

[Edition 4](#) (June 2025). This is the first edition that is available for **downloading** by the user.

[Edition 3](#) (July 2022) is the first online version and includes some minor changes to the previous Edition 2.

[Edition 2](#) (May 2021) updated the previous Edition 1 by incorporating additional material provided by both Ron Flook and my co-author Martin Cook that elaborates their separate contentions regarding the timeframe for the adoption of the “easy opener” clasp knife by the British military.

[Edition 1](#) was produced in April 2021 in a standard A4 page format

## Table of Contents

1. BACKGROUND.....	1
2. PURPOSE.....	1
3. INFORMATION SOURCES .....	1
4. CONTEXT .....	2
5... PATTERN 6353 AND VARIANTS .....	4
5.1. The pattern 6353 stamping ‘conundrum’ .....	4
5.2. History of Pattern 6353 .....	5
5.2.1. Antecedent patterns .....	5
5.2.2. Subsequent patterns .....	6
5.3. Description & Characteristics.....	7
5.3.1. Group A: Pattern 6353/1905.	8
5.3.2. Group B: Pattern 940... series .....	10
5.3.3. Group C: Not described by Sweeney, no pattern number known.....	14
5.3.4. Group D: Pattern 6353/1905 made in colonial India. ....	15
5.3.5. Group E: American made knives. ....	15

## 1 BACKGROUND

This [fourth Edition](#) of the “BRITISH MILITARY CLASP KNIVES 1905 – 1939” Collector Note reviews and updates our knowledge of the range of military clasp knives that were produced in the years following the cessation of the Boer War in May 1902. In particular it discusses the lessons learned that were applied to the design and manufacture of clasp knives issued to military personnel in both “The Great War” (WW1) and to the lead up to World War Two (WW2). In addition, two Research Papers have been included (as Appendix 8 and 9) that describe specific matters associated with the manufacture of clasp knives during WW1 that assist in an appreciation of the wartime context.

## 2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Collector Note is to identify and document the range of clasp knife available to British and Commonwealth military servicemen from 1905 to 1939, and in particular their prominence in WW1. (Navy knives, such as Admiralty Pattern 301, are covered in a companion Collector Note CLASP KNIVES OF THE ROYAL NAVY” available at [www.CASK.info](http://www.CASK.info) .

On the currently evidence available, there were three apparently distinct groupings of clasp knife available to British military personnel over this period. Following are examples from each group:



Pattern 6353 and variants, including 2-blade versions. See [here](#) for further details



The “easy opener” clasp knife, including a 2-blade version. See [here](#) for further details



Pattern 817... series. See [here](#) for further details

There is a need to exercise considerable caution when documenting these knives as there continues to be differing opinions amongst collectors as to the exact role of each group, the time frame of their availability, and whether they were:

- “issue” knives as a result of a military contract, or
- commercially marketed knives, or
- possibly a combination of both.

## 3 INFORMATION SOURCES

The information provided in this Collector Note is primarily sourced from two documents, as follows:

5.3.6. Group F: “Case M346” (World War 2 and in the early post-war years). ....	17
5.3.7. Group G: Metal scales, not mentioned by Sweeney, no pattern number known.....	17
5.3.8. Group H: Not mentioned by Sweeney, no pattern number known.....	18
5.3.9. Group J: Not A Pattern 6353. ....	18
5.3.10. Group K: ‘Private Purchase’ examples ....	19
5.3.11. Group L: Other Examples ....	20
5.3.12. Anomalies and “other” knives.	21
6. “EASY OPENER” CLASP KNIVES.....	23
6.1. Three-blade version .....	25
6.2. Possible Variants .....	27
6.3. Two-blade version .....	28
6.4. Variants of the two-blade version.	28
7. THE WW1 “GIFT KNIFE” .....	29
7.1. Purpose .....	29
7.2. Description ....	30
7.3. Context.....	30
7.4. Typology of known examples of the “Gift knife/pattern 817.../1914 clasp knives”. ....	31
7.5. American made pattern 817.../1914 clasp knives. ....	32
7.6. Stag Handles..	33

1. Ron Flook’s “*British and Commonwealth Military Knives*”<sup>1</sup> (referenced in this Collector Note as B&CMK) published by Howell Press in 1999 is the pre-eminent compendium of information on this subject. A copy of the original pre-publication ‘flyer’ promoting the book is attached as Appendix 4. Where examples shown in this Collector Note are also shown in Flook’s book they are noted accordingly.
2. Forum posts by Joe Sweeney – as detailed in [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#) of this Collector Note. The late Joe Sweeney was believed to be an American researcher of military history, and his posts on the now defunct “BritishBlades” website and on the “The Society of the Military Horse” website provided detailed official descriptions of pattern 6353 and variants that expanded the knowledge base previously established by Flook.

In addition, immediately prior to completion of this Collector Note, UK collector Paul Stamp made available to the authors a copy of his recent research on ‘Government Contracts for Sheffield pocketknives in the years 1914 – 1919’ sourced from Sheffield newspapers of that period. This research, which is included herein as [Appendix 8](#), caused the authors to re-address the question of whether the two main categories of clasp knives available to military servicemen during WW1 (particularly the pattern 817 series of knives) were “issue” knives or “private purchase” knives? The overwhelming conclusion is that the vast majority of such knives were “issue” knives as a result of government contracts, irrespective of whether or not they are stamped with the ↑ pheon.

All knives depicted in this Collector Note are from either of the two authors’ collections (refer [Schedule 1](#) for Lawrie Wilson’s collection and [Schedule 2](#) for Martin Cook’s collection) unless otherwise acknowledged.

## 4 CONTEXT

The UK based commentator and military knife collector (and joint author of this Collector Note) Martin Cook (aka “Cooky”) has provided a copy of a column from a US Newspaper ‘*The Buffalo Commercial*’ from June 12<sup>th</sup> 1918, titled ‘*Jack-Knife Part of Tommy’s Kit*’ which states as follows:

*“Every soldier in the British Army in France is provide by the government, as part of his overseas kit, with a jack knife.*

*The military jack knife is built for service. It has only three parts – a blade of Sheffield steel, a can opener, and a marlin spike. The whole thing clasps into a solid steel or bone handle four inches long, which is provided with a ring so that it can be hung to the belt.”*

A copy of the complete article is included in this Collector Note as [Appendix 1](#). Apart from the obvious errors regarding the handle material and the length of the knife, this is at least an acknowledgement that the issue knife for British servicemen was a “*Knife, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike*”, and that the pattern 6353 clasp knife is the most obvious candidate for this role as many examples are known that include some form of the W↑D stamp that indicated government ownership. This description also applies to the 3-blade “easy opener” clasp knife where evidence of military contracts has been noted although examples with the W↑D stamp are still quite rare. Note however that examples with spurious W↑D stamping are known, especially the Pattern 8173.

Further, Pattern 817 series of clasp knives were introduced into service in 1914 and produced in vast quantities during WW1 by many Sheffield makers, and whilst they appear never to have been stamped with a government ownership mark, it is now evident that they were produced under government contract, see [Appendix 8](#).

7.7. A reference to “private purchase” examples 33	
8. CONCLUSION .....34	
9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....34	
10. JOINT AUTHORS: 34	
SCHEDULE 1: “Gift” Knives in Lawrie Wilson’s Collection ...35	
SCHEDULE 2: “Gift” Knives in Martin Cook’s Collection. ....39	
APPENDIX 1: Extract from a US Newspaper ‘The Buffalo Commercial’ from June 12 <sup>th</sup> , 1918 .....45	
APPENDIX 2: Joe Sweeney Posts on Pattern 6353 and “Gift Knife”. ....46	
APPENDIX 3: Joe Sweeney Post on ‘The Society of The Military Horse’ Forum. ....48	
APPENDIX 4: Copy of Flyer for Ron Flook’s Book “British & Commonwealth Military Knives” .....49	
APPENDIX 5: “Specification No. A.C.D. 685” copied from Ron Flook’s Book “British & Commonwealth Military Knives”. ....50	
APPENDIX 6: “Canadian WW1 Military Folders” Article by Don Lawrence.....51	
APPENDIX 7: Note on the Difference Between Scales Material Commonly Used on WW1 and Inter-War Years Clasp Knives.....53	
APPENDIX 8: Research by Paul Stamp on Government Contracts for Sheffield Pocket Knives 1914 – 1919 ..56	

There has been general acceptance amongst British military knife collectors that the reference by Sweeney (see Appendix 2) that “*All of these alternate patterns were declared obsolete on 18 May 1920*”, applied to all patterns detailed by Sweeney in his “BritishBlades” post. An alternative interpretation has recently been proposed which suggests the “obsolete” declaration only applied to the Pattern 817 knives. This alternative interpretation is based on Sweeney’s specific use of the terms “alternate” to describe the Pattern 817 knives, and “provisional” to describe the pattern 940 knives. Martin Cook has provided a possible explanation for this, as follows:

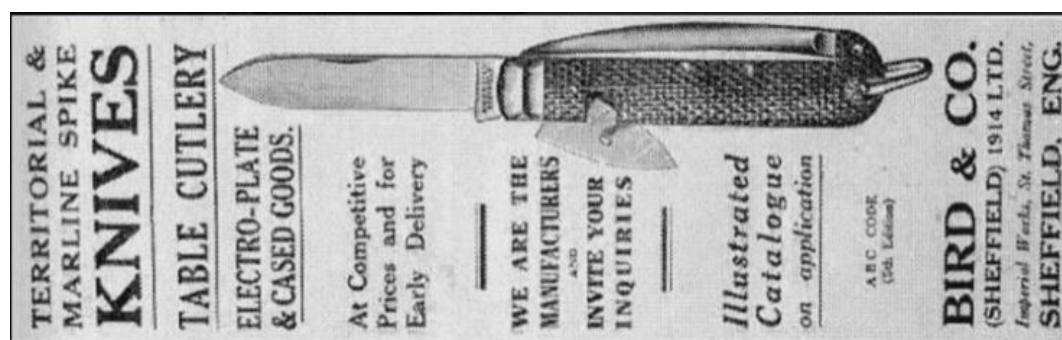
*“Previously it had been assumed that Joe Sweeney meant ALL of the patterns both 817 and 940 were made obsolete in May 1920. However the distinction between his use of the words ‘alternative’ and ‘provisional’ puts an interesting slant on this. ‘Alternative’ means; ‘is ‘available as another possibility or choice’, whereas ‘Provisional’ means; ‘put into circulation temporarily, usually owing to the unavailability of the definitive issue’. Both of these definitions, when looked at in the context of WW1 government issue clasp knives, as we know indicates a shortage of available supply to meet the wartime demands. The solutions were twofold:*

1. *Alternative patterns conforming to existing patterns but allowing other variations/materials in manufacture, and*
2. *Provisional patterns allowing use of similar knife patterns to meet demand as ‘original and alternatives’ were in short supply.*

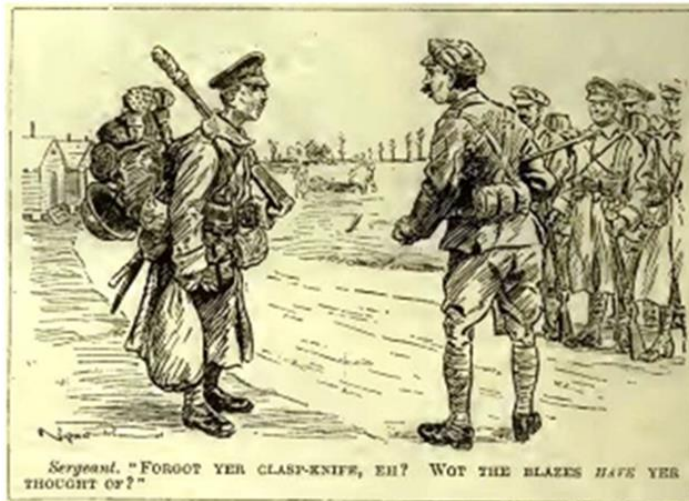
*Bearing in mind that the “easy-openers” would be much simpler and cheaper to manufacture, (one piece tin opener, no bolsters, fibre scales, steel bails, and despite being smaller, they ‘roughly’ comply with 6353 clasp knife patterns), that would seem logical. We can infer from this argument (and as the ‘easy openers’ were still being contracted after WW1) that they were indeed NOT declared obsolete in May 1920.”*

It is also important to note that whilst Sweeney’s documentation as detailed in [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#) of this Collector Note is specifically aimed at pattern 6353/1905 and later derivatives, it should not be assumed that it is a totally comprehensive analysis of all associated patterns, as other undocumented (by Sweeney) examples are detailed in the following sections. Further, Sweeney makes no mention of the ‘easy opener’ pattern knives, and there is disagreement amongst collectors as to whether Sweeney’s reference to the Pattern 817 series of knives is in fact a reference to the so-called “Gift Knives” – as is discussed in more detail in section **7 THE WW1 “GIFT KNIFE”** (see [here](#)).

