‘integral liners and bolsters’ stock that he was able to use in his sheepfoot blade sailor knives.

5.2.5 Joseph Rodgers & Sons

Knife No. 5 – bottom.



Maker: “JOSEPH RODGERS & SONS No. 6 NORFOLK ST. SHEFFIELD” is

stamped on the mark side tang, and the trademark * + is stamped on the pile side tang. The blade face is stamped “TO STRIKE FIRE” close to the top edge. It has a closed length of 5 ½ inches, stag horn scales, and non-integral steel liners and bolsters. The butt end is factory-drilled for a lanyard. It is known that this Rodgers pattern was available in several sizes up to 6 inches closed length. It is assumed that these extra-large clasp knives had gone out of fashion by the early 20th century so a possible date range of **1880s – 1890s** is suggested.



The J. Rodgers c.1912 catalogue illustrates a similar knife which is

the only one that also has the blade face stamped “TO STRIKE FIRE” close to the top edge, however the style of the blade sheepfoot blade has the “*more gentle slope to the point (with similarities to the Wharnccliffe style blade)*” which appears to be a feature of Rodgers sheepfoot blades in the early 20th century. The closed length of the above knife is not known.

5.2.6 Joseph Haywood & Co. - 1

Knife No. 6 – righthand side

This knife does not have a hole for a lanyard nor a shackle, however it appears to be an early knife possibly dating to the **c.1860s** and there is a possibility that it was used by a sailor.



Maker: not stated, there is no stamping of any type on the blade which was common in the mid-1800s. It

has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, polished buffalo horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, and a hand-forged tapered backspring. The blade has lost much of its original profile due to use and sharpening however there is no doubt that it was originally a sheepfoot blade.



The mark side scale is stamped with the ‘kettle’ trademark which belonged to “JOSEPH HAYWOOD & Co”, “... which had been granted in 1860” (Tweedale). This mark, in a simpler form, had been owned by Geo. Hinchliffe who was the uncle of Joseph Haywood and by 1850 “Haywood owned the name” (Tweedale) and presumably the ‘Kettle’ trademark also. This is an interesting example of a clasp knife hand tool that commenced its working life over 150 years ago.

5.2.7 Joseph Haywood & Co. – 2

Knife No.7 – not shown

This knife is not shown in the Collection photo above as it was incorrectly assumed to be a spear-point clasp knife (mea culpa).



Maker: "JOSEPH HAYWOOD & COMPLY [kettle mark] MAKERS SHEFFIELD" is stamped on the mark side of the blade face, and the kettle mark is stamped on the tang. It has a closed length of 4 ¼ inches, integral steel liners and bolsters, and a hand-forged tapered backspring. The lanyard hole is countersunk on both sides and therefore is assumed to be factory drilled. It includes a 'handmade' shackle that is assumed to have been added at a later date.



The 'kettle' trademark both on the blade and the tang is the simpler form (compared to the one shown immediately above) that had previously been owned by Geo. Hinchliffe whose cutlery business had been absorbed into Haywood's by 1850. Based on the history of the company and in particular the relationship between the two companies, together with the style of the stamping, it is assumed that the date range for this knife is **circa 1860s – 1870s**.

5.3 Clip-point sailor knife

The existence of the clip-point knife as a sailor knife in the 19th century has become apparent following an analysis of Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues from the 19th century. However, there is no description of a clip-point clasp knife being a "*Sailor's knife with hole in Handle*" in the Mappin Brothers/Mappin & Webb c.1860 catalogue (see [section 3.1.2 here](#)), but they are depicted in two illustrations dated to the mid-late 18th century in [APPENDIX 2 here](#).

5.3.1 Lockwood Brothers

The Lockwood Brothers' Colonists' Guide catalogue circa pre-1870s (see [section 3.1.3 here](#)) illustrates four such knives – three of which are shown with a hole in the handle for attaching a lanyard, with one example shown in the following illustration – being **pattern 8278** with stag horn scales:



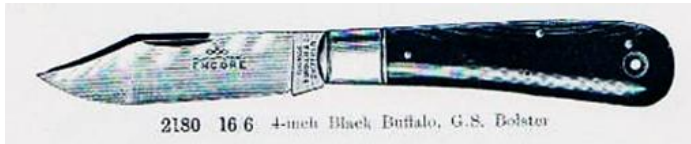
5.3.2 Joseph Rodgers & Sons Ltd

A similar example is shown as one of four clasp knives with a hole for a lanyard in the butt end in the Joseph Rodgers & Sons Ltd. Catalogues dated circa 1900 and circa 1910 – 1915 (see [section 3.1.8 here](#)) being **pattern 1619** shown in the following illustration:



5.3.3 Thomas Turner & Co - 1

There is also an interesting example in the Thomas Turner & Co. ENCORE catalogue dated 1902 (see [section 3.1.8 here](#))



The description states “**Pattern 2180**. 4- inch Black Buffalo, G.S. Bolster” [“G.S.” being German Silver and what is now referred to as nickel silver].

This knife is also included in the T. Turner 1925 catalogue.

5.3.4 Thomas Turner & Co - 2

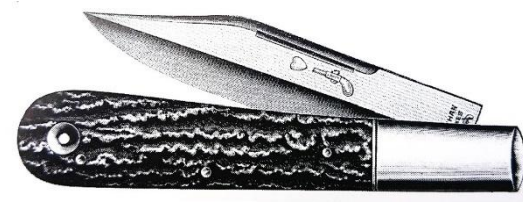
The following knife is the only example available to the authors to handle that clearly has the lanyard hole provided as part of the manufacturing process – being countersunk on both sides.



Maker: “ENCORE THOMAS TURNER & Co. stamped on the blade face, and

“SUFFFOLK WORKS SHEFFIELD” stamped on the mark side tang. It has a closed length of 5 inches, stage horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, and a hand-forged tapered backspring. Given the stylistic similarities with the “5.3.1 Lockwood Brothers” knife illustrated above, together with stamping arrangement on this knife it is probable that it dates **circa 1870s**.

5.3.5 Jonathan Crookes & Son



The illustration opposite is copied from an undated Jonathan Crooke’s trade catalogue shown in Tweedale’s “The Sheffield Knife Book” (page 72), although no other details are provided. The distinctive provision of a hole at the butt end of the handle to secure


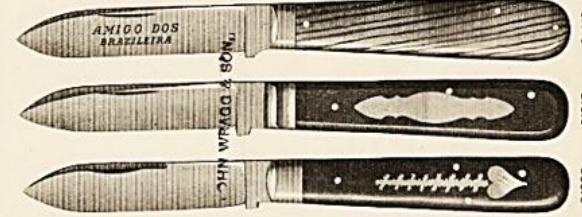




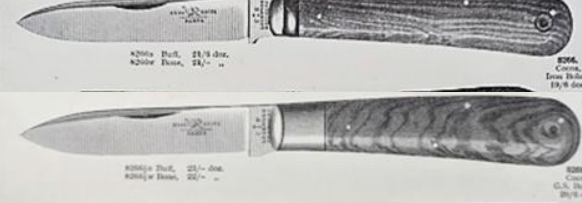
the knife to a lanyard is confirmation that this pattern was suited to the needs of a sailor. “Tweedale’s Directory of Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2020”⁴⁸ notes that the business ceased operating in 1896, and “*The mark was soon acquired by razor maker Joseph Allen, at Ecclesall Works, 245 Rockingham Street. Crookes continued to be advertised as a stand-alone name at that address*”. This suggests that the knife could date from **c.1910 to the mid-1920s**.

5.4 Spear point blade Sailor Knife

As with the clip-point sailor knife described in [section 5.3](#) above, the existence of the spear-point knife as a sailor knife in the 19th century has become apparent following an analysis of Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues dating to the 19th century.

Unlike the clip-point knife however the spear-point knife in various forms is illustrated extensively in the 19th century Sheffield trade catalogues, examples from those trade catalogues detailed in [section 3.1 here](#), as follows:

Ref. No.	Illustration	Details
1		<p>Mappin Brothers – Queen’s Cutlery Works Sheffield (c.1860)</p> <p>“Pattern 7736. Stag handle, 4 ½ inches, 1 Blade Sailor’s Knife with hole in Handle”.</p> <p>“Pattern 8370. Stag handle, 4 ½ inches, 1 Blade Sailor’s Knife with Copper Shackle”.</p>

2		<p>Lockwood Brothers' Colonists' Guide to the selection of Cutlery – Part 1, Manufactory 74 Arundel Street Sheffield, circa 'pre-1870'. Pattern 8266½ top, and Pattern 8266 bottom.</p>
3		<p>John Wragg & Son, circa mid to late-1880s. Patterns 91007, 91017 and 91415</p>
4		<p>George Wostenholm & Son, Limited, Washington Works, The 1*XL cutlery, circa 1885 – c.1892.</p>
5		<p>Silber & Fleming Ltd. 57 Wood St. Cheapside London "Illustrated Pattern Book". circa 1889. Pattern No. 2560, horn, nickel silver bolster and cap. Pattern No. 2563, stag</p>
6		<p>Joseph Rodgers & Sons Ltd. Catalogues dated circa 1900 and circa 1910 – 1915. Pattern 1618, bone scales.</p>
7		<p>Thomas Turner & Co. ENCORE Suffolk Works Sheffield. 1902. Pattern 9639. 4 ½ in. Stag. Iron Bolster. P9840 is clip-pointed, as P2180 following. P9639 SQ is Square Point Service Pattern".</p>
8		<p>Lockwood Brothers Limited, circa 1920s. Pattern 8266. Cocoa, iron Bolster. Pattern 8266½. Cocoa, Nickel silver bolster.</p>
<p>The following knives are the only examples available to the authors to handle that clearly have either the lanyard hole provided as part of the manufacturing process or has an in-situ shackle.</p>		

5.4.1 Lockwood Brothers



Maker: "C + X LOCKWOOD BROTHERS" stamped on the mark side tang. The blade face is stamped "REAL [Pampas rhea mark] KNIFE – PAMPA". The knife has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, stage horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters, and a hand-forged tapered backspring. The lanyard hole is countersunk on both sides

and therefore is assumed to be factory drilled. This knife appears to be identical to Lockwood Brothers pattern 8266 – the lower of the two knives shown as Ref. No. 2 in the above table copied from their **circa 'pre-1870' catalogue** – see following for a comparison, and also to the knife with the same pattern number in the **circa 1920s catalogue**.