Also, probable post-WW1 commercial versions of knives that are generally identical (variations to overall length closed have been noted) to pattern 6353 knives are known from advertisements and trade catalogues. The following BIRD & Co. advertisement is from 1914, and details of a similar knife in the Thomas Turner & Co catalogue dated 1925 are shown on page [6](#) following. Differentiating between pattern 6353 military knives and contemporary commercial versions is a significant challenge to collectors.







The adjacent cartoon was found on the internet from an un-named W.W.1 publication:

*Sergeant. "Forgot yer clasp-knife, Eh ? Wot the blazes have yer thought of?"*

## 5 PATTERN 6353 AND VARIANTS

The knife in the first photo (page 1 above) is considered to be a typical example of a Pattern 6353 military clasp knife. The pattern was introduced into service on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1905 and therefore is generally referred to by collectors as "6353/1905" and is the most common version available. The official description is "*Knife, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike*", with scales to be "*checkered black horn*" and a closed length of 4 7/8 inches. The later variants had different pattern numbers (see details following) and were primarily introduced to allow changes to the scale material or for the non-inclusion of the marline spike (patterns 9403 and 9404 – see details following) however all such variants were required to adhere to the dimensions and construction detail specified for Pattern 6353.

### 5.1 The pattern 6353 stamping 'conundrum'

One matter that generates considerable discussion among collectors is the apparent inconsistency in the application of the government ownership stamp (either ↑ or W↑D) to pattern 6353/1905 knives – and in particular those knives presumably manufactured after the approval of the updated "SPECIFICATION No. A.C.D. 685" by the War Office in July 1913. A copy of the specification is shown on Plate 303 (page 133) of Flook's B&CMK and is included here as [Appendix 5](#). It appears that 'A.C.D. 685' became the "standard" specification for 6353 pattern military knives until the pattern became obsolete in 1939, although as noted by Sweeney, additional "provisional" patterns were approved in 1917 but "*Dimensionally all of these knives adhered to pattern 6353, although material substitution was allowed, i.e. copper wire replaced by steel.*"

Martin Cook has advised that "Clasp Knives" were included amongst the items that changed management/procurement responsibility in the "Director of Equipment and Ordnance Stores" (DEOS). In the 1890's responsibility for clasp knives changed from "Quartermaster General" (QMG) Branch 9 "Stores" to QMG Branch 7 whose major component was the "Royal Army Clothing Depot" (RACD). From that date patterns were no longer tracked via the "List of Changes" (LoC) but instead by the Registry of Changes of the RACD. Records of the actual manufacturing specifications still exist in the National Archives for Clasp knives from 1905 through WWI, as has been noted in the work of the late Joe Sweeney.

According to Wikipedia: "*The Royal Army Clothing Depot was a factory and warehouse providing uniforms and other items of clothing for the British Army. It was located in Grosvenor Road, Pimlico, London, England. Established in the 1850s, it remained in operation until 1932; for much of its history the depot was part of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and its precursors. During the early part of the First World War it was headed by Colonel Harold Stephen Langhorne.*"

It has been speculated that one possible reason for the lack of the government ownership stamp (↑ or W↑D) on many pattern 6353 knives (and variants) is that clasp knives were regarded as an 'article of clothing' supplied by the RACD and therefore were not required to be so stamped. An Australian collector and researcher [Kevin Coleman](#) has noted in a self-published monograph "Introduction to Collecting British, Australian & Canadian Military Clasp Knives (1899 to 2018)" dated July 2020, that *"The 6353/1905 pattern was issued until 1939. One point I should note is that the knives issued during World War One appear not to bear any military markings or dates - only the makers name. Whereas the later issued knives that I have studied are dated and have either an inspectors mark or a War Department marking on the marline spike, ..."*. This observation appears to be correct for pattern 6353/1905 knives "issued during World War One" as stated by Coleman, and examples made by Butler with a W↑D8 on the spike, and another by Hunter with W↑D stamped on the can opener are known although neither has a proven WW1 provenance. An example of the 'easy opener' with the ↑ stamping is shown [here](#), also with no WW1 provenance. This stamping conundrum also applies to pattern 8173/1914 clasp knives (see [here](#)) although no examples with [legitimate](#) ↑ or W↑D stamping are known.

A relevant observation by Martin Cook is also included at section **7.7 A reference to "private purchase" examples** [here](#) wherein he provides a copy of a document related to the South Monmouthshire Regiment dated August 2, 1914. It requires soldiers on mobilization to provide their own small kit for which an allowance of 10 shillings is made along with a £5 gratuity and includes "1 Clasp knife with tin opener." No size or pattern or marline spike is specified, however this suggests that for this regiment at least and at the very start of WW1, clasp knives were regarded as a 'private purchase' item.

## 5.2 History of Pattern 6353

### 5.2.1 Antecedent patterns

The evolution of pattern 6353/1905 commenced with the clasp knife known to collectors as the 'Boer War Jack Knife' which is well documented in the companion Collector Note "BRITISH MILITARY CLASP KNIVES OF THE BOER WAR" (also available on the CASK website - see [www.CASK.info](http://www.CASK.info)) which appears to have been introduced into the British Army in 1872 and at that time its issue was limited to Royal Engineers. By the commencement of the Boer war in October 1899 it was far more widely distributed, 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"*. It was officially described as *"A clasp knife with marline spike & lanyard"*. It is commonly found with the owner's service number and unit heavily branded on the grips/scales and with a W↑D stamp on the pile side tang of the blade. The following photo is an example of such a knife.



Maker: "ATKINSON BROTHERS SHEFFIELD" stamped on the mark side tang, and "W↑D 2" stamped on the pile side tang. One scale is branded with the owner's service number "52071 RFA" which indicates that the owner was probably Gunner S.

Goldfinch of the 76<sup>th</sup> Royal Field Artillery.

According to Sweeney (see [Appendix 2](#) for details):

*"The pattern of knife on issue at the beginning of the war dated back to 1905 with pattern 6353/1905, 2 August 1905. This pattern replaced two patterns then on inventory, 116a/1902 "knives, clasp with marline spike, buffalo handle" and 4563a/1902 "knives, clasp with marline spike, black horn handle".*

Martin Cook has suggested that these patterns (i.e. 116a/1902 and 4563a/1902) were very short lived, being replaced by the pattern 6353/1905 that introduced a tin opener into the design for the first time. It appears that these 1902 changes was just the knife grip standardization. The knife in the following photo is considered to be one of either of the 1902 examples, and is probably "116a/1902 "knives, clasp with marline spike, buffalo handle".



The knife was made by 'HIATT & Co.' (possibly a Birmingham manufacturer) and has a closed length of 4 7/8 inches.



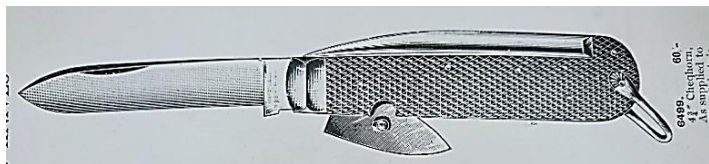
6044 30"  
4 7/8" Black Buffalo  
Marline Spike

The adjacent illustration is copied from the 1902 Thomas Turner & Co. trade catalogue. It is described as

being "4 3/4 inches" in length with "black buffalo" scales, and also appears to be consistent with the specification for the "116a/1902 "knives, clasp with marline spike, buffalo handle".

For the collector, it can be difficult to distinguish between these patterns and the earlier 'Boer War Jack Knife'; one useful indicator is that the dyed black polished scales on the later knives is different to the natural horn matt colours found on earlier Boer knife scales.

Note also that an apparent 116a/1902 or 4563a/1902 knife with a possible WW1 connection is detailed in section **5.3.12 Anomalies and "other" knives** [here](#).



6049 30"  
4 3/4" Cheqhorn  
As Supplied to  
His Majesty's

Pattern 6353 remained the 'issue' clasp knife for the British military until 1939. The adjacent illustration is taken from the "Thomas

Turner & Co. Sheffield" 1925 trade catalogue (page 51). It is referred to as a "SERVICE KNIFE" and has a "6499" stock number. The description states "4 3/4" Cheqhorn, As supplied to His Majesty's Army".

For some time, the consensus amongst collectors was that that Pattern 6353 remained in military service until 1938 and certainly examples with that date are quite common. More recently however examples with the date 1939 have been noted.

### 5.2.2 Subsequent patterns

According to Flook's B&CMK (page 138), there were "three basic forms" for the clasp knife that replaced Pattern 6353 as the "issue" knife for the British military in 1939, with the most directly applicable one being the "three-piece (main blade, can opener and marlin spike) with steel bolster". It has a length closed of 3 3/4 inches, black plastic ('Bexoid') scales, and a copper shackle (that was superseded by steel in 1940). An example by Harrison Brothers and Howson and dated 1939 is shown on Flook's Plate 317 (page 138).

The knife in the following photo is identical to that shown Flook's Plate 317. The maker's name "G. BUTLER & Co. SHEFFIELD" is stamped on the blade's mark side tang, and "MADE IN SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" on the pile side tang. The tin opener has "G. BUTLER & Co. SHEFFIELD" on the mark side and "1939" on the pile side. The marlin spike is stamped ↑ with 8 below.



I also have an identical knife with the main blade tang stamped "[logo] WITNESS] TAYLOR SHEFFIELD" and the pile side tang stamped "1939". The marlin spike is stamped ↑ but no accompanying number is evident.

### 5.3 Description & Characteristics

The best way to present all the information regarding the range of clasp knives that come within the orbit of "Pattern 6353" is to present it as a 'typology', that is - a "classification according to general type". As well as being a specific reference to Pattern 6353 knives that were introduced into service on August 2, 1905, "Pattern 6353" is also used here as a generic term to encompass most three-piece clasp knives that appear to have some association with the British military during WW1, and specifically those described as "*Knife, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike*".

Some knives have a different Pattern number, and in some cases are not fitted with a marline spike. They all (with one possible exception - see **Group H** [here](#)) have a closed length of approximately 4 7/8 inches.

The 'standard' specification for the Pattern 6353/1905 knife (as described by both Sweeney and Flook) indicates a closed length of 4 7/8 inches whereas the knife illustrated in the Thomas Turner 1925 trade catalogue and detailed on [page 6](#) above is described as having a closed length of 4 3/4 inches. In practice, this "closed length" can vary from 4 3/4 inches to 5 inches, although I am unclear as to why this is the case.

The framework for this typology is based on the information contained in the Forum posts by Joe Sweeney – as detailed in [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#) of this Collector Note, and specifically the pattern number and details that Sweeney identified from researching the "*RACD pattern registers*" held in the UK National Archive. The Royal Army Clothing Depot (RACD) was a factory and warehouse providing uniforms and other items of clothing for the British Army, clasp knives came under their control.

The following is a list of known manufacturers of pattern 6353 and similar knives, maintained by Martin Cook which is current to [May 2025](#).

Sheffield England			
J. Allen 'NON XLL'	T Ellin & Co. 'Vulcan'	A. Milns & Co.	Wade & Butcher, aka W
Atkinson Bros.	W.H.Fagan	Needham	& S Butcher
J. Barber 'ERA'.	Ford & Medley	F. Newton & Sons	Walker & Hall
J. Batt & Co	G. Gregory & Sons	'Premier'	Ward & Co.
H. Barnascone	Harrison Bros &	J. Newton	J. Watts 'B4*ANY'
Baum Bros.	Howson	J. Nowill	Wilkinson Brothers
Bird & Co.	Hunter	Oates, Albert	T. Wilson
E. Blyde & Co.	W.M. Hutton & Sons	Joseph Rodgers	G. Wostenholm 'I*XL'
G. Butler	A. Ibbitt	W. Rodgers	
J. Clarke & Son	Jacobs & Co.	Ryals-Turner & Co.	
Christies & Sons	C. Johnson	H M Slater 'Venture'	



HY. Clegg & Sons Crossland Bros. C.W.S. 'Unity' E.M. Dickenson A. Dodson A. Dales (alloy hilt) J. Davenport & Co	S & J Kitchin Lockwood Bros H.G. Long Mappin & Webb J. Mc Clory 'Scotia' Medley - aka Ford & Medley F. Mills & Co	Southern & Richardson S.S.P. Taylors 'Eye Witness' Thomas Turner 'Encore' J Tidmarsh, aka T. Ellin?	
USA			
Case USA Camillus Cutlery Co. USA	Challenge Cutlery Co. USA Schatt & Morgan Cutlery Co. USA	Press Button Knife Co. Walden NY USA	E.C. Simmons 'Keencutter' USA
European			
Ed Wusthof Solingen D.R.G.M.			
India			
Nizamabad India	K C Works Wazirabad India		

### 5.3.1 Group A: Pattern 6353/1905

Although still subject to some dispute amongst collectors (see discussion included in the section on Patterns 817 knives [here](#)), pattern 6353/1905 appears to be the principal clasp knife issued to the British military during WW1. As stated previously, the knife was first issued circa 1905 and remained in service until 1939. In summary, pattern 6353 is described as "*Knife, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike*", with scales to be "*checkered black horn*" and a closed length of 4 7/8 inches. Sweeney notes that the "standard specification" was updated slightly in 1913 to include specific dimensions for the tin opener. A copy of this update (Specification No. A.C.D. 685) is included in Flook at page 133 (Plate 303) and is included in this Collector Note as [Appendix 5](#). No concerted attempt has been made by the authors to distinguish between pattern 6353 knives made before 1913 and those made after 1913, although some possibilities are noted in respect to specific knives.



The knife in the adjacent photo appears to be totally consistent with the standard specification dated 1913, possibly apart

from the lack of a brass pin securing the shackle. The maker is "FORD & MEDLEY SHEFFIELD" as stamped on the blade tang. The knife has no military markings however it is assumed to be military issue based on [Appendix 5](#) following.

Regarding compliance with Specification No. A.C.D. 685, Martin Cook notes that only two of his pattern 6353/1905 knives have a brass pin securing the shackle, being one made by Hunter with **W↑D** on the tin opener and the other made by Wostenholm with 293506 on the spike (see knife at the centre of the following page [10](#)). He also has documents on file that show "C Johnson Sheffield", "F Newton Sheffield" and "James Christie & Sons Ltd, Sheffield", have a brass pin securing the shackle. Further, only the Hunter and the James Christie knives have the maker's name stamped on the tangs of both the main blade and the tin opener as required by the Specification 685. The conclusion is that knives with a



brass pin securing the shackle were made prior to the start of WW1 or in the very early months of the war and were quickly replaced by steel pins.



This interesting example is stamped on the mark side tang with the maker's name "T. ELLIN & Co." The pile side scale is branded "RE 134745" in the manner that was

common on large clasp knives during the Second Boer War. Apart from the branding, the knife does not appear to have any other military stamping. The knife was offered for sale some years ago by the UK dealer W.D. MILITARIA. It is probable that this knife dates prior to the introduction of "A.C.D. 685" in 1913.

Martin Cook has provided the following as a guide to collecting pattern 6353 clasp knives:

- Early examples have W↑D marks on the can opener.
- Early models have a brass pin holding the copper shackle.
- Some early examples with service number branded on the scales – for example the T. ELLIN & Co knife with the service number R.E. 134745, shown immediately above.
- Later models have W↑D on the spike.
- WW1 - service numbers on the marline spike are not uncommon, even up to 1938.
- Not all knives are W↑D marked, indeed unmarked ones are much more common.
- Just before WW2, 6353 knives are date marked 1937, 1938 (and rarely 1939) on the main blade tang. These pre-WW2 knives are sometimes referred to '*The Dunkirk Knife*' by some UK collectors.

An excellent example of the pattern 6353 knife with a date stamp of 1938 made by Wade & Butcher, Sheffield. Note the ↑6 on the marline spike.



Another example is in the collection of the UK Imperial War Museum with the catalogue reference WEA 29, and can be viewed on their website at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30002928>

The knife shown below from the WW1 era was assumed to be a commercial 6353 knife by BIRD & Co. who were established as a limited company in 1914 but became defunct in 1916 after the death of Edward Bird. It features translucent green buffalo horn chequered scales. See also advert for BIRD & Co. on page 3 [here](#). Martin Cook, the owner of this knife is of the opinion that "*the Bird Knife scales are really thick, the knife is some 2mm thicker than any of my other 6353's - that's not much you may say, but it is very noticeable when you handle it and suggests a 'better finished' commercial knife*".



Given that the advert for BIRD & Co. on page 3 above indicates that such knives were commercially available at some time in 1914 there is a high probability that this is an example of such. However, given the circumstances described in [Appendix 8](#), there is also a possibility that this knife is a military contract knife.

Martin Cook has an unissued pattern 6353/1905 knife made by Geo. Wostenholm that purportedly came from the Wostenholm factory during WW1. What is of particular interest is that it has a number stamped into a cut-out on the marline spike - all done very professionally, which has not previously been noted.



Martin has determined that it is not a Registered Design number and would be most interested to hear from other collectors who may have knowledge of this practice and its intended purpose. Note that the knife has a brass pin holding the copper shackle

### 5.3.2 [Group B: Pattern 940... series](#)

The third group of knives referred to by Sweeney in his “pattern 6353” post (see [Appendix 2](#) following for full details) are as follow:

*“The year 1917 saw a further introduction of a multitude of provisional patterns for clasp knives.*

- *Pattern 9401/1917, 26 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Nickle Scales”.*
- *Pattern 9402/1917, 23 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales”.*
- *Pattern 9403/1917, 20 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Fibre Scales”. [i.e. no marline spike]*
- *Pattern 9404/1917, 26 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Steel Scales” [i.e. no marline spike].*

*Dimensionally all of these knives adhered to pattern 6353, although material substitution was allowed, i.e. copper wire replaced by steel”.*

It is important to emphasise that two of the above patterns (9403 and 9404) did not include a marline spike.

#### 5.3.2.1 [Pattern 9401/1917,](#)

This pattern was introduced on 26 April 1917 as “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Nickle Scales”. Most examples of this pattern are made by Thomas Turner, however an example by ‘H. G. LONG & CO, SHEFFIELD’ is shown below which has no military marks. Flook provides details of two examples also made by Thomas Turner which have the Canadian military acceptance marks – Plates 450 and 451 (page 191), both of which have a squared recess for the tin opener pin compared to the rounded recess shown in the three knives referred to immediately below.

Interestingly, the knife shown on Flook's Plate 450 is stamped 1914 on the scale which raises the possibility that these knives were also in service with the British military prior to 1917. Sweeney notes that the specification was modified slightly in 1917 by pattern 9814 to ensure that the tin opener "be ground bright and sharpened". Given the information contained in [Appendix 8](#) it is now considered that all of these knives were WW1 issue knives, irrespective of whether or not they have military stamping.

An identical example of the first knife shown below is in the collection of the UK Imperial War Museum with the catalogue reference WEA 731, and can be viewed on their website at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30001388>, and is dated 1916.



Maker: 'THOMAS TURNER & Co SHEFFIELD' with their 'ENCORE' trademark on the blade ricasso. The nickel scale is stamped: 'ENCORE T. TURNER & Co W↑D.' Brass pin for the copper staple and fitted with a rope lanyard.



Maker: 'THOMAS TURNER & Co SHEFFIELD' with their 'ENCORE' trademark on the blade ricasso.

The nickel scale is stamped 'ENCORE T. TURNER & Co'.

No War Dept. markings. Nickel plated steel staple.



Maker: "THOMAS TURNER & Co SHEFFIELD" with "[logo] ENCORE" at right angle, stamped on the blade mark side tang. Copper staple with brass pin. No War Dept. markings.

An identical example of this knife is shown in Flook Plate 351 (page 150), although it has a WW2 attribution.



Maker: 'ENCORE' T. TURNER, SHEFFIELD.' on the blade ricasso. Scales stamped 'M&D CANADA, 1914'. Canadian WW1 contract knife, copper staple with brass pin.

Note: examples with dates 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918 are also known. An identical example of this knife is shown in Flook Plate 450 (page 191). In his explanation, Flook provides a reference to an excellent article

'Canadian Military Folders of WW1' by Canadian collector Don Lawrence that appeared in *Knife World* October 1989. This article was later featured in 'Military Knives A Reference Book- From the pages of Knife World Magazine' pub. 2001 by Knife World Publications, ISBN 0-940362-18-X' and a copy from that source is included here as [Appendix 6](#).



Maker: 'H. G. LONG & CO. SHEFFIELD' Marked on the blade tang. Plated steel staple and pin. No military marks.

#### 5.3.2.2 Pattern 9402/1917

This pattern was introduced on 23 April 1917 as "*Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales*". The specification was modified slightly in 1917 by pattern 9799 to ensure that the tin opener "be ground bright and sharpened".

Most known examples are made by "SCOTIA J. McCLODY SHEFFIELD", of which the following knife is an excellent example.