On this basis, it is probable that this knife has a date range of **circa 1860s to circa 1920s**.

5.4.2 Wingfield & Rowbotham



Maker: "[trademark] WINGFIELD ROWBOTHAM & Co." stamped on the blade face, there is no tang stamp. The knife has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, stag horn scales, integral steel liners and bolsters a hand-forged tapered backspring, and a copper shackle with steel pin. Based on information in Tweeddale it appears that the Wingfield Rowbotham & Co.

name was first used in the early 1850s. Given however that the stamping is on the blade face includes the 'Harp & Crown' trademark which according to Tweeddale's Directory was not registered until 1885, the knife must date to after this.

5.4.3 G. Butler



This knife is a late example of a knife made by 'G. Butler' with the 'key' logo above the makers name and opposite 'Sheffield ART England'. It has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, nickel silver bolsters and steel shackle. The thick chequered grips are hardwood.

6 EARLY 20th CENTURY TO c.1939

The early 20th century (and probably also the latter years of the 1890s) saw major changes in the way that the navy and the army addressed their respective personnel's equipment needs – possibly based on experiences of service in both the first and second Boer Wars. The most significant change in regard to clasp knives appears to be an emphasis on standardisation whereby the Ministry of Supply designed a clasp knife (being "Admiralty Pattern 301), prepared a specification, and entered into contracts with (mostly) Sheffield manufactures for the supply of large quantities that strictly accorded with the specification.

In the lead-up to the adoption of this practice in the first decade of the 20th century, there appears to have been indications that some degree of standardisation was being practiced. In the Royal Navy for example, the 'issue' clasp knife appears to have been the square-point rope knife – probably from at-least the 1850s as elaborated in [section 5.1 here](#). There are indications however that the supply of such knives in the last decade of the 19th century was in decline, so the question arises as to what, if any, replaced them from this time until the introduction of the clasp knife referred to as "Admiralty Pattern 301" late in the first decade of the 20th century.

One possible candidate for this role is the Thomas Turner & Co. [pattern 6118](#) which is depicted on Plate 302 (page 32) of Flook's B&CMK. This matter is discussed in detail in [section 3.1.9 Thomas Turner & Co. ENCORE Suffolk Works Sheffield here](#), including a copy of Plate 302 which includes the follow statement: "*Large quantities of all these knives were supplied by THOMAS TURNER & Co., as contractors to HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICES during the WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1899 to 1902*". Three of the four knives illustrated are described as being a "SPECIAL REGISTERED DESIGN" dated to the time of the second Boer War. The other knife, being [Pattern 6118](#), has no such description which suggests that it had been in Thomas Turner's inventory before the start of the Second Boer War in 1899. Acknowledging that this Thomas Turner 1902 catalogue was a trade catalogue published following the end of the Boer War, and aimed at a commercial market, [pattern 6118](#) was described as "Blade and Marline Spike. Boating and Yachtsman's knife". However, noting the statement on Plate 302 that "*Large quantities of all these knives were supplied by THOMAS TURNER & Co., as contractors to HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICES ...*" it is apparent that the only knife that was suitable for naval service was [pattern 6118](#), and therefore, it is possible that [pattern 6118](#) had either replaced, or more likely was issued contemporary with, the square-point rope knife as the Navy issue clasp knife towards the end of the 19th century, and that the naval tradition of not stamping their clasp knives with the government "W↑D" ownership stamp was continued with this knife. If this scenario is correct, it indicates that such knives (i.e. [pattern 6118](#) knives without the "W↑D" stamp were either a naval issue clasp knife or a post-Boer War commercially available knife.

It must be emphasised that this "... *issued contemporary with...*" scenario is just speculation on my part until supporting evidence is identified. Further, the previously noted 441,800 square-point rope knife supplied to the Admiralty by Thomas Turner & Co. as stated in their 1902 publication "Handicrafts that Survive", (refer [section 5 here](#)) may well have covered the needs of the Navy until the introduction of the Admiralty Pattern 301 in circa 1910.

6.1 Thomas Turner & Co. Pattern 6118



Maker: "THOMAS TURNER & Co. SHEFFIELD" stamped on the mark side tang. The Knife has a closed length of 4 inches, stag scales, sheepfoot blade and marline

spike, steel liners, a copper shackle. This knife has also been noted with the "M & D CANADA" on the mark side blade face which is the 'pre-WW1 Canadian Militia and Defence blade marking'



Illustration copied from Plate 302 (page 32) of Flook's B&CMK.

This Thomas Turner pattern 6118 is significant in the "Clasp Knives of The Royal Navy & the Merchant Marine" narrative in that it appears to be the first knife to include a marline spike that was available to the Admiralty, and consequently appears to have had an influence in the design of AP301 in the early 20th century

6.2 Admiralty Pattern 301

Flook's B&CMK (page 130) provides the best-known description of this knife, as follows: *"In the early 1900s the square-pointed RN knife appears to have been replaced by a piece designated Admiralty Pattern 301. The Maleham and Yeomans document [see page 131 in B&CMK .ed], although dated 1915, quotes an earlier paper CP 7182 1910, so it would appear the Admiralty Pattern was introduced at least as early as 1910. Further documents [see Plate 298 page 131 .ed] shows that the knife saw service in World War 1, a contract for 64,000 being placed in 1915".*

As noted by Flook, Admiralty Pattern 301 (AP301) was introduced into service in the first decade of the 20th century as the standard issue knife for sailors and retained that position until the introduction of the "Royal Navy Seaman's Clasp Knife" in 1938 – 1939, see section 6.3 following. Makers noted are Sheffield cutlers: Harrison Brothers & Howson, Non- XLL, Joseph Allen & Sons, H.G. Long & Co., Brookes & Crookes, John Clarke & Son, E.M. Dickinson, J. Nowill & Sons, Thomas Turner & Co., Walker & Hall, and others.

6.2.1 Harrison Brothers & Howson



Maker: "HARRISON BROTHERS & HOWSON" is stamped on the mark side tang and is the only stamping on the knife. It has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, stag scales, sheepfoot blade and marline spike, steel liners, a strong copper shackle with a steel pin. The time frame for this knife is **c.1910 to early 1930s.**

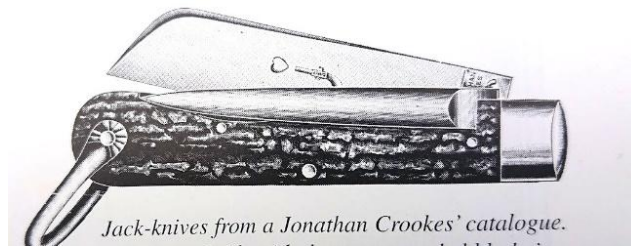
6.2.2 J. Nowill & Sons Sheffield

This knife was posted on the Facebook page of “Military Jack Knives from Around the World” in July 2024 by UK collector [Neil Champion](#). This knife is interesting in that, as pointed out by Neil, it is not strictly in accordance with the standard pattern, the differences being the gauge of copper used on the shackle (same as 6353 types), a slightly narrower bolster, and jugged bone scales. This suggests that that it may have been a ‘private purchase’ item available both during and after WW1, rather than an Admiralty contract knife.



Maker: “J. NOWILL & SONS SHEFFIELD” as stamped on the mark side tang. The main blade face is stamped with the full Nowill trademark, being: “J NOWILL & SONS SHEFFIELD, with their trademarks star above the letter D to the left of title and Cross keys to the right of title”. It has a closed length of 4 5/8 inches, jugged bone scales, sheepfoot blade and marline spike, steel liners, a copper shackle with a steel pin. (Source: Neil Champion collection).

6.2.3 Jonathan Crookes & Son



Jack-knives from a Jonathan Crookes' catalogue.

The illustration opposite is copied from an undated Jonathan Crooke’s trade catalogue shown in Tweedale’s “The Sheffield Knife Book” (page 72), although no other details are provided. However, “Tweedale’s Directory of Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2020”⁴⁹

notes that the business ceased operating in 1896, and “*The mark was soon acquired by razor maker Joseph Allen, at Ecclesall Works, 245 Rockingham Street. Crookes continued to be advertised as a stand-alone name at that address*”. This suggests that the knife could date from c.1910 to the mid-1920s.

6.2.4 Thomas Turner & Co

The “Thomas Turner & Co. Sheffield, England” 1925 trade catalogue includes the following illustration which is one of two knives described as “**Service Knives**” and which appears to be identical to Admiralty Pattern 301.