Maker: "SCOTIA J. McCLODY SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade tang. The knife has a closed length of 5 inches.

The following example is in the collection of the Museum of Victoria (AU) - reference: <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/398749> . The citation for the item states:



"In WW1 it was carried by Corporal H. H. Cousland of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion AIF during his service on the western Front in France (service #3808). His life was said to have been saved by the knife. A knife like this was usually carried on a belt, but he decided to carry it in his top pocket where he was struck. The reverse side of the knife shows a deflection mark from ball shrapnel or a bullet".

Maker: "E. C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS U.S.A." stamped on the blade mark side tang. The scales are a moulded synthetic material.



E. C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS U.S.A. made at least 3 variations of the 6353 Knife, being: 6353/1905, 9402/1917 fibre scales, and 9403/1917 fibre scales no spike. All variants have a brass pin holding the copper shackle, the tin openers are more pointed, and all have 'Oil the Joints' stamped on the tin opener.



Maker: "E.C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS U.S.A." stamped on the blade mark side tang, and "OIL THE JOINTS" stamped on the tin opener. The knife has a closed length of 4 7/8

inches which is consistent with the "A.C.D. 685" specification, as required. The scales appear to be a moulded synthetic material but could also be pressed fibre.

#### 5.3.2.3 Pattern 9403/1917 – no marline spike.

This pattern was introduced on 20 April 1917 as "*Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Fibre Scales*". The specification was modified slightly in 1917 by pattern 9798 to ensure that the tin opener "be ground bright and sharpened".



Maker: "E.C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS U.S.A." stamped on the blade mark side tang, and "OIL THE JOINTS" stamped on the tin

opener. The knife has a closed length of 4 7/8 inches which is consistent with the "A.C.D. 685" specification, as required.

An identical knife, except with a different style of tin opener is shown in the E.C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER 1917 catalogue (page 2334, knife "No. K5008").

These knives turn up for sale quite often and are the only known knives that conform with 9403/1917 description.

Until recently, it was unclear if any of these E.C. Simmonds knives were British, Canadian, Commonwealth or US WW1 contract/issue knives, or indeed if they were "private purchase" knives!

Given, however, that [Appendix 8](#) provides details of a report dated 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915 in the Sheffield Evening Telegraph which states: "*The War Office have lately given out an order for 120,000 clasp knives to an American firm*" (which are assumed by the authors to be pattern 6353/1905 knives), it is certainly conceivable that a further contract was issued to "*an American firm*" in 1917 for pattern 9402 and 9403/1917 knives (with fibre scales).

Finally, research has uncovered information which proves that these American knives made by E.C. Simmons were indeed British Government contract knives during WW1. Martin Cook has written a comprehensive article about this at [Appendix 9](#).

#### 5.3.2.4 Pattern 9404/1917 – no marline spike.

This pattern was introduced on 26 April 1917 as "*Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Steel Scales*". The specification was modified slightly in 1917 by pattern 9813 to ensure that the tin opener "be ground bright and sharpened".

No photo of pattern 9404 is available.

### 5.3.3 Group C: Not described by Sweeney, no pattern number known.

These knives are of identical dimensions and style to Pattern 6353 described above except that the scales are either stag or bone. Also, the first two knives shown below have a copper shackle and brass pin. The brass pin could indicate that these Thomas Turner knives date from prior to the updating of the standard specification (Specification No. A.C.D. 685) in 1913.



Maker: "THOMAS WILSON SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.

The pile side tang is stamped "↑" over "T"

which is assumed to be an Indian acceptance mark for knives made in UK for British Colonial Indian military forces. The marline spike is stamped "54366 RHA". The scales are stag secured by 3 brass pins. A very similar example is shown in Flook Plate 514 (page 213).



Maker: "THOMAS TURNER & Co SHEFFIELD"

with "[logo] ENCORE" at right angle, stamped on the blade mark side tang.

The pile side bolster is stamped "134".

The cutting blade is a sheepfoot style rather the more common spearpoint.

The scales are stag secured by brass pins, as is the copper shackle.



Maker: "H. G. LONG & Co SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.

The scales appear to be smooth stag. The original shackle has been replaced. It is possible that this is a private purchase knife and could date from 1905 through to the post-

WW1 era.



Maker: "[logo] G. BUTLER & Co" stamped on the blade mark side tang.

The scales appear to be dyed and jigged bone. It is possible that this is a private purchase knife and could date from 1905 through to the post-WW1 era.



Maker: "DAVENPORT & Co. SHEFFIELD". Jigged bone scales. Like the BUTLER knife above, these variants are very uncommon

#### 5.3.4 Group D: Pattern 6353/1905 made in colonial India.

These knives are of identical dimensions and style to Pattern 6353 described above except that the scales are wood on the following two examples.



This knife was offered for sale by the UK dealer "Ark Collectables" in November 2016, the blade tang appears to be marked "... NIZAMARA" however it is assumed to be

NIZAMABAD. There is an "0" stamped on the spike.



The mark side tang of the blade of this knife appears to be stamped "K C WORKS WAZIRABAD". Source: internet.

A very similar knife is shown on Plate 513 (page 212) of Flook's B&CMK, which he describes in the following terms: "513 This Indian made pocket knife could date any time from World War One up until and possibly including World War Two. The knife is the same type as the British 6353/1905 pattern but has wood grips. The main blade is marked NIZAMABAL" [this is assumed to be NIZAMABAD .ed]

#### 5.3.5 Group E: American made knives.

The dimensions of these knives and their overall characteristics are the same as pattern 6353, with the addition of twin metal bolsters. Made by a various American cutlery manufacturers around 1915. In addition to the knife described below, examples by Keenkutter, Schatt & Morgan, Press Button Knife Co. and Challenge Cutlery Co. are known. Also, examples with the Canadian acceptance mark are known including an example by Schatt & Morgan described by Flook - Plate 453 (page 191).

All of the known examples have dyed jigged bone scales, but with a different appearance; for example the Camillus knife described below has scales dyed to look like stag, knives by Challenge are evenly polished, and Keenkutter scales are dyed black.

There is speculation amongst some collectors that examples without the Canadian acceptance mark were made under contract for British and/or other Commonwealth military forces, or for American forces that served in Europe from early 1917 – although they are not documented in Michael Silvey's "Pocket Knives of the United States Military"<sup>2</sup>.





Maker: "CAMILLUS CUTLERY CO. CAMILLUS. N. Y. U. S. A." stamped on the blade tang and on the tin opener. The knife has a closed length of 4 7/8



inches and has a copper shackle and brass pin. There is a possibility that this knife is a commercial version as Canadian contract Camillus knives are dated '1915' on both the blade and tin opener – see example on adjacent photo, whereas undated ones do not have the Canadian acceptance mark on the spike.



Maker: "CHALLENGE CUTL. Co. BRIDGEPORT CONN." stamped on the blade tang and on the tin opener. The knife has a closed length of 4 7/8 inches and has a brass

shackle and a brass pin.



Maker: "SCHATT & MORGAN CUTLERY Co. TITUSVILLE" stamped on the blade tang. Note the thinner grips and the tin opener has a different shape with its own nail nick.

The Canadian Government acceptance mark is clearly visible on the marline spike. The knife has a closed length of 4 7/8 inches and has a copper shackle and a brass pin.



Maker: 'Press Button Knife Co, Walden N.Y.' Almost identical to the knife above. The Canadian Government acceptance mark shown on the marline spike. The knife has a closed length of 5 inches.

This knife is missing its copper shackle.

Photo credit to Roy Shadbolt, who sold this rare knife several years ago.



This next knife by E.C. Simmons is interesting. It has all the characteristics of a 6353/1905 but with two steel bolsters. For whom it was made, and precisely when, is so far unknown.



Maker: "E.C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS U.S.A." stamped on the blade mark side tang, and "OIL THE JOINTS" stamped on the tin opener.

Dimensions unknown, probably as 6353/1905.

The scales appear to be a moulded synthetic material.

Source; internet download

#### 5.3.6 Group F: "Case M346" (World War 2 and in the early post-war years).

These knives have the same characteristics as pattern 6353 except that they have a sheepfoot blade rather than the far more common spearpoint blade. All of this information is sourced from Flook pages 191 – 193 which provides details of "four manufacturing series" *made for the US and Canadian forces both during World War 2 and in the early post-war years*. The following two examples appear to be identical to the second knife shown on Flook Plate 455 (page 192) given their steel scales, (brass pins?), and blade stamping, although there may be some difference in the composition of the metal used for the scales.



Maker: "M. S. LTD XX" stamped on the blade tang (being "W. R. Case and Sons of Canada Ltd", a subsidiary of Case USA). The scales are assumed to be steel

but there is a possibility that they are an alloy.



Maker: "M. S. LTD XX" stamped on the blade tang (being "W. R. Case and Sons of Canada Ltd", a subsidiary of Case USA). The scales

are steel. The maker's name is clearly stamped but used a different die to the example shown immediately above.

#### 5.3.7 Group G: Metal scales, not mentioned by Sweeney, no pattern number known.

The dimensions are identical to pattern 6353. Sweeney only describes one pattern with steel scales, being: *Pattern 9404/1917, 26 April 1917, introduced "Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Steel Scales"*, that is – not including a marline spike. For this reason, it is presumed that this knife was probably produced as a 'private purchase' item.



Maker: "THOMAS WILSON SHEFFIELD" stamped on the mark side tang of the blade. No military marks so likely a private purchase knife.

#### 5.3.8 Group H: Not mentioned by Sweeney, no pattern number known.

These knives have the same general characteristics as pattern 6353 except that the handle is  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch shorter and the tin opener is of a different style. Significantly, the pile side tang of the blade has the pheon  $\uparrow$  stamp that appears to be legitimate. The scales on this example are probably 'fibre' (given that they are slightly buckled which is a characteristic of fibre scales (see [Appendix 7](#) following).



Maker: "JOHN WATTS SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" stamped on the blade mark side tang and  $\uparrow$  stamped on the blade pile side tang.

This knife has some of the visual characteristics of the "easy opener" series of clasp knives illustrated in the following section but lacks the distinctive crab claw tin opener style which is a primary characteristic of the "easy opener" series. It also has a copper shackle whereas "easy openers" have a steel shackle. Similar knives with pressed fibre scales are shown below. The top knife was made by Ford & Medley and below by ERA James Barber. Both are larger than the John Watts knife and are comparable to the 6353/1905 specification. It could be argued that they are a variant of Pattern 9402/1917.



#### 5.3.9 Group J: Not A Pattern 6353.

These knives were previously a pattern 6353/1905 (see Group A above) however both the marline spike and the part of the knife frame that housed the pin for the spike have been removed. This is not a factory pattern but rather is a not-uncommon practice by a previous owner. Note that the butt-end is only fully rounded on one side and shallow rounded on the side where part of the frame has been removed.



Maker: "GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" stamped on the

blade tang. I\*XL stamped on blade face.



Maker: 'ENCORE' T. TURNER, SHEFFIELD.' on the blade ricasso. Scales stamped 'M&D CANADA, 1915'. Canadian WW1 contract knife, copper

staple with brass pin. Note that the Marline spike has been removed. An original example of this knife is shown on page [11 here](#) in the section on Pattern 9401/1917 knives, however examples of these Canadian contract knives with dates 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918 are known, and therefore were obviously in production in Sheffield some years prior to the introduction of Pattern 9401/1917 knives.

Further to this a knife by Thomas Turner is known dated 1912 with the Canadian 'beaver' logo over M&D Canada on the blade face, see photo following:



SOURCE: Military Antiques Toronto



#### 5.3.10 [Group K: 'Private Purchase' examples](#)

The purpose of including this group is to highlight three-piece clasp knives – that is: “*Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike*” that were available for ‘private purchase’ before and during WW1, but which don’t otherwise confirm with the pattern 6353 specification. Two examples are shown with different blade configurations.



Also shown is a clasp knife that has the characteristics of the Boer War Jack Knife except that it includes a wire cutter device that is dated to 1915 which suggests WW1.



Maker: "WHEATLEY BROTHERS SHEFFIELD" stamped on the mark side tang. "WHEAT [logo] SHEAF KNIFE" stamped on blade face. It has a

closed length of 4 ¾ inches and stag scales.



Maker: "THOMAS TURNER & Co CUTLERS TO HIS MAJESTY", stamped on the blade mark side tang. The pile side tang of the blade is stamped "RD No

551515" stamped on the pile side tang which dates it to 1910. It has a closed length of 4 ¾ inches and stag scales. It is not certain that the copper shackle is original. The tin opener is stamped "ENCORE OIL JOINTS SHEFFIELD".

The following knife (maker not known) has characteristics that are similar to the Boer War jack Knife - for example the sheepfoot blade, however the Registered design number stamped on the pile side scale is "RD. No. 646797" which indicates a date of 1915. The "wire cutter" mechanism consists of a cutting edge formed on the back end of the spike near the hinge pin. British military regulations relevant to WW1 required that officers carry a wire cutter and therefore this knife would have been commercially produced for private purchase by military personal.



SOURCE: Interned search

### 5.3.11 Group L: Other Examples

The objective of this Group is to document clasp knives that share the characteristics of Pattern 6353 (being "Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike") but which are not covered by any of the preceding groups.

#### 5.3.11.1 Possible 'Kriegsmarine jack knife???'



Maker: "ED WUSTHOF, SOLINGEN" stamped on the tang of the main blade. The tin opener is stamped "D.R.G.M. 625794". The knife

appears to have the same overall dimensions and characteristics as Pattern 6363/1905. Source: War Relics Forum: February 28, 2012.



#### 5.3.11.2 Alloy Scales



This knife was sold on eBay in March 2009 and appears to be totally consistent with the dimensions described for pattern 6353. The seller stated that *"The scales, liners and bolsters are cast as one"*. The maker was probably "THOMAS WILSON SHEFFIELD" although some of the letters are obscure. One other example of this pattern has been noted made

by 'A. DALES, SHEFFIELD'. The probability is that these were a post-WW1 commercially available knife.



This knife is featured on the "Australian Military Knives<sup>3</sup>" website which notes that it was sold on eBay in February 2009 and apart from the inscriptions applied by a former owner, there are no "makers markings" evident. The website

suggests that there are two possible explanations for this knife being: *"That it was a civilian clasp knife and entered military service as a "Private Purchase" item, or that this was an "Owner Modification" of an existing issue knife either because of damage to the scales or as a "Trench Art" project to alleviate the boredom of life in the trenches"*. The website reference is: <http://www.australianmilitaryknives.com/clasww1/privatep.html>



This knife is consistent with the dimensions described for pattern 6353. The alloy scales, liners and bolsters are cast as one.

It is unmarked.

#### 5.3.12 Anomalies and "other" knives

The following knife is a mystery in that it appears to be an excellent example of the post-Boer war version of the 'Boer War Jack knife', dating from 1902. The post Boer War version is described in detail on page [6 here](#) - as the antecedent of the pattern 6353/1905 and was documented by Sweeney as being both: "116a/1902 - knives, clasp with marline spike and buffalo handle, and 4563a/1902 - knives, clasp with marline spike and black horn handle".



Maker: "JAMES TIDMARSH" stamped on the mark side tang of the blade. The face of the blade is stamped "EXCELSIOR". The marline spike is stamped with the service number: 'RFA 3301'.

Source: Tennants Auctioneers Dec.12,2018

The problem is that the service number is ambiguous as there are two possible candidates, being:

- "Thomas POLLARD of 4 Brigade RA. Discharged 1890", or
- "Frederick THOMPSON RFA" who served in WW1.

The discharge date of 1890 for Pollard appears to be far too early for a knife with the characteristics of the pattern 116a/1902 or 456a/1902 and therefore Thompson appears to be the correct candidate. If this assumption is correct however, this knife is currently the only known example of the post-Boer war version of the 'Boer War Jack knife' that was issued to a serviceman in WW1.

This earlier Boer war knife with light horn grips was issued to the Orkney Island Territorial Royal Garrison Artillery after 1908, as prior to that date they were Volunteers. They were absorbed into the new Territorial Force (TF) under the Haldane Reforms of 1908, so it was probably issued post 1908 and carried during WW1 when the number of gunners in the Orkney RGA (T) increased.



Maker: F. Newton, Premier, Sheffield.



Blade face marked;  
ORKNEY R.G.A.(T)

SOURCE: David Duggleby  
Auctions. 4/02/2022

The following photos show Australian troops in WW1 with pattern 6353 knives attached to belts.



SOURCE: Internet search



SOURCE: Internet search

## 6 “EASY OPENER” CLASP KNIVES

The easy opener clasp knife, that appears to have been in circulation possibly from towards the end of WW1 or the early 1920s (the actual date is in contention - see discussion following) to the late 1930s (or possibly later as examples with a WW2 connection are known – see page [27 here](#)), and was produced as both a three-blade and two-blade version – as follows:



The dilemma for collectors is differentiating between those knives that have a possible military connection and those that were manufactured post-WW1 for commercial sale. Obviously, those that have legitimate stamping of either/both the W↑D stamp and a service number stamp have a military connection. However as we have seen, not all military issue knives were WD marked. Those without any such stamp are not necessarily commercial or ‘private purchase’ knives, as for example were the ‘Gift Knives’ supplied to Australian soldiers in WW1 by the Australian government, which totally lacked any official stamping, as detailed [here](#) in the following Section 6.

Identical clasp knives that conform to this pattern were produced by various UK manufacturers, which suggests the existence of a formal specification, similar to “Specification No. A.C.D. 685” detailed on page [4 here](#) and in [Appendix 5](#), although no such specification has as yet been identified.

The following is a list of known manufacturers of both two and three blade ‘easy opener’ knives maintained by Martin Cook - which is current to [May 2025](#).

J. Allen ‘NON XLL’ Atkinson Bros. G. Butler J. Beal & Sons J. Clarke & Sons J. Davenport T Ellin & Co ‘Vulcan’ Ford & Medley	Harrison Sheffield W.M. Hutton & Sons Humphrey Radiant J. U. James H.G. Long Medley, aka Ford & Medley F. Mills	J. Milner Needham Newton, J. J. Nowill Ryals-Turner & Co. ‘Scotia’ J. Mc Clory H M Slater ‘Venture’ Southern & Richardson	J H Swift & Sons Taylors ‘Eye Witness’ Thomas Turner ‘Encore’ Wade & Butcher J. Watts T. Wilson G. Wostenholm ‘I*XL’
---	--	--	--

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 (which was common in WW1 knives whereas WW2 blades were commonly a sheepfoot), and loosely conforming to the 9402/1917 provisional patterns as detailed by Sweeney as “*Knives, Clasp with Tin*”

*Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales*" (see page [11 here](#)), albeit with a smaller closed length at approximately 4 ¼ inches.

Martin Cook's contention is that the 'easy opener pattern was introduced into military service towards the end of WW1 due to a shortage of available supply to meet the wartime demands, as it would be much simpler and cheaper to manufacture, (for example: one piece tin opener, no bolsters, fibre scales, steel bails and despite being smaller, they 'roughly' comply with 6353 clasp knife patterns), although it is acknowledged that pattern 6353 knives remained in service with the British military until 1939. Cook has also identified three 'easy opener' knives that have a WW1 provenance.

The tin opener is identical to the opener that was included in the equivalent range of clasp knives introduced into service for the British military in 1939 at the commencement of WW2. This has resulted in suggestions that the "easy opener" was a WW2 knife. While it is evident that a small number of examples were in use during WW2 (see example in the following "Three-blade version"), there is no evidence that indicates any large-scale issue or common usage.

Ron Flook has recently confirmed (April 2021) his contention that the "easy opener" knives were not issued to the British military during WW1. He states *"The can opener is to my mind the key to this issue and as far as I can tell the style of can opener did not appear on knives until the mid-1920's, probably later on military knives given how slow the military are in adapting to new things."* Martin Cook's response is that *"Sheffield newspapers from that time [see [Appendix 8](#).ed] clearly show that ANY jack knife with a can opener would be purchased by the military. The easy opener with simpler can opener design was probably the Sheffield cutlers' initiative responding to demand and lack of skilled workers and ease of manufacture."*

There appears to be agreement that easy opener knives were issued to the military at least by the mid/late-1920s and were produced commercially in the early post war years - possibly the result of a government contract. Research undertaken by Ron Flook related to the 'daybooks' prepared by the Sheffield manufacturer Malham & Yeomans and detailed in a post on the 'Military Knives and Daggers of the World' website dated Feb 18, 2014, indicates contracts for the two-blade version in 1931, 1934, 1937, and 1939; for the three-blade version in 1931 and 1937, and also one for "Crown Agents" dated 1936. There is also a reference to a contract for a three-blade version in 1936 which is described as a "scout knife". A UK based collector has advised that he has *"a three-blade 'easy opener' fibre-scaled knife identical to the assumed military version that has a blade mark tang: BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION LONDON pile side: SHEFFIELD MADE"*. A distinctive feature of "easy opener" clasp knives was the apparent universal provision of fibre scales.

Flook also provides a copy of an undated page from the Malham & Yeomans daybooks (Plate 353 page 151) with a hand-drawn sketch of a three-blade 'easy opener' knife which is describes as an "army knife, and includes the following details *"marlin spike, tin opener, shackled, pressed paper, iron shackle"*. The sketch also indicates that the knife is also available either "without tin opener" or "without spike". This suggests that such variants would have the same dimensions as the "army knife" – that is, (an assumed) closed length of 4 3/8 inches whereas all examples of the two-blade 'easy opener' (i.e. "without spike") known to the authors have a closed length of 4 1/8 inches. The reference to *"pressed paper"* above is another term for "fibre" – See [Appendix 7](#) following.

Regarding the possible date of the daybook page Flook has suggested that the inclusion on the page of knife patterns having "stainless steel blades, springs etc" indicates a date of 1930's rather than late WW1 when stainless steel was far less common.



The “Easy opener” style is defined in the Knife Magazine<sup>4</sup> knife glossary as a “knife with a half-round notch cut into the handle top to allow grasping the blade with a thumb and finger”. It appears to have been a popular style in the USA in the early 20th Century, and Mike Silvey details a number of examples in his book *“Pocket Knives of the US Military”* of WW1 US Navy knives that are ‘easy opener’ patterns.

### 6.1 Three-blade version

As stated above, the three-blade ‘easy opener’ “loosely” conformed to the 9402/1917 as *“Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales”*, with the major difference being that the length closed was reduced by 3/8 inch - from 4 ¾ to 4 ⅜ inches.