It is described in the catalogue as “**Pattern 6490**. 4 ½ inch. Stag. As supplied to His Majesty’s Navy”.

Flook’s B&CMK (page 130) also notes that:

“Two patterns of this knife are known, one which complies with the specification [i.e. the knife described above .ed] and another with chequered alloy scales. One of the latter has been noted dated 1932, and would appear to be step towards the development of the pattern of RN jack knife used between 1940 and 1986”. See following [section 6.2.5](#).

6.2.5 Joseph Allen & Sons



Maker: "NON XLL JOSEPH ALLEN & SONS SHEFFIELD". The knife has a closed length of 4 ¾ inches, chequered alloy scales, steel liners, and a strong copper shackle with steel pin. The time frame for this knife is early **1930s to 1939**.

These knives are uncommon compared with the stag gripped type which was introduced in 1910. So far, the only known makers are Sheffield's Non X-LL Joseph Allen, J. Rodgers & Sons, Harrison Brothers & Howson & G. Ibberson.

6.3 Royal Navy Seaman's Clasp Knife

Again, Ron Flook's B&CMK provides the background to this knife that was in service with the Royal Navy probably from **1938** [note that Flook gives 1940 as the start date .ed] until 1986 when it was replaced by "*The lighter and more compact in-service stainless steel knife, pocket*" (page 163).

Flook includes text from the official document that provided the authority to phase out this Royal Navy Seaman's Clasp Knife in **1986**, the pertinent parts of which are summarised as follows:

"245/86 Uniform – replacement pattern clasp knife (U).


- 1. Knife clasp, RSN V021 – 99 – 571 – 3619 is to be phased out of Naval Service. The requirements that all Class II seamen ratings, and all RM and RMR ranks maintain a folding knife in their compulsory kit remains unchanged, however".*

Additional details of the 'phase out' document are provided at the end of this section 6.3 following.

The following is an example of 'Knife clasp, **RSN V021 – 99 – 571 – 3619**', more commonly known as the '**Royal Navy Seaman's Clasp Knife**'

6.3.1 Joseph Rodgers & Sons



Maker: "G  R RODGERS & SONS 6 NORFOLK ST. SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" is stamped on the mark side tang, and the pile side tank is stamped "* + 1940". It has a closed length of 4 ½ inches (not including the screwdriver tip), chequered alloy scales with one side having a shield, screwdriver tip formed by the centre liner, a marlin spike, and a copper shackle with a steel pin. The only change in the design throughout its life was the replacement of the copper shackle

with steel in 1940. Examples of these knives dated 1940 with either a copper shackle or a steel shackle are known.

Besides Joseph Rodgers & Sons, other makers are: Humphreys Radiant Sheffield, G. Ibberson & Co., Harrison Bros & Howson, and several others

In addition, Coleman⁵⁰ (page 102) notes that “Gregsteel” of Melbourne also manufactured the Royal Navy heavy-duty pattern during World War Two for the RAN and includes a photo.

It appears however that Joseph Rodgers was the most prolific maker of this pattern – particularly during WW2. The following photo shows an example of a Joseph Rodgers made Royal Navy Seaman’s Clasp Knife for each year starting from 1938 (which is evidence that this is the date that they were first introduced into service) – through to 1945, (there were two variants for 1940 – one with a copper shackle and one with a steel shackle). This collection was assembled over a twenty-year period by Australian collector and commentator [John Kroezen](http://www.australianmilitaryknives.com) - see www.australianmilitaryknives.com . The knives are displayed bottom right **1938** to bottom left **1945**.



Other WW2 makers also dated their knives, a 1940 and a 1941 dated example by G. Ibberson & Co. have been noted. Picture opposite from the [Keith Van Assen](#) collection.

Flook (B&CMK page 153) provides an interesting overview regarding the Royal Navy Seaman’s Clasp Knife, as follows:

“Historically it would appear that this type of knife is the successor to Admiralty Pattern 301 [see [section 6.2](#) above], and as far as is known this type of knife has only seen service with the Royal Navy. With the exception of one knife, (see 365)

[section 6.4 following .ed] *the design of these knives has remained unchanged throughout its life*".

Flook also notes that regarding stamping, as follows:

"Markings vary from the date from which the knife originates: early knives carry only the makers name and the year of manufacturer; later pieces carry either only the maker's name along with either a VOCAB or NATO stores number. Various other marks are occasionally found, such as a single number on the marlin spike, inspectors marks and names/service number on the shield".

I have a Joseph Rodgers made knife with a VOCAB number **21306** on the pile side tang, together with **↑614** and **'SS – 51'** on the scale. Also noted are the inspectors mark **489 ↑** and **↑560**.

As mentioned at the start of this [section 6.3](#), the Royal Navy Seaman's Clasp Knife was phased out in 1986 by virtue of the *"Royal Navy/Marine Regulation 245/86 Uniform – replacement pattern clasp knife (U)"*. This document (see copy following) described such knives as *'heavy clasp knives'*, that were replaced with the *'lighter and more compact in-service stainless steel knife, pocket...'*

Such knives had been *'in-service'* with the army since the 1950's. The below example was made by J.H. Thompson in 1953. It has the stores code C.C.1287



Below is a later 1987 example by J.R. (Joseph Rodgers), with the NATO stores code 7340-99-975-7403. It is unissued and came in its waxed paper wrapper.



245/86 Uniform – replacement pattern clasp knife (U)

{DGST(N)83A-D/ST83/314/1/3} 1. Knife clasp, RSN V021-99-571-3619, is to be phased out of Naval Service. The requirement that all Class II seamen ratings and all RM and RMR ranks maintain a folding knife in their compulsory kit remains unchanged however. The lighter and more compact in-service stainless steel knife, pocket, RSN V021-99-975-7403, is to be provided for this purpose once the small residual assets of heavy clasp knives have been exhausted.

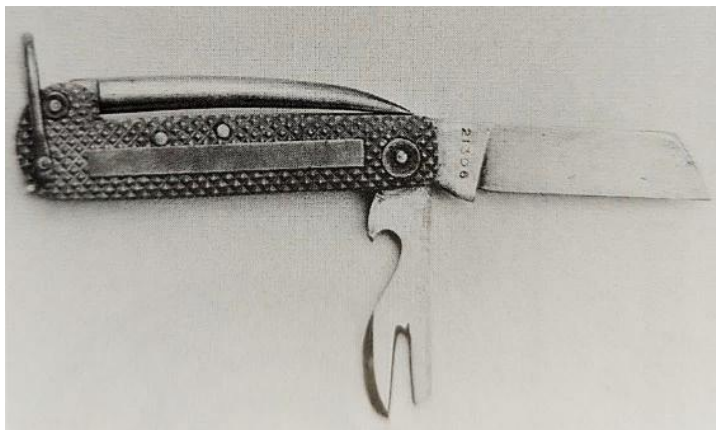
Storekeeping instructions

2. Supply officers should ensure that unit stocks of knife, clasp, RSN V021-99-571-3619 are reduced to nil at the earliest opportunity by transferring current holdings direct to HMS Raleigh for use in kitting seamen ratings. Future demands for folding knives should be for the replacement pattern only. Accounting details are shown in the Annex to this DCI.

3. BR 81 (RN and RM Uniform Regulations) will be amended. In the meantime, a copy of this instruction is to be retained within the covers of BR 81, and is to be removed only when its contents have been incorporated in the text by the next routine amendments.

The Royal Navy is renowned for not disposing of obsolete equipment but rather issuing it until it is no longer fit for purpose.

6.4 Royal Navy Seaman's Clasp Knife – three-piece.



Flook (B&CMK [Plate 365](#), page 154) provides the following explanation regarding this knife:

“Although bearing the VOCAB number [21306] this is the only example of the heavy-duty RN clasp knife so far observed that is fitted with a can opener. Enquires with the manufacturer, Rodgers, and within naval

circles have failed to reveal the reason for this apparent anomaly. It is however known that this type of knife was available on contract from Rodgers (see extract from their circa 1975 sales brochure at 365A)). It was also used by the Canadians (see 457)”.

The following knife in the author's collection appears to be identical to that shown in [Plate 457](#) (page 193) of B&CMK, including the following description:



“This knife, of the same style as (365), is marked PREMIER within an oval on the can opener, and ENGLAND on the tang of the main blade. According to research undertaken by LAWRENCE⁵¹, these knives were made for the Canadian Armed Forces during World War two and up until about the 1950s. The knives were apparently made by Wostenholm under contract for the Premier Cutlery Co. of Toronto. While not bearing any official marks, this knife and two other examples are marked with a

serviceman’s number on the shield”.

There is a serviceman’s number very faintly stamped on the shield of this knife which appears to be 53292, another is noted with the number 42433.

6.5 Camillus – model 7085

Coleman (page 99) describes these knives as follows, and credits Martin Cook as the source of the information:

“A scarce British naval pastern or sailors’ knife ... Designed by Camillus as Model 7085, these knives were a ‘lend lease’ for the British Navy in World War Two. Only 38,148 were made during the war. The knives had a sheepfoot blade, 4-inch marline spike, double steel bolsters, screwdriver stub, steel shackle, and jugged rosewood scales. ...”.

An identical knife was made for the Royal Navy by “ULSTER USA”



Maker: “CAMILLUS CUTLERY Co. CAMILLUS, N.Y. U. S. A.”, closed length of 4 7/8 inches, jugged rosewood scales (not including extended screwdriver stub), 4-inch marline spike, steel bolster, shoulder, and shackle.