The following excellent example of the three-blade knife is in Martin Cook’s collection, the maker is ‘WALKER & HALL SHEFFIELD’ stamped on the tang of the main blade. It has a six-digit service number (probably 811827) stamped on one side of the spike and **W↑D** on the other which indicates a military contract and suggests a possible WW1 issue.



Research by Cook has identified the knife’s owner as Pte. Charles S Marshall, who served in the Devonshire Regiment in WW1.

Ron Flook has a photo of an identical knife on Plate 354 (page 151) in the section “Miscellaneous World War Two Clasp Knives” of B&CMK which he describes as follows, note that the text reference is shown as (352) when correctly it is (354):

*“(352) is by Wade & butcher whose name appears on both main blade and can opener. The scales are of fibre and the marlin spike is stamped with a service number of 527401. Main blade is 3.25 inches and overall length is 7.625 inches. Another example by George Wostenholm has its marlin spike marked with a W↑D stamp”.*

Research by Martin Cook has identified the knife’s owner as Leonard Auburn who served in the Bedfordshire Regiment Labour corps, in WW1.

Cook contends that these examples are clear evidence that the ‘easy opener’ pattern was introduced into service in the latter stages of WW1 (probably 1917), however Ron Flook remains unconvinced. He states (April 2021) that: *“I just do not see why the military would change from the typical style can opener during that period. Also those knives where the service number is identified to a particular soldier is no guarantee of WW1 issue. There was crazy situation up until the 1920's where the same number could be issued within different regiments. For example, the 527401 is also the number of a Reginald Billington who served with the RAMC. Also the 811827 was the service number of a John Thomas Smith who joined the Royal Artillery in 1930. Both the 527401 and the 811827 could both be post 1920 as the new numbers were allocated in blocks and both could easily fall into these regiments: 528001 to 721000 The Hussars, 721001 to 1396000 Royal Artillery.”*

Martin Cook has also provided (April 2021) additional documentation supporting his contention that the “easy-opener” was ‘in-service’ in the later stages of WW1.



The first is part of a so-called WW1 “time capsule” that was listed for sale by an auction house in UK in Feb. 2014 with one item described as: “Souvenir 1914 – France 1919”. It is attributed to Pte R.F Critcher Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and included

a three-blade easy opener knife described as: “Taylor ‘Eye’ Witness Trench Penknife - Has fishscale handle and bayonet style can punch.”

The second is an extract from the on-line “Great War Forum” dated September 7 - 9, 2008 in the section “Other Equipment”, as detailed in the following text box:

What is this jack knife? By UnionJack, 7 September 2008:  
*Bought this at a fair this morning and cannot discover what it is. It is 4 ¼” long, with blade, tin-opener and marlin spike. Marked something-Butch, Sheffield, England. No date, no WD or arrow. Side grips are flat, not curved like most brit ones I’ve seen. One side has been stamped with “F G BALL” other side difficult to make out but looks like & “P L 21748”*

horatio2 said:  
*It belonged to a member of the RMLI for whom there are papers at the FAA Museum:-  
PLYMOUTH/21748; BALL, FG; Enlisted 12/06/1918; Discharged to PENSION; D.o.b. 26/08/1900; P.o.b. DERBY; Formerly PORTSMOUTH/20778*

Joe Sweeney, posted 9 September 2008 said:  
*Unionjack, Your knife is probably/ might be pattern 9402/1917, 23 April 1917, “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales”. The Fibre being vulcanized Asbestos fibre. The confusing part is the tin opener is one usually associated with WWII. Knives of these types are usually looked as WWII even with the bigger WWI dimensions. The pattern above does not describe the configuration of tin opener. If you’ve ever read a book by Flook R, “British and Commonwealth Military Knives” He has a picture of a nearly identical Jackknife that is in the WWII section (p. 151). Only problem is a service number is stamped into the marline spike and it is uniquely WWI vintage. I also have one that is dated 1918 (if you believe the date), in addition use of Steel for the lanyard ring became common later in the war.*

Although no photo of the knife in question is available, having an overall length closed of 4 ¼ inches is an indication that it is a three-blade easy opener knife.

The research undertaken by “horatio2” shows that the knife owner was an 18-year-old who enlisted only a few months prior to the end of the war on November 11, 1918, which corresponds to

the timeframe proposed by Cook for when the ‘easy opener’ pattern was first used by the British military.

The post by the late Joe Sweeney (who is a primary source for this Collector Note) is interesting as he suggests that the knife in question is “*probably/might be pattern 9402/1917 ...*”. This may not be correct as the original post by “UnionJack” states that the knife in question “*is 4 ½” long*” whereas pattern 9402/1917 knives were described as “*dimensionally all of these knives adhered to pattern 6353*” (see page [12 here](#)) and therefore have a closed length of 4 7/8 inches (and occasionally 5 inches).

Both Ron Flook and Martin Cook agree that this is a complex matter, and that further research is required before any concrete conclusions can be discerned. More importantly, it highlights that healthy debate is good for the hobby – especially if it stimulates interest in the topic.

Flook also uses the example of the reference to "BALL, F.G." in the text box above to highlight the potential reliability problems associated with a single reliance on service numbers to date such knives. Flook states: *"If we take for example the piece ... on the Royal Marine FG Ball, details of his service are available from our National Archives and at the moment due to COVID free to download. Though it took me while to discover this - as the reference to the FAA Museum completely threw me as that implied the Fleet Air Arm Museum which did not make sense. However Ball after enlisting in 1918 served right through until 1939 but was then re-engaged and served until 1944. In addition it shows he did not transfer to the Plymouth division until 1923 thus the knife must date to post that year"*.

## 6.2 Possible Variants

This next 'easy opener', sourced from the website "Tales from The Supply Depot"- subject 'Large Clasp Knife', has identical dimensions to the 'standard' example shown above; the thick rounded scales appear to be checkered horn however the author of the article states: *"This example of the knife has the standard bexoid scales to either side of the knife"*, and suggests therefore that it may be a commercial example, see: <https://talesfromthesupplydepot.blog/2020/07/25/large-clasp-knife/>



Maker: mark erased but 'Sheffield' is visible on both the blade and tin opener tangs.



Martin Cook has recently (May 2021) advised his discovery of another possible variant, being identical to the standard three-blade version but with checkered horn scales. Martin states that *"The maker, in 3 lines, was revealed to be 'DAVENPORT/CUTLERY Co. /SHEFFIELD.'* marked only on the main blade ricasso. See p.186 in Tweedale. I think it's fair to say it could be of late vintage & pre-1924 as

*Davenport then became 'Davenport Ltd'.* "



A known WW2 example was described on the "Military Knives & Daggers of the World" website (reference; Jocknife Sun Feb 09, 2014) as a *"a 3pce by Watts with W↑D on the marline spike issued to a Lowestoft trawlerman engaged in mine hunting in WW2. The tin opener stamped "44"*.

Maker: "J. WATTS, SHEFFIELD" stamped on the mark side tang of the tin opener. Note that the profile of fibre scales is different to Martin Cook's example shown at the top of the preceding page 27 above.



### 6.3 Two-blade version

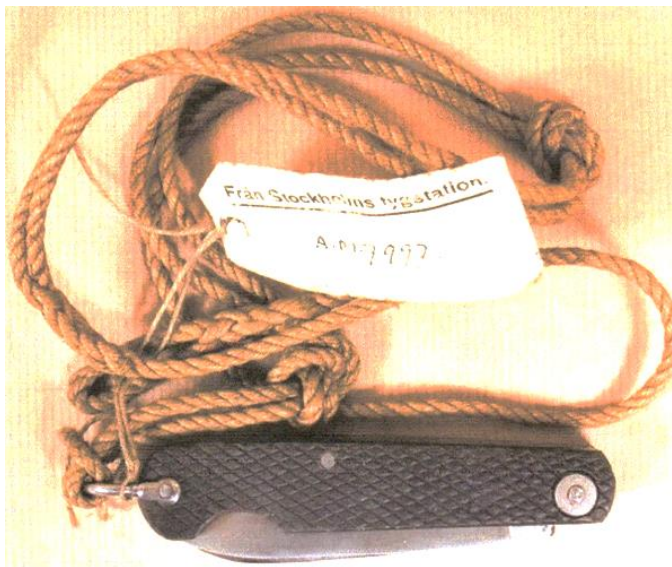
The two-blade version is even less well documented than the three-blade version although an example is shown in Flook Plate 352 (page 150). Dimensionally however, they are identical to the pattern 817 series of knives described by Sweeney (refer Appendices 2 and 3 following) as "...clasp knife with only a tin opener and no marline spike" see following photo, having a closed length of 4 1/8 inches. The pattern 817 series of knives are known to collectors as the "Gift Knife" and are described in more detail in the following Section 7 of this Collector Note.



Maker: The mark side tang of the tin opener is stamped "SCOTIA J. Mc CLORY SHEFFIELD" and there is some evidence that the blade tang may

have been similarly stamped. Scales are fibre.

All two-blade 'easy opener' knives (i.e. blade and tin opener) known to the authors are identical to this example, irrespective of the maker's name.



This example is copied from the "Military Knives & Daggers of the World (reference 'British Army Knife from 1924' Sun Jan 03, 2016) and shows an example on display in the Swedish Army Museum Stockholm that was apparently added to the museum collection in 1924. The maker's name is not known.

Note also, as mentioned previously, Flook's research of the 'daybooks' prepared by

the Sheffield manufacturer Malham & Yeomans and detailed in a post on the 'Military Knives and Daggers of the World' website dated Tue Feb 18, 2014 indicates contracts for the two-blade version dated 1931, 1934, 1937, and 1939.

### 6.4 Variants of the two-blade version



Maker: "SCOTIA Mc CLORY SHEFFIELD" stamped on the main blade tang, and the scales appear to be checkered horn however on closer inspection are most

likely fibre. This knife in this photo appears relevant to the references detailed on page 24 above (see [here](#)) in regard to a variant of the "army knife" described in the undated page from the Malham & Yeomans daybooks as "without tin opener". It has the same closed



length as the three-blade version (being 4 3/8 inches) whereas all other two blade version described above have a closed length of 4 1/8 inches.



Maker: "JOHN WATTS SHEFFIELD" on both blade tangs. Identical to other 2 piece 'easy openers' with the exception of having two blades and the metal shackle is thinner and flatter.

## 7 THE WW1 "GIFT KNIFE"

### 7.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Section of the Collector Note is to document the various patterns and examples of clasp knives that are loosely and collectively referred as a "gift knife" by collectors and is commonly held to be an "issue" knife for the British military in WW1. In addition this Collector Note reviews the on-going discussion amongst collectors as to whether the so called "Gift Knife" is in fact the 'Pattern 817... series' of clasp knives documented by the late Joe Sweeney in a couple of post on the now defunct "BritishBlades" website (see [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#)) following.