The quoted the number of 38,148 for production of the 7085 J72 lend lease knife is from the official Camillus record shown below.

Obviously it does not tally with the contract numbers shown on the specification page of the same records dated 27th October 1943 (see following page), upon which added handwritten notes indicate Camillus actually made 68,088 knives and Ulster 11,000.

Principal Items Delivered to Armed Forces During World War II From 1941 to 1946

By Camillus Cutlery Co.

<u>Item Numbers</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
5677 L99 ; 5682 L75 ; 5683 L75 ; 5683 L94; 5684 L77 ; 5684 Q3 ; 5685 Q39	Fighting & Utility Bayonets	1,955,024
5369 L67B	Fish Knives	247,380
14 F31 ; 14 L23 ; 14 QZ ; 14 Q38 ; 14 S13 ; 14 S26	Navy 4 blade Knives	2,564,220
14 F31 ; 14 L55	Army or Engr. Knives	3,282,988
425 L21 ; 425 L39 ; 5541 J51	Sailor's Knives	698,020
14 L79 ; 14 J95A ; 14 J95S ; 5665 L66 ; 5679 L36	Air Corps Knives	1,042,040
57 L49 ; S7 A73 ; 54 J94	Signal C. Elec. Knives	2,183,136
5541 L29 ; 5541 L34 ; 5541 L46	Navy Jack Knives	1,711,012
5674 L12 ; 5674 L45 ; 5675 L13 ; 5676 L14 ; 5680 L60 ; 5671 L61	Surgical Knives	196,593
14 S11 ; 14 S25 ; 14 L68 ; 14 L69 ; 7085 J72	Quartermaster Knives Spike Knife	855,472 38,148

The following specification was copied from a post by "Cooky" (Martin Cook) on the website "MILITARY KNIVES and DAGGERS OF THE WORLD on December 30, 2017.

This, and the above document, came from the website:

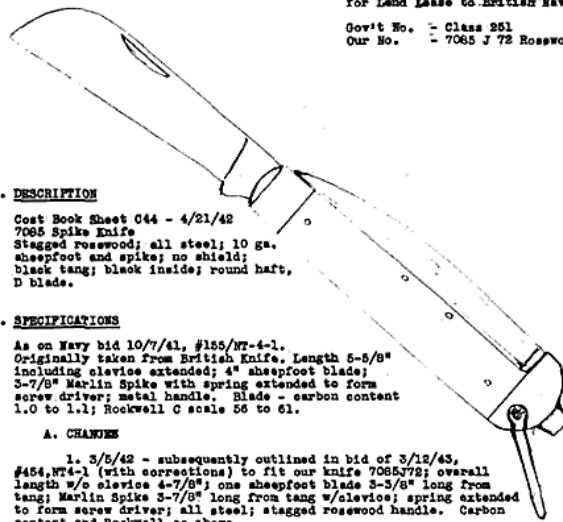
<http://collectors-of-camillus.us/History/Camillus-Military-1941-1945s.pdf>

10/27/43

SAILORS SPIKE KNIFE

U.S. NAVY
for Lend Lease to British Navy

Gov't No. - Class 251
Our No. - 7065 J 72 Rosewood



1. DESCRIPTION

Cost Book Sheet C44 - 4/21/42
7065 Spike Knife
Stagged rosewood; all steel; 10 ga.
sheepfoot and spike; no shield;
black tang; black inside; round haft,
D blade.

2. SPECIFICATIONS

As on Navy bid 10/7/41, #155/NT-4-1.
Originally taken from British Knife. Length 5-5/8"
including cleive extended; 4" sheepfoot blade;
3-7/8" Marlin Spike with spring extended to form
screw driver; metal handle. Blade - carbon content
1.0 to 1.1; Rockwell C scale 58 to 61.

A. CHANGES

1. 3/5/42 - subsequently outlined in bid of 3/12/43, #454, NT4-1 (with corrections) to fit our knife 7065J72; overall length w/c cleive 4-7/8"; one sheepfoot blade 3-3/8" long from tang; Marlin Spike 3-7/8" long from tang w/cleive; spring extended to form screw driver; all steel; stagged rosewood handle. Carbon content and Rockwell as above.
2. 3/12/43 - back of spring glazed instead of black.

3. OTHER MANUFACTURERS

Ulster Knife Co.

4. USES

By British sailors for general utility, splicing ropes, opening knots and emergency.

5. CONTRACTS (to date)

11/4	Omnillas - 3 contracts: 8000 - 11,000 - 10,000	Total	29,000
	58,000		
	Ulster Knife Co. 1 contract - 11,000		11,000

CP:JL Sub-Grant 1944 YP8

Of interest is "For Lend Lease to British Navy" and the WW2 dates. Also point '4. USES By British sailors for general utility, splicing ropes, opening knots and emergency.'

6.6 "Easy-Opener" Clasp Knife – Navy Connection.

These knives are covered in detail in the CASK Note 'British Military Clasp Knives 1905 - 1939' and were made by many Sheffield cutlers. There are two types, a 2-piece knife with blade and tin opener and a 3 piece knife with the addition of a marline spike.

The primary features of this pattern are the distinctive style of the tin opener, pressed fibre scales, easy opener niche/indent, steel shackle, spearpoint blade and overall, loosely conforming to the 9402/1917 provisional patterns as detailed by Sweeney as "Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales" - albeit with a smaller closed length at approximately 4 3/8 inches.

There appears to be agreement that easy opener knives were issued to the military at least by the mid/late-1920s and were produced in the early post WW1 years until the end of WW2.



3-piece Easy-opener clasp knife.
Maker: "Walker & Hall Sheffield",
with **W↑D** stamped on the
marline spike.
Pressed fibre scales, no bolster.
Spearpoint blade, tin opener and
marline spike. Steel shackle.
Closed length 4 3/8 inches.

Further to this, there are three known examples of the 3-piece knives which have a naval connection, in particular to the Royal Marine Light Infantry. In 1855 the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI) was formed, followed by the Royal Marine Artillery (RMA) in 1859. The RMLI and RMA merged in 1923 to form a single Royal Marine Corps.

The first knife was discussed on 'The Great War Forum' in 2008. The knife was made by Wade & Butcher and the marline spike was stamped "**F.G. Ball PL 21748**". Research showed this was Frederick George Ball who served in The Royal Marine Light Infantry. He was enrolled at Plymouth on 12/6/1918, and served right through until 1939, he was then re-engaged and served until 1944.

Two other knives were discussed on the Facebook page 'Military Jack Knives From Around the World' on 21/5/2024.



The knife above was made by Southern & Richardson and is marked on the scales: "**PO 19054 WM**". The owner being identified as William Frederick Mears, Royal Marine Light Infantry, Portsmouth Division. He joined in November 1915 and served until 1949. Photo and information courtesy of Daren Nicholson who owns this knife, and research by David Thomas.

The other knife was made by J. McClory and had the marline spike removed, the scales were marked "**PO 18820**" who was identified by researcher David Thomas as Walter Cowles of the Royal Marine Light Infantry Portsmouth Division. He joined in 1915 and re-joined after 10 years and was discharged 1945. At what point in their service these knives were issued to the Marines is to date unknown.

Another 3-piece knife is known that has a Merchant Marine connection, it is shown below. It was made by J. Watts, and has '**44**' stamped on the tin opener and **W↑D** on the marline spike, and was issued to a fisherman/trawlerman engaged on mine hunting and clearance working out of Lowestoft on the East coast of England during WW2.



Post by '[Jocknife](#)', Sun Feb 09, 2014, Military Knives & Daggers of the World.

6.7 Joseph Rodgers & Co. 'Rigger' Knife

The following knife was posted on the Facebook page 'British & Sheffield' on 24/5/2024 by Pyrian Gore and is shown here with his description. It is obviously designed for sailors.



"A different design take on the single blade with marlin spike knife, this hefty nickel silver scaled example is marked for Joseph Rodgers & Co (as opposed to & Sons) and the Registered Design No is from 1902-1903. I wonder if it was an attempt to attract a military contract?"

Despite J Rodgers & Co appearing to be trying to cash in on their more famous namesake, all the knife examples I've seen marked for them have been well made, as is this one, which also sits well in the hand, with either tool

open. A closed length of 106 mm (approx. 4 3/16") with an unusual almost 'diagonal' spring to serve both tools, thick, heavy nickel silver scales and a multi-purpose hollow marlin-spike/awl, I find it quite a pleasing and tidy design that, unfortunately, didn't seem to catch on!"

7 [CONCLUSIONS](#)

This Collector Note describes the joint authors' understanding of the Royal Navy & merchant marine clasp knife narrative and, in-particular, the role of the square-point rope knife as the primary working knife (hand tool) used by sailors for probably 100 years from the early 19th century through to the early 20th century, and which appear to have been primarily associated with the Royal Navy over that period. This Collector Note also identifies a range of clasp knives that were contemporary in their use with the square point rope knife, such as the sheepfoot blade 'sailors' knife'. As noted in [section 5.2](#) above ([here](#)) "A review of the Sheffield cutlery trade catalogues ... indicates that there was a far greater variety of sheepfoot blade sailor knives than there were square-joint rope knives." A reason for this may be that the market for such knives were sailors of the merchant marine (who most likely purchased their own knife) rather than sailors of the Royal Navy who were

supplied with their knife or who were limited in their choice of knife due to naval regulations.

This Collector Note also recognises that sailors were likely to own a range of knives – the first being a working knife (a hand tool) – primarily for working with rope, and a second knife that would be more multipurpose- being a combination of a working knife and a pocketknife suitable for more everyday activities. These are described in the section [“5.3 Clip-point sailor knives”](#) and section [“5.4 Spear point blade sailor knives”](#).

The previously mentioned “... 100 years from the early 19th century through to the early 20th century”, totally covers the era of change from wind power to steam power, and with it the corresponding change from rope to steel cables, and the tools required to work them. This change is clearly reflected in the Admiralty’s decision in the early 20th century to adopt the heavy duty AP301 as the issue knife, and almost a century later to phase out the *‘heavy clasp knives’* and replace them with the *‘lighter and more compact in-service stainless steel knife, pocket’*.

8 [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT](#)

In common with the companion CASK Collector Notes, being: “Clasp Knives of the Boer War”, “Clasp Knives 1905 – 1939”, “Clasp Knives 1939 – 1945”, and “Private Purchase Military Clasp Knives” (all available at www.CASK.info, this Collector Note builds on the research undertaken by Ron Flook in the preparation of his book *“British and Commonwealth Military Knives”* published by Howell Press in 1999, and is the pre-eminent compendium of information on this subject. Where examples shown in this Collector Note are also shown in Flook’s book they are noted accordingly.

In addition, we now have access to Kevin Coleman’s “Military Clasp Knives” Revised and expanded Edition July 2023, self-published by the Author. This work provides a useful context for any discussion on military clasp knives, together with original research regarding the introduction of clasp knives into the British naval and military forces in the middle years of the 19th century.

Finally, the efforts of UK collector and researcher Paul Stamp in undertaking the final pre-publication review is greatly appreciated. This is a necessary but onerous task, and it requires someone with both a technical knowledge of the subject matter and a passion for collecting, together with a skill in articulating, all of which Paul has in abundance.

9 [UPDATES & CORRECTIONS](#)

Much of the value of ‘web notes’ such as this Collector Note lies in their ability to be regularly updated, elaborated and corrected, so that in-reality there is no final version – it is in-fact a ‘never-ending story’. Our purpose is to assist in filling the knowledge gap regarding antique Sheffield pocketknives and folding knives - to encourage/assist new collectors and to generally promote the pleasure associated with such collecting. To this end, any suggestions/contributions that fellow collectors may have that will improve the content of this Collector Note and thus expand the knowledge base will be most welcome, and I am sure will be greatly appreciated by all present and future collectors of CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY & THE MERCHANT MARINE.

10 [AUTHORS](#)

Lawrie Wilson
storyteller

Martin Cook
technical expert

Paul Stamp
Researcher & reviewer

APPENDIX 1: Description of Jack Knives

The following page has been copied from Geoffrey Tweedale's most informative book "The Sheffield Knife Book – A History and Collectors' Guide" (Page 72) published by the Hallamshire Press in 1996, which includes the traditional description of a jack knife and a possible source for the name. He also observes (correctly in my opinion) that "Generally, the term jack knife has fallen into disuse in England". I don't however agree with his use of the term "Jack – Tar knife" which he uses as the name for the Thomas Turner square point jack knife, as it appears to me that the only time this term has been used in print is "Handicrafts That Survive" a publication dated 1902 by Thomas Turner & Co., which I have referenced in this Collector Note at section 3.2.3 and section 5.1 – both at the start of the section and at the end [here](#). Note also that the three "Jack Knives from a Jonathan Crooke's catalogue" illustrated are also referenced in this Collector Note, being the rope knife at section 5.1.2.12 [here](#), the AP301 at section 6.2.2 [here](#), and the clip point at section 5.3.5 [here](#).

era. Knives were made in exotic shapes, in pearl and tortoiseshell, and sometimes the scales were decorated with pin work (piqué). By this method, tiny silver pins were painstakingly let into the pearl scales producing a dazzling effect. Scales were also shielded, carved and engraved. Several Sheffield makers achieved a high reputation by specialising in silver fruit-knives, though the master in the Victorian era is recognised as John Y. Cowlshaw (see Part Two). Naturally, the advent of stainless steel destroyed the silver fruit-knife trade after the First World War, though by then many of the craftsmen who had produced such marvellous pieces were either dead or in decline too.

One of the most popular Sheffield folders was the jack-knife—a sturdy and simply made pocket-knife, which usually had a single blade in one end of the handle (though some jack-knife patterns had two blades). Again, no one has ever offered a satisfactory definition as to why these knives are so named, though some have suggested a link with the mythical Jacques o' Lieges, a Flemish cutler who came to Sheffield in the sixteenth century. This is more fancy than fact and more probably the name simply derives from the traditional English word 'jack', meaning labourer or sailor. Certainly, the term 'jack-knife' covers a wide variety of types. For example, folding hunting-knives are recognisably jack-knives. Some knives in the nineteenth century had 'jack' in their actual name. Perhaps the best example is the 'Jack Tar' knife. Thos Turner supplied nearly half a million of these knives to the Admiralty in the late nineteenth century. They described it as follows:

The pattern of this knife is a very old one. The end of the blade is an inch in width, and quite blunt, the original idea being, apparently, that the sailor should not be tempted to use his pocket-knife as a stabbing instrument in any quarrels...The other feature of the knife is that the strong pin by which the blade is held in its place stands above the 'bolster', so that if the blade should get loose at any time the sailor can himself rivet it tight again. Jack's knife is, indeed, an indispensable possession...[with which]...he eats his dinner, for Jack is not allowed the luxury of a table knife and fork, he scrapes the paint off a boat, he cleans an iron rail, cuts his plug tobacco, and does innumerable

other things besides. So it is that...the 'Jack Tar' knife is almost the strongest pocket-knife made.

Generally, the term jack-knife has fallen into disuse in England (though it is used more in America), and to most people jack-knives are simply pocket-knives.

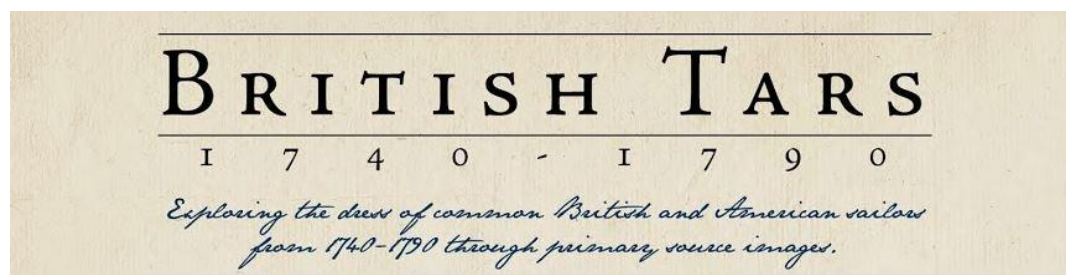
Aside from the original penknife, no Sheffield pocket-knife was more well known in the early nineteenth century than the Barlow knife. This was a cheap, sturdy pattern intended for young boys—though, of course, this did not prevent it from being used by adults. Barlows had one or two blades, but their chief characteristic was a long bolster (which added extra support for the blade and so made a stronger knife). Often the bolsters carried a name or trade mark. Barlow knives and the cutlers who made them were indigenous to the Sheffield area. The most important was Obadiah Barlow, who founded a business which made



Jack knives from a Jonathan Crookes' catalogue. The top knife with the square-ended blade is a sailor's-knife and would have been similar to Turner's 'Jack Tar' knife.



APPENDIX 2: BLOG - British Tars 1740 – 1790 “Sailors’ Knives”



Sailors' Knives

Wednesday, December 20, 2017

Today's guest post comes courtesy Matthew Brenckle. He is specialist in maritime material culture, and former historian for the USS Constitution Museum in Boston. Matt is now the proprietor of his own historic hat making business.



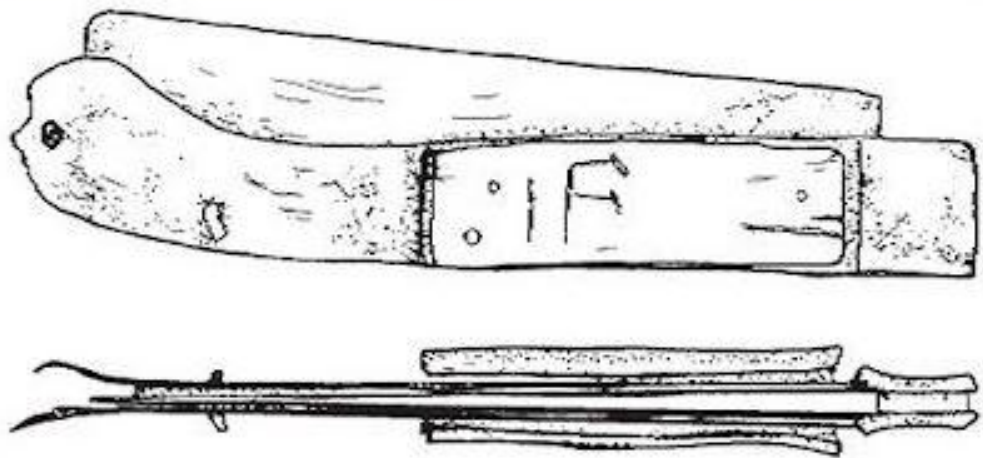
This detail of a 1775 watercolor by Lt. Gabriel Bray depicts a sailor of Pallas with an open clasp knife.
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Visiting Nantucket in the years before the American Revolution, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur explained the importance of the humble knife to the seafarer, and the high esteem in which it was held. Of the island whalers he said:

I must confess, that I have never seen more ingenuity in the use of the knife; thus the most idle moments of their lives become usefully employed. In the many hours of leisure which their long cruises afford them, they cut and carve a variety of boxes and pretty toys, in wood, adapted to different uses.... You will be pleased to remember that they are all brought up to the trade of coopers, be their future intentions or fortunes what they may; therefore almost every man in this island has always two knives in his pocket, one much larger than the other; and though they hold everything that is called fashion in the utmost contempt, yet they are as difficult to please, and as extravagant in the choice and price of their knives, as any young buck in Boston would be about his hat, buckles, or coat. As soon as a knife is injured, or superceded by a more convenient one, it is carefully laid up in some corner of their desk. I once saw upwards of fifty thus preserved at Mr.'s, one of the worthiest men on this island; and among the whole, there was not one that perfectly resembled another.[1]

Here is the seaman's knife in all its guises. It was a tool for carving useful things or crafting decorative trinkets. It served as a fashionable accessory, something to be admired and envied.