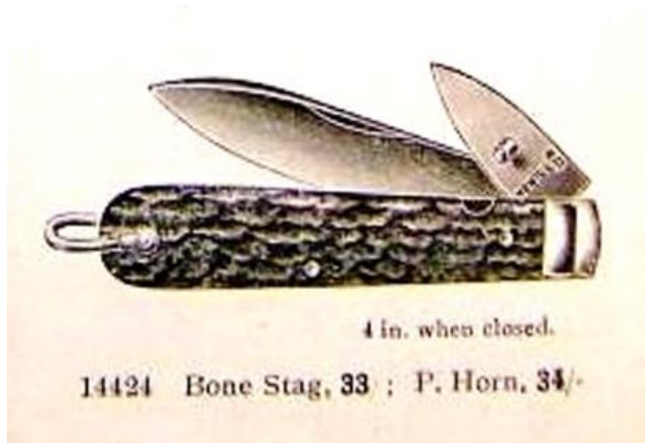
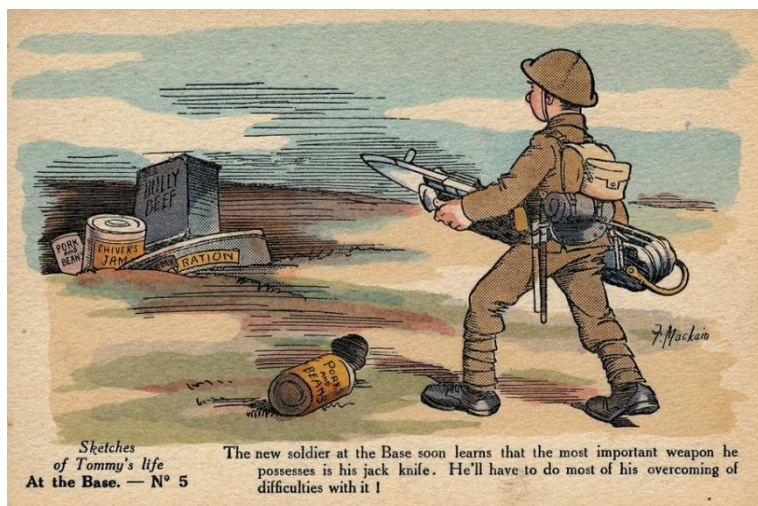


Illustration copied from the 1916 John Nowill Military catalogue advertising both the 8173 and 8172/1914 'Gift Knives'

"Bone stag" – as stated on the adjacent illustration is the trade name for jugged bone grips.

P.Horn is for chequered black horn grips.

Price are per dozen.



Sketches of Tommy's life At the Base. — No 5

The new soldier at the Base soon learns that the most important weapon he possesses is his jack knife. He'll have to do most of his overcoming of difficulties with it !

The UK based collector (and joint author of this Collector Note) Martin Cook has provided the following cartoon of the 'gift knife' in use. It is from the postcard: "Sketches of Tommy's Life, At the Base postcard - No.5". They are from the wartime illustrations of Pte. Fergus Mackain who

served with the 23rd (First Sportsmans) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers during WW1. 'At The Base' was drawn at the B.E.F. camp at Etaples, France.

There is no doubt that "Tommy's knife is a pattern 817.../1914, but maybe a little larger???"

## 7.2 Description



The knife in the adjacent photo is an example of the most commonly available pattern

8173/1914 version with jigged bone scales. The maker is "HALE BROTHERS SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang. The pile side tang is stamped "TIP [top logo]". The closed length is 4 1/8 inches. These knives were manufactured in vast quantities during WW1, with a variety of materials used for the scales, although jigged and dyed bone appears to have been the most common.

[Schedule 1](#) and [Schedule 2](#) of the Collector Note exhibit examples from the collections of the joint authors. It is probable that further variants are in the possession of other collectors.

## 7.3 Context

The basis for categorising these knives is the information contained in a post by Joe Sweeney on the now defunct 'BladeForum' website in respect to Pattern 6353/1905 knives, as follows:

*"Very early in the war alternate patterns of knives were adopted to meet demands. Patterns were approved that introduced the clasp knife with only a tin opener and no marline spike. These patterns were:*

- *8171/1914 with Stag horn handle,*
- *8172/1914 with checker black horn handle, and*
- *8173/1914 with bone handle.*

*All of these alternate patterns were declared obsolete on 18 May 1920".*

A common assumption is that these 'pattern 817.../1914' clasp knives are what is commonly called the "Gift Knife" (possibly a contemporary reference to the knife as being a "gift" from the Government). This has previously been disputed by some UK collectors whose argument was that there is no evidence that the 'gift knife was ever 'issued' to military personnel and therefore it was in fact a private purchase item. Recent research by UK collector [Paul Stamp](#) as detailed in [Appendix 8](#) of this Collector Note however provides convincing evidence that the vast majority of the three patterns of 817 series of knives (i.e. 8171/1914, 8172/1914 and 8173/1914) were manufactured under government contracts between 1914 and 1918 and therefore were an "issue" knife. It is also probable that commercial/private purchase versions were manufactured both during the war and in the post-war years.

There also now appear to be a general consensus that pattern "8173/1914 with bone handle" was most likely the knife supplied to the Australian military forces (i.e. the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF) in WW1 - either when en-route to the Middle East or during a stopover in UK en-route to the Western Front. This consensus is based on information gathered by Australian collector and commentator [John Kroezen](#) and detailed in his Australian Military Knives website<sup>5</sup> under the heading "Gift Knife – A mystery".



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL  
RELAWM04500.002

The museum of the Australian War Memorial also shows a pattern 8173/1914 clasp knife as part of the kit belonging to an

Australian serviceman in WW1. See: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1245037>

A further matter in contention is whether the reference by Joe Sweeney is to the "Gift Knife" or is a reference to some variant of pattern 6353/1905 knives, given that the only closed length of any of the knives referenced by Sweeney is in the detailed description of the pattern 6353/1905 as *"The Length of the Handle to be 4 7/8 inches"* whereas the length of the handle of "Gift knives" is 4 1/8 inches (although some examples at 4 inches or less are noted). Sweeney did include reference to two knives which have identical (except for their closed length) characteristics to the "Gift Knife" (i.e. they didn't include a marline spike) which are described as *"provisional patterns"* introduced in 1917, as follows:

*Pattern 9403/1917, 20th April 1917, introduced "Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Fibre Scales"*

*Pattern 9404/1917, 26th April 1917, introduced "Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Steel Scales"*

The description included the following: *"Dimensionally all of these knives adhered to pattern 6353"*.

An example of a pattern 9403/1917 clasp knife is shown on page [12 here](#).

There are two sources of documentation regarding these knives:

- Ron Flook: "British & Commonwealth Military Knives" page 136 (Plates 312 and 313)
- The "Australian Military Knives" website:  
<http://www.australianmilitaryknives.com/claspww1/8173.html>

Note also that Ron Flook, on 'Military Knives & Daggers of the World' website under the topic 'Two Rare WW1 Clasp Knives' post started Tue Sep 04, 2018 6:19 pm, advised as follows: *"Despite what I wrote in British & Commonwealth I think the jury is still out on whether these are actually gift knives. There is some information in the List of Changes held by the National Archives that point to the knives being issued items. But it seems odd that if that is the case none ever seem to appear with official markings."*

## 7.4 Typology of known examples of the "Gift knife/pattern 817.../1914 clasp knives".

The aim is to assemble a typology of all "Gift knife/pattern 817.../1914 clasp knives" to ascertain if any further patterns emerge, and to encourage on-going research.

The knives in the following [Schedule 1](#) are in Lawrie Wilson's collection and the knives in [Schedule 2](#) are in Martin Cook's collection; all have a closed length of 4 1/8 inches and a copper shackle unless otherwise stated.

The two Schedules use a common base to differentiate between the variants, as follows:

- A. Pattern 8171/1914 with stag handle
- B. Pattern 8172/1914 with chequered black horn handle
- C. Pattern 8173/1914 with bone handle
- D. Pattern 817 ??? with steel/nickel handle – not described by Sweeney
- E. Pattern 817 ??? with uncommon features – not described by Sweeney.

No evidence has been found to confirm that these knives were included in the 1914 Queen Marys Xmas “Gift Tin” for the troops - as has previously been suggested by some commentators.

The following is a list of known manufacturers of ‘Gift’ knives maintained by Martin Cook, which is current to April 2025. All of the makers are Sheffield Cutlers.

J. Allen Atkinson Bros. J. Barber ERA. E. Barnes Barnascone Baum Bros E. Blyde & Co. Bird & Co. A. Brooksbank G. Butler Coe & Sons Challenge Cutlery Co.USA Crossland Bros (all metal)	E.M. Dickenson A. Dodson J. Elliott & Sons T. Ellin W.H. Fagan J. Fenton & Sons A. Field Ford & Medley Hale Bros. S Hibbert & Son W.M. Hutton C. Johnson S & J Kitchin Ltd H.G. Long Maleham & Yeomans	J. McLory F. Mills A. Milns & Co. W. Morton & Sons R.F. Mosley J.Petty Needham,Veall & Tyzack F. Newton J. Newton J. Nowill A. Oates Rawson Bros. W. Saynor E.C. Simmons USA	Southern & Richardson Taylors ‘Eye witness’ Wade & Butcher W. Whitely T. Wilson Williams A. Wood & Son G. Wostenholm (alloy grip) Wraggs J. Watts
--	--	---	--

## 7.5 American made pattern 817.../1914 clasp knives.

Previously in this Collector Note, examples of American made knives have been described (see page [12](#) – pattern 9403/1917, page [15](#) – Group E clasp knives, and page [15](#) – Group F clasp knives) based on readily available documentation. Collectors have also been aware for some time that knives made by the American manufacturer E.C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER which are consistent with two patterns of 817 series of knives, being: 8171/1914 – stag handles, and 8173/1914 – bone handles, occasionally became available for sale. Until now their connection to the UK war effort was not known, See Appendix 9 [here](#) for an update. Two such knives are detailed in the following Schedules, as follows:



of can opener.

See SCHEDULE 1: Knife C.9.

Assumed to be pattern 8171/1914

Maker: “E. C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS USA” in logo stamped on the mark side tang of both blades. Jigged bone scales with three pins, shackle is missing. “Oil The Joints” is stamped on the reverse



See SCHEDULE 2: Knife C,7.

Assumed to be pattern 8173/1914

Maker: ‘EC SIMMONS KEENKUTTER, ST LOUIS USA’. In shield on both blades. “Oil The Joints” on reverse of can opener. Jigged bone scales with 3 pins. A separate brass pin fixing the copper staple.





## 7.6 Stag Handles

It is noted that pattern 8171/1914 knives were the only WW1 issue knife that specified "stag handles", as it is assumed that the cost of stag during wartime became unacceptable. Conversely, most of the vast number of clasp knife patterns described in the E.C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER 1917 catalogue (18 pages with 12 knives per page = over 320 different patterns) offered "stag" as handle option. It would be useful to know which British makers produced pattern 8171/1914 patterns, noting that two have been described in Schedule 2, being: knife A.1. made by H.G. LONG and A.2. made by NEWTON.