Crèvecoeur saw his Nantucket mariners on shore. Had he witnessed them working at sea he could have enumerated a score of other uses. In a world of wood and rope, the knife was the sailor's indispensable companion. In the 18th century, the folding clasp knife seems to have been the blade of choice. Inexpensive and easy to slip in a pocket, their very ubiquity means few bothered to mention their existence.[2]



A clasp knife belonging to sailor John Frazer, recovered from the 1785 wreck of the British collier *General Carleton*. From *The General Carleton Shipwreck, 1785*, Waldemar Ossowski, ed. (Polish Maritime Museum, Gdansk, 2008).

A sailor's knife made quick work of salt meat, and could slice through seizings or other lines with ease. It could also slice a shipmate. The oft-repeated story that upon entering a ship a sailor was forced to snap the point off his knife is probably apocryphal. At least, no eighteenth-century evidence of the practice has yet been found. With or without a point, sailors frequently used their knives as weapons of interpersonal violence, both afloat and ashore. Unless a fight ended with the untimely demise of one of the participants, however, the records are silent. Murder was a serious offence, however, and both civil and naval courts are full of cases involving knife play.

English sailors supposedly were scornful of using knives to settle disputes, preferring fists to blades. Said one sailor when faced with a clasp-knife wielding Portuguese opponent, "I'll not use that thing [the knife], but I'll box you in the English way." [3] Yet, as a nationalistic early-twentieth-century law commentator bluntly put it, "stabbing was nearly as common in the British Navy as it can have been among [the Spanish] to whom it is supposed to be appropriate." [4] The records certainly support this supposition.

Among court proceedings appear a large number of crimes of passion, or stabbings committed in the heat of the moment. For example, in 1743 two seafaring men who had perhaps spent too much time in the White Bear public house got into an argument over who was more esteemed aboard ship. Lewis Legier, who had been Commodore Anson's cook, naturally argued that a cook, especially a commodore's cook, enjoyed far more

respect than a mere sailor. His companion, Gabriel Beaugrand disagreed, called Legier a "lying Rascal," and commenced striking him on the head with the pewter pint pot from which he had been drinking. Not one to be abused, Legier grabbed Beaugrand, threw him onto the table, and wrested the pot from his hand. A general scuffle ensued. At length, Legier cried "I am dead," and collapsed lifeless on the floor. Beaugrand made a speedy exit, and an examination of Legier's body revealed he had been stabbed three times. The next day a "Knife with a sharp pointed Blade, about eight or nine Inches long" was discovered in the yard next door.[5]

Between 1755 and 1778, British naval courts martial were held on fifty men accused of murder; a large portion of these cases involved seamen's personal knives.[6] A particularly ugly case was tried in December 1778. Two seamen from Worcester, David Caynes and Edmond Butler, were accused of killing shipmate Matthew Cavanagh over a matter of four pounds. By all accounts, the two defendants were pretty rough customers. Caynes, a boatswain's mate "*carried a knife which he was very ready to produce in terrorem. He was in the habit of sticking it in the deck, and looking significantly at such of his messmates as he wished to cow.*"[7] At length Caynes stuck his knife in Cavanagh and pitched his body overboard from the head, a crime for which he hanged. We know what this knife looked like thanks to the testimony of one witness: "[Caynes] put his hand in his pocket, and drew his knife out, and said, putting his thumb on the open blade of the knife, 'If I hear any more of that this shall be your portion.'"[8] We learn that Caynes' knife was a clasp knife kept in a pocket, but also that there could be some unpleasant dealings in the darkness of the middle watch.

The knife was only useful against unarmed (or similarly armed) opponents. Most other ship-board edged weapons such as cutlasses, swords, pikes, and even boarding axes had a greater reach than the average knife. John Carden demonstrated this in 1798, when as a young lieutenant he led a boarding party to subdue a mutiny aboard a merchant vessel: I soon reach'd her Deck, & found her in a high state of Mutiny. I rush'd with a dozen Men arm'd to the Cabin, where the Mutinous part of the crew outside its Door were assembled. – The Captain was just coming out, & a Seaman having a large knife was rushing forward, as he explained, to have blood for blood. At this moment I prick'd him with my Sword under the right Arm, he turned short round, when I plac'd my Sword [at] his Brest. - My Crew seiz'd him, bound him hand & foot, & plac'd him in the bottom of our Boat, & thus this wrong headed kickup or Mutiny was totally subdued.[9] Carden relates this tale with no small amount of pride, but a man armed with a knife had no chance against one armed with a sword. No sailor used a knife in battle, except as a weapon of last resort.

A workaday tool or an instrument of terror, the clasp knife could be found in every sailor's jacket pocket, easily concealed and easily drawn when the occasion required.



A detail of a mezzotint portrait of Capt. Andrew Wilkinson, before 1761. He's using a clasp knife with a clipped point to cut the tails of a splice. National Portrait Gallery, London.

SOURCES:

[1] J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (Westvaco, 1976), 176-177.

[2] Transcripts of court cases involving theft are some of the best sources for determining the price of knives in the eighteenth-century. In October 1799 Mary Clarke and Clarissa Parker of Shadwell, London, two women of questionable morality, were dragged before a justice at the Old Bailey. They were accused of stealing, among other sundry articles, a knife valued at 12 pence from one John-Christian Wolfe, a seaman from HMS Bellona. Apart from a canvas bag, the knife was the least expensive item lifted from the hapless sailor, and though hardly trivial, the value of the knife was but 4 percent of a Royal Navy seaman's monthly wage (24 s. per lunar month). In February of the same year George Barry, a merchant seaman, was assaulted on the highway in East Smithfield by two men, John Tate and John Connoway, alias Irish Jack. Accosting Barry and throwing him against the side of a shed, the two malefactors riffled the victim's pockets, relieving him of six shillings and a clasp knife valued at 2 pence. Both thieves were found guilty, and despite the small value of the stolen goods, they were sentenced to death.

[3] Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 2 November 2005), 6 May 1761, trial of Antonio de Silva (t17610506-24).

[4] David Hannay, *Naval Courts Martial* (Cambridge, 1914), 157.

[5] Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 2 November 2005), 19 May 1743, trial of Gabriel Beaugrand and Lewis Brunet (t17430519-9).

[6] Hannay, *Naval Courts Martial*, 142.

[7] *Ibid.*, 149.

[8] *Ibid.*, 150.

[9] John Carden, quoted in William Gilkerson, *Boarders Away: With Steel* (Lincoln, R.I., 1991), 129-130.

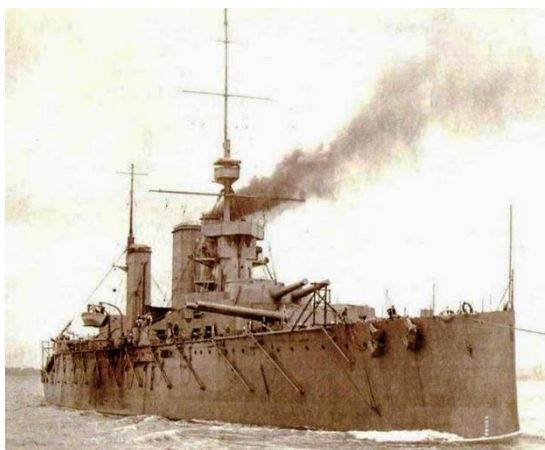
[APPENDIX 3: A World War 1 Sailors Prize Knife.](#)



This is not a navy knife, but it is a knife with an interesting naval connection. It is a champagne pattern sportsmans knife made with a tin opener indicating it was retailed toward the military man. It has been well used, the makers name is illegible, only the word 'Sheffield' being visible. It is inscribed on one scale 'W. Allnatt Ch Plumb.' and opposite 'Malta Auxiliary Patrol Base, Billiard Handicap 1917.'

William Edward Allnatt was born in Portsmouth, Hampshire on 18-01-1874. He joined the Royal Navy in 1894 as a Plumbers Mate, by 1917 he was a Chief Plumber, the equivalent rank to a Chief Petty Officer. The list of Royal Navy bases and ships he served on is impressive, starting at HMS Victory II, a shorebase at Crystal Palace/Sydenham which was a London training Depot. Then numerous bases and ships including HMS Australia, HMS Bellerophon where he gained his Long Service and Good Conduct medal. At the famous WW1 Battle of Jutland in 1916 he was serving on board HMS Princess Royal. In February 1917 he is shown as serving on HMS Egmont. HMS Egmont was known as a 'stone frigate', i.e. a shore base at Fort St Angelo on Malta, which was an Auxiliary Patrol Base. This is where he won the Billiard Handicap and this prize knife. He saw out the final years of WW1 on Malta before ending his service in 1919, ironically, where he started, at HMS Victory II in London.

William Allnatt was married in 1908 aged 20 and died in 1953 aged 79yrs at Romsey in Hampshire.



HMS Princess Royal

340252 Portsmouth 340252

Name in full } William Edward Allnatt
 P. S. No. 254503

Date of Birth 18 January 1874
 Place of Birth Portsmouth, Hants
 Occupation Plumber

Date and Period of C. & S. Engagements.		Age.	Height. Ft. in.	Hair.	Eyes.	Complexion.	Wounds, Scars, Marks, &c.
10 July 1894 - 12 years		42	5. 7 1/2	Light	Grey	Fair	
10 July 96 - To Comp		1	5. 7	"	"	"	

Ships, &c., served in.	List and No.	Rating	Sub-ratings.			Badges.	Period of Service.		Character.	If Discharged, Whether, and for what Cause.
			Rating.	From	To		From	To		
Victory II	157/181	Plumber				31. 10. 79	2 July 94	17 Dec 95	17 Dec 95	17 Dec 95
Malabar	157/27	Plumber				4. 1. 97	17 Dec 95	19 June 96	19 June 96	19 June 96
Victory I	157/219	"				11. 9. 7. 97	20 June 96	20 June 96	20 June 96	20 June 96
Nile	157/34	"					2 Aug 96	12 Jan 97	12 Jan 97	12 Jan 97
Victory 2	158/103	"				30	13 Jan 96	9 May 96	9 May 96	9 May 96
Humbal	158/16	"					10 May 97	2 Sep 97	2 Sep 97	2 Sep 97
Robwell	158/100	"					30 Sep 97	30 Jan 98	30 Jan 98	30 Jan 98
Australia	158/78	"					31 Jan 98	6 Feb 98	6 Feb 98	6 Feb 98
Defiant	158/1034	"					7 Feb 98	17 Feb 98	17 Feb 98	17 Feb 98
Imogene	158/83	"					1 Oct 98	5 Oct 98	5 Oct 98	5 Oct 98
Duncan	158/8	"					6 Oct 98	27 Nov 98	27 Nov 98	27 Nov 98
Victory	158/164	"					28 Nov 98	1 Dec 98	1 Dec 98	1 Dec 98
Nelson	158/214	"					2 Dec 98	8 Jan 99	8 Jan 99	8 Jan 99
Victory I	158/257	"					4 Jan 99	30 Sep 99	30 Sep 99	30 Sep 99
Flagstaff	158/19	"					1 Oct 99	18 Nov 99	18 Nov 99	18 Nov 99
Victory	158/572	"					19 Nov 99	19 Feb 99	19 Feb 99	19 Feb 99
Jefferson	158/3	" (1)					20 Feb 99	11 Jan 99	11 Jan 99	11 Jan 99
Flagstaff	158/29	"					1 Feb 99	13 Apr 99	13 Apr 99	13 Apr 99
Victory 2	158/10	"					13 Apr 99	18 Feb 99	18 Feb 99	18 Feb 99
Ariadne	158/3	"					29 Feb 99	25 June 99	25 June 99	25 June 99
Argonaut	158/18	" (2)					26 June 99	3 Dec 99	3 Dec 99	3 Dec 99
Victory	158/1	"					1 Jan 99	10 Apr 99	10 Apr 99	10 Apr 99
Crescent	158/13	"					14 Apr 99	4 Dec 99	4 Dec 99	4 Dec 99
Victory 2	158/1520	"					5 Dec 99	14 Dec 99	14 Dec 99	14 Dec 99
Flagstaff	158/954	"					16 Dec 99	2 Jan 99	2 Jan 99	2 Jan 99
Princess Royal	158/29	"					8 Jan 99	12 Jan 99	12 Jan 99	12 Jan 99
Flagstaff	158/126	"					13 Jan 99	25 Feb 99	25 Feb 99	25 Feb 99
Egmont	158/17	"					1 Feb 99	3 Dec 99	3 Dec 99	3 Dec 99
Egmont	158/149	"					1 Jan 99	25 Dec 99	25 Dec 99	25 Dec 99
Victory II	158/1538	"					14 Feb 99	15 Feb 99	15 Feb 99	15 Feb 99

Clothing and Bedding Gratuity.	REMARKS.
£5. 10/- 3/2	(1) 0-0-1 5 4 12 13. 10. 10 (N 729/10)
£3. 10/- 6/6	(2) 6-0-0 6 4 12 1. 12. 12
£8. 10/- 6/6	10/100 100/18
£5. 0/- 0/0	

Below, HMS Egmont, Fort St Angelo, Malta.



FORT ST ANGELO, H.M.S. 'EGMONT'

APPENDIX 4: Named Knives

In order to affirm ownership of a knife, sailors like other servicemen (and indeed non-servicemen), often had their initials or name, rank, number or other identifying mark added to their personal knife. The most commonly seen markings are those engraved into the pile side blade face. This is contrary to the knives issued to the army where it was common practice for the grips to be stamped or branded with such markings.

This practice has the benefit of allowing modern collectors the opportunity of researching the original keeper of a knife and thus adding to its provenance and enabling a more precise date of issue to be established. Always bearing in mind that knives were often sold, traded, stolen or handed down to new keepers.

That said, it is generally presumed that the original owner would be the one to add his name or number to his knife.

Here are some examples:



Square point rope knife

Maker: "Hunter, Sheffield".

The pile side blade face is inscribed in a freehand type-style "19433 A. Barnes". Only one possible result is; Frederick Barnes R.N. No.19433, b.1857 at St Marys, Suffolk, joined the Navy 1.3.1872, 'Boy 2nd Class' at HMS Fisgard, with a 10yr contract.

Info from The National Archives



A.P. 301

Maker; "NON XLL Joseph Allen & Sons, Sheffield".

The pile side blade is faintly inscribed "J. Graham" (barely visible in the photo.)

A search of the National Archives shows there are many sailors recorded with that initial and name so it is not possible to identify the original owner



'Easy-Opener' fibre scales.

Maker; "Southern & Richardson, Sheffield" scales marked "PO 19054 WM" identified as William Frederick Mears, Royal Marine Light Infantry, Portsmouth Division. 1915- 1949

With the introduction of the alloy scale AP 301 in circa 1932 came a vacant rectangular shield on the obverse scale to enable sailors to mark the knife with their personal details. This could be done in several ways; by hand, engraved or die-stamped. The quality of the marks varied somewhat!

Knives sold out-of-service often have the marks ground or filed off.




Admiralty Pattern 301, Alloy Scales.

Maker; "NON-XLL, Joseph Allen & Sons, Sheffield", and it has the original owners name hand marked in the shield "F.J. SMITH. A.B. R.F.R." (Able Seaman Royal Fleet Reserve). This knife has had the scales polished and rounded.



Admiralty Pattern 301, Alloy Scales.

Maker; "G  R J. Rodgers, 6 Norfolk St, Sheffield, England" The shield is marked; "PO X 4665", the 5 being upside down. This is a Royal Marines number, the PO indicating he enrolled at Portsmouth, X indicating post 1930.



Heavy Duty Navy Rope Knife

Maker; Harrison Bros & Howson, Sheffield.

Marked "HMS KENT NAVAL BOAT CREW 1941"

A collector of naval items bought six of these knives, all marked the same, in a Weller & Dufy auction in the early 1970's. HMS Kent was torpedoed in September 1940 and was out of action for a year being refitted and upgraded at Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth. In early 1942 she was reassigned to the Home Fleet. Navy Boat Crews are permanently assigned crews and typically consists of the coxswain, engineer, bowhook, sternhook and boat officer. These knives were probably used by the permanent resident Naval Boat Crew during her time in dock throughout the year of 1941.

APPENDIX 5: Lanyards.

The original use of a lanyard was to hang the seaman's knife in front of his body ensuring he could not drop it. It was of such a length that a man aloft could use the knife with one arm outstretched, the other arm holding onto the rigging.

These are most commonly seen in period photos as a white or natural cord lanyard worn under the collar and held in a pocket in the sailor's jumper or frock, or was worn around the waist.

Modern Royal Navy lanyards differ little from their 19th century ancestors, being a length of cord looped at each end with turks head knots.

This description (sourced from "The British & Commonwealth Military Badge Forum December 2012") is taken from Joint Service Publication 768 which states:

Lanyard. White. Royal Marines. Single cord, 1/4-inch diamond loop with turks at head of each end. 33-inch overall length. NSN: 8465-99-136-5683.

Specification: UK/SC/5416 @ 20587A

Also, Section 1, Sub-Section 1a of the M.O.D. Distribution Management Centre (2005) which states:

Lanyard Individual Equipment Carrying 42 Commando Royal Marines


Braid type. Single cord with loops at either end, secured by a turks head. White. length 84cm Diameter 0.6cm. 42 Commando Royal Marines

NSN 8465-99-136-5683 UK/SC/5416 @ 20587A Cost Guide £1.24.

Sailors would often make their own lanyards showing off their skill with plaited rope and knots.



Admiralty Pattern 301, Alloy Scales.

Maker; "G  R J. Rodgers, 6 Norfolk St, Sheffield, England"
With lanyard. See [here](#).



Heavy Duty Navy knife
Maker; Harrison Bros & Howson, Sheffield.
Late WW2 knife with lanyard.
See [here](#).



Camillus model 7085 WW2 'lend lease' knife with lanyard which has splashes of 'Battleship Grey' paint. See [here](#).

The issue of lanyards with clasp knives started about **1894**. The "Navy List 1895, HMSO pp. 577 at (3.)" states:

"knife lanyards with knives attached are to be worn by all men wearing seamen's dress."

The following provides further details:

UNIFORM OF PETTY OFFICERS AND MEN DRESSED AS SEAMEN [CLASS II]

1. Petty Officers of the 1st and 2nd Class - Seamen - Artificers - Stokers - Boys, and all other Ratings not specifically provided for.
2. The regulation kit for Petty Officers, and others above mentioned (Class II), is as follows, and is to be strictly adhered to.

Kit

Includes;

- 1 knife
- 2 knife lanyards

"Navy List 1895", *HmsO*, pp. 580

Knives are to be worn by seamen branch ratings and wiremen in class II uniform on a lanyard attached to the waist when in working dress or tropical rig ordered as working dress

"Appendix To The Navy List", *HmsO*, pp. 120

Neck lanyards are always to be worn with dresses Nos. 1, 2, 6 and 7 by all men wearing class II uniform, except that when drilling under arms on occasions other than ceremonial occasions and rehearsals for ceremonial occasions, the wearing of lanyards may be dispensed with at the discretion of the Commanding Officer. They are to be worn with the end tucked into the jumper and the bight passing between the silk and the jumper. The wearing of the knife on the lanyard is optional.

"Appendix To The Navy List", *HmsO*, pp. 120

Generally the lanyard pattern for all British Military clasp knives in 1901 was a renewal of previous patterns dating into the 19th century, and in 1901 it was stated that all patterns were to be of unbleached natural flax.

Almost all the WW1 photos of men wearing lanyards over their shoulders or around the neck that appear white in colour have clasp knives attached which are tucked into their left breast pockets.

It was very much a navy or mounted soldier's piece of kit until clasp knives became more universal in 1914/15.

The following images of lanyards being worn were taken from the web page - <https://www.thebluejackets.co.uk/research/item/23/html>



26: Man-of-War's Men (1854)



42: Boy Seaman (1860)



22: Everyday life in the Navy (1893)



16: HMS Camperdown (1895)



17: HMS Excellent (1898)



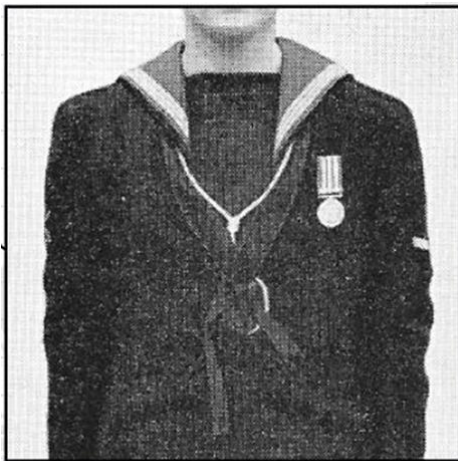
46: HMS Ganges (1913)



47: RNVR (1918)



20: HMS Ganges (1950)



38: Uniform Regulations (1966)

Author and collector Martin Jan Brayley shared the following photos on the Facebook page "Military Jack Knives From Around The World":

Published in 1898, interesting use of rope knives, clearly showing the lanyards being worn with knives attached.



Royal Navy divers perform UXB work, Cherbourg harbour 1944. Issue heavy duty clasp knives on lanyards worn around the waist.



Below is an image sourced from the internet showing WW2 Royal Navy sailors struggling with an anchor chain, note the heavy-duty knife with lanyard around the waist.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Colin Waters "Dictionary of Old Trades, Titles & Occupations"
- ² "Jack Knife" see Appendix 1.
- ³ "British Tars 1740 -1790" available at <https://www.britishtars.com/2017/12/sailors-knives.html>
- ⁴ Ron Flook "British and Commonwealth Military Knives" Published in the United States in 1999 by Howell Press, Inc.
- ⁵ Geoffrey Tweedale "The Sheffield Knife Book – A History and Collectors' Guide". The Hallamshire Press 1996
- ⁶ Michael Silvey "Pocket Knives of the United States Military", Published by the author, 2002.
- ⁷ Bernard Levine "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values" DBI Books Inc., Northbrook, USA 1985. 4th Edition 1987.
- ⁸ Kevin Coleman "Military Clasp Knives" Revised and expanded Edition July 2023, self-published by the Author
- ⁹ Smith's Key: "Explanation or Key to the Various Manufactories of Sheffield ..." published by Joseph Smith in 1816.
- ¹⁰ Bernard Levine - Knife World magazine article "Warranted Really Good", published in the September 1986 edition.
- ¹¹ Bernard Levine - Knife World magazine article "Old sailor Knives", published in the December 1986 edition of "Knife World" magazine and was also included in the book "The Best of Knife World Volume III"
- ¹² "Mappin Brothers Illustrated Catalogue" Queen's Cutlery Works Sheffield circa 1860.
- ¹³ Lockwood Brothers' Colonists' Guide to the selection of Cutlery – Part 1, Manufactory 74 Arundel Street Sheffield.
- ¹⁴ John Wragg & Son (assumed - as that is the name rubber stamped on each page)
- ¹⁵ "George Wostenholm & Son, Ltd. Washington Works, THE I*XL CUTLERY Sheffield England". Reproduction published by Beinfeld Publishing, Inc. North Hollywood, California, undated. Author's collection
- ¹⁶ Michael Silvey "Pocket Knives of the United States Military" Op. cit.
- ¹⁷ "Christopher Johnson & Co." Internet download: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2377720913/view>
- ¹⁸ Silber & Fleming Ltd. 57 Wood St. Cheapside London "Illustrated Pattern Book" circa 1889 catalogue
- ¹⁹ Ron Flook "The London Knife Book – an A-Z listing of London Cutlers and Retailers" published by Antique Knives Ltd. 2008
- ²⁰ Joseph Rodgers & Sons Cutlers" assume dated circa 1912. Catalog reprint by Adrian Van Dyk, undated. Author's collection
- ²¹ Joseph Rodgers & Sons Cutlers No.6 Norfolk Street Sheffield"
- ²² "Thomas Turner & Co." catalogue (part) dated 1902. Internet download
- ²³ Ron Flook: "British and Commonwealth Military Knives" Op. cit.
- ²⁴ Thomas Turner & Co. (Sheffield) Ltd." Sheffield England. Published July 1925. Author's collection.
- ²⁵ Bernard Levine "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values" Op. cit.
- ²⁶ "The Best of Knife World Volume III" published in 1933 by Knife World Publications, P.O. Box 3395, Knoxville TN 37927.
- ²⁷ Scrattd - a pattern of incised lines (often checkered) applied to bone handles aimed at improving the grip. The practice died out as gnarly stag became the handle of choice as it provided a better grip. 'Scrattd' is simply a Yorkshire dialect word for 'scratched'. Also, occasionally the term "forbuck" was used which has the same meaning as scrattd.
- ²⁸ Smith's Key: Op.cit.
- ²⁹ Ron Flook, British and Commonwealth Military Knives. Op. cit.
- ³⁰ Michael Silvey "Pocket Knives of the United States Military", Op. cit.
- ³¹ Tweedale Geoffrey "Tweedale's Directory of Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2020" Published by Geoffrey Tweedale, Second Edition 2018.
- ³² Kevin Coleman Op.cit.
- ³³ Michael W. Silvey, "The Complete Book of U. S. Military Pocket Knives from 1800 to the present", Schiffer Publishing 2015.
- ³⁴ SOURCE: post by "Cooky" on the website "Military Knives & Daggers of the World" dated June 22, 2013.
- ³⁵ Smith's Key: Op.cit
- ³⁶ Michael Silvey "Pocket Knives of the United States Military", Op. cit.
- ³⁷ Bernard Levine "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values" Op. cit.
- ³⁸ Bernard Levine "Warranted Really Good" article – see End Note 7 above. 7
- ³⁹ Kevin Coleman: Military Clasp Knives. Op. cit
- ⁴⁰ David Marcombe "The Victorian Sailor", Shire publications, 1985
- ⁴¹ Geoffrey Tweedale "The Sheffield Knife Book. Op. cit.
- ⁴² Kevin Coleman: Military Clasp Knives. Ibid.
- ⁴³ Michael Silvey "Pocket Knives of the United States Military". Op. cit
- ⁴⁴ Bernard Levine "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values" Op. cit.
- ⁴⁵ Michael Silvey "Pocket Knives of the United States Military". Op. cit.
- ⁴⁶ Geoffrey Tweedale "The Sheffield Knife Book. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁷ Ron Flook The London Knife Book. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁸ Tweedale Geoffrey "Tweedale's Directory of Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2020, Op.cit.
- ⁴⁹ Tweedale Geoffrey "Tweedale's Directory of Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2020, Ib.id.
- ⁵⁰ Kevin Coleman: Military Clasp Knives. Op. cit
- ⁵¹ Don Lawrence Canadian researcher and collector – quoted in Flook's B&CMK page191