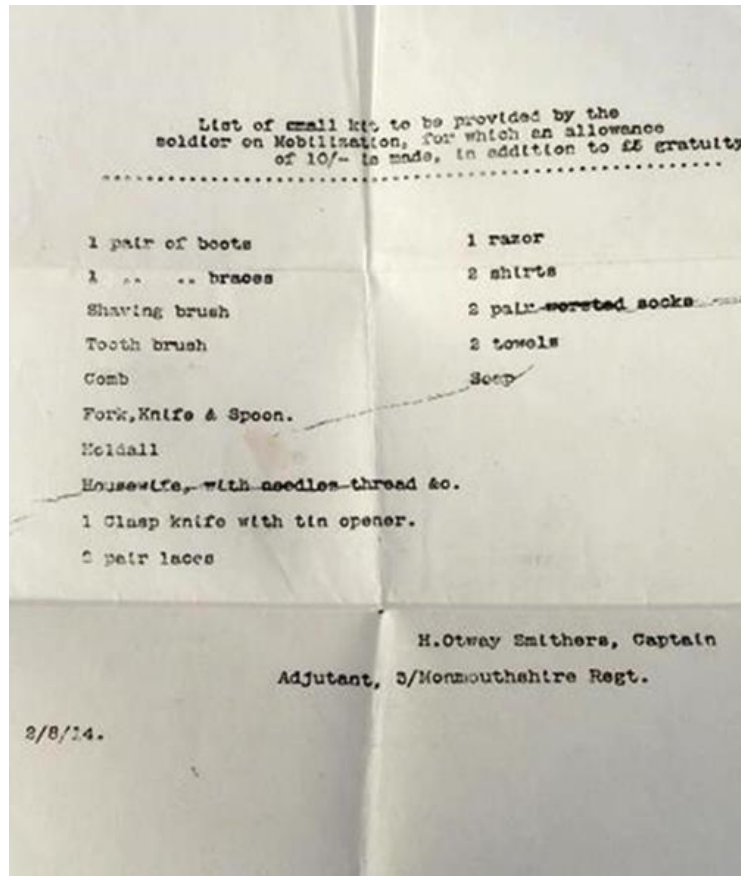
Maker: 'H.G. LONG & CO. SHEFFIELD'

Stag scales. Copper shackle

Knife shown at Schedule 2, A1.

## 7.7 A reference to "private purchase" examples

The following document is from the South Monmouthshire Regiment dated 2nd August 1914. It requires soldiers on mobilization to provide their own small kit for which an allowance of 10 shillings is made along with a £5 gratuity. Required is "1 Clasp knife with tin opener."



No size or pattern or marline spike is specified. Martin Cook speculates: "if this was common practise, could this be the origin of the term 'Gift Knife'? ". Given that this document is dated to the start of WW1 it is probable that the practice was soon superseded by the standard practice of the military issuing a clasp knife to all servicemen.

## 8 CONCLUSION

Given that this Collector Note is based on a very limited number of documentary sources, it is hoped that it will generate further research and discussion to fill in the gaps and the correct any errors. One conclusion that can now be drawn with a high degree of confidence is that the term "the Gift Knife" is a reference to the Pattern 817 series of clasp knives as documented by Joe Sweeney and that they were a government issue knife to military personnel from "very early in the war", and "were declared obsolete on 18 May 1920".

Certainly more clarity is required regarding "The pattern 6353 stamping conundrum" as discussed on page 4 [here](#), and there is also a lack of information regarding what actually constitutes "fibre scales" particular in regard to "Easy Opener" knives as discussed in that section commencing on page 23 [here](#) and in [Appendix 7](#).

To this end, any suggestions/contributions that fellow collectors may have that will improve the content 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 BRITISH MILITARY CLASP KNIVES 1905 - 1939.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are most grateful for the efforts of UK collector Paul Stamp in proofing the final draft and suggesting changes that improved the overall clarity of the narrative, and for contributing a copy of his research paper "Research on Government Contracts for Sheffield pocket knives 1914 – 1919" which is included here as [Appendix 8](#).

## 10 JOINT AUTHORS:

Lawrie Wilson (storyteller)  
July 2022

Martin Cook (technical expert)  
April 2021

### SCHEDULE 1: "Gift" Knives in Lawrie Wilson's Collection

The standard length closed of these knives is 4 1/8 inches (10.5cm), however some variations are noted

#### A. Pattern 8171/1914 with stag handle.









Ref. No.	PHOTO	DESCRIPTION	COMMENT
A.1.		Maker: "[logo] C : X LOCKWOOD BROTHERS SHEFFIELD"	Stag horn scales held by 3 pins
A2		Maker: <i>'NEWTON, SHEFFIELD'</i> (written in italics)	Stag horn scales

#### B. Pattern 8172/1914 with chequered black horn handle



B.1.		Maker: "I*XL GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	
B.2.		Maker: "W. M. HUTTON & SONS LTD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	

#### C. Pattern 8173/1914 with bone handle. All scales appear to be dyed and jigged bone.

C.1.		Maker: "HALE BROS. SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang and the "TIP TOP" logo on the pile side tang. The tin opener is also stamped "HALE BROS"	Note: scales secured by 3 pins.
------	---	--	------------------------------------





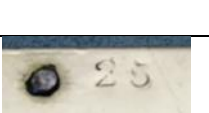
	C.2.		Maker: "[logo] JOHNSON WESTERN WORKS SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	
	C.3.		Maker: "[logo] JOHNSON WESTERN WORKS SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	
	C.4.		Maker: "A. DODSON SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	
	C.5.		Maker "A. FIELD SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.  Scales could be stag.	
	C.6.		Maker: "E. BARNES SHEFFIELD". There is also evidence of a small ↑ stamped adjacent to the maker's name; the tin opener is stamped as shown right.	  This stamp on the tin opener, and the ↑ stamped on the blade tang are of <u>doubtful legitimacy.</u>
	C.7.		Maker: "WOOD & SON SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	NOTE: this knife has a closed length of 4 inches.
	C.8.		Maker: no stamping evident	NOTE: this knife has a steel shackle whereas all others have a copper shackle.



C.9.		Maker: "E.C.SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER ST. LOUIS USA" in logo on the mark side tangs of both the main blade and the tin opener. Tin opener also stamped "OIL THE JOINTS". The closed length is 4 inches (10.2cm). The shackle is missing.	  The main blade also has the mark ↑ stamped on the pile side tang which appears to be authentic.
------	--	---	--

D. Pattern 817 ??? with steel/nickel handle – not described by Sweeney. These knives have all the characteristics of the pattern 817.../1914 knives but may be post-WW1 knives produced for commercial sale.

Knives D.1. D.2. and D.3. appear to be of identical construction

D.1.		Maker: if there was ever a maker's name stamped on the knife, it is no-longer legible	NOTE: the mark side scale is stamped "PRO PAT I NO. 22626".
D.2.		Maker: "H. G. LONG & CO SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	Knives D.1. D.2. and D.3. appear to be of identical construction
D.3.		Maker: no stamping evident	Note: no shackle.  Knives D.1. D.2. and D.3. appear to be of identical construction
D.4.		Maker: "CROSSLAND BROS SHEFFIELD, ENG" stamped on the blade mark side tang.	 NOTE: the pile side scale has "25" stamped next to the spring pin. Scales appear to be nickel silver.

E. Pattern 817 ??? with uncommon features – not described by Sweeney. These knives have all the characteristics of the pattern 817.../1914 knives but may be post-WW1 knives produced for commercial sale.

E.1.		Maker: "THOMAS TURNER & Co Sheffield England" with the logo and "ENCORE" stamped at right angle.  The tine opener is stamped: SHEFFIELD OIL THE JOINTS"	NOTE: wood scales.
------	---	--	--------------------

E.2.		<p>Maker: "ENGLISH CUTLERY SHEFFIELD" stamped on the blade mark side tang.</p> <p>Tweeddale has no entry for this maker</p>	<p>NOTE: Knife has a closed length of 3 5/8 inches. The blade is a sheepfoot style. The shackle is missing. It is possible that this is a <u>Boer War era knife</u></p>
E.3.		<p>Maker: "[key logo] G. BUTLER" stamped on the blade mark side tang.</p>	<p>NOTE: the scales appear to be pressed fibre or pressed leather, <u>not chequered black horn.</u></p>

## SCHEDULE 2: "Gift" Knives in Martin Cook's Collection.

A. Pattern 8171/1914 with stag handle. All scales appear to be stag horn. The standard length closed of these knives is 4 1/8 inches, however some variations are noted.








Ref. No.	PHOTO	DESCRIPTION	COMMENT
A.1.		Maker: 'H.G. LONG & CO. SHEFFIELD'	Stag horn scales held by 3 pins
A.2.		Maker: 'NEWTON, SHEFFIELD' (written in italics)	Stag horn scales

B. Pattern 8172/1914 with chequered black horn handle







B.1.		Maker: 'key logo' above 'G. BUTLER & CO.'	black chequered 'pressed' horn scales.
B.2.		Maker: 'Scotia' J. McClory, Sheffield	Grooved fibre/plastic grips

C. Pattern 8173/1914 with bone handle. All scales appear to be dyed and jigged bone. The standard length closed of these knives is 4 1/8 inches, however some variations are noted.

C.1.		Maker: 'WADE & BUTCHER, SHEFFIELD' (no trademark).	
------	---	--	--

	C.2.		Maker: 'WADE & BUTCHER, SHEFFIELD' & 'arrow' trademark.	
	C.3.		Maker: 'THOMAS.... SHEFFIELD' Surname erased, begins with W... - possibly THOMAS WILSON	
	C.4.		Maker: 'WRAGGS, 2 ARUNDEL ST, SHEFFIELD'.	
	C.5.		Maker: 'JOHN WATTS, SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND'.	Unusual red coloured jugged bone scales.
	C.6.		Maker: 'JOSEPH ELLIOT & SONS, SHEFFIELD' with 'C [maltese cross] C' trademark.	'Peachstone' jugged scales with 3 pins.
	C.7.		Maker: 'EC SIMMONS KEENKUTTER, ST LOUIS USA'. In shield on both blades 'Oil The Joints' on reverse of can opener	Scales with 3 pins. A separate brass pin fixing the copper staple.
	C.8.		Maker: A. Milns & Co. Sheffield	Very light grooved bone grips



	C.9.		Maker: Hale Bros Sheffield & Tip 'top' logo.	Named on the tin opener to 'Harry Oliver' There are several Harry Olivers in The National Archive records. Very rare to see this personalisation
	C.10.		Maker: none	Unusual features; nickel silver bolsters, no makers marks. The copper shackle is half-round.
	C.11.		Marked: 'Field, Sheffield' Alfred Field was an agent based in Birmingham, Sheffield and New York for the Sheffield cutlers	Tin opener has a W↑D mark. Copper staple. Field had a 1915 government contract for clasp knives.
	C.12.		Maker: none. Broad arrow on blade tang	Unusual features; No makers mark. ↑ mark on pile side blade tang. Longest blade at 3 3/8" (originally 3 1/2"). Large tin opener. Longest copper shackle. All these slight variations on one knife make it unusual.
	C.13.		Maker: 'J.U. James & Sons'	Smooth bone scales
	C.14.		Maker: H.G. Long, Sheffield.	

C.15.		Maker: Bird & Co. Ltd, Sheffield	Bird & Co. Ltd, were a limited company in 1914 and defunct in 1916, dating this nicely to 1914-16.
-------	---	----------------------------------	--

D. Pattern 817 ??? with steel/nickel handle – not described by Sweeney. These knives have all the characteristics of the pattern 817.../1914 knives but may be post-WW1 knives produced for commercial sale.

D.1.		Maker: 'CROSSLAND BROS, SHEFFIELD'	Nickel silver scales over steel liners. Same dimensions as 'Gift knives'.
D.2.		Maker: 'ALFRED WILLIAMS, SHEFFIELD'.	Nickel alloy rolled one-piece body. Nickel staple. Same dimensions as 'Gift Knives'. Named to J. MARRIOTT
D.3.		Maker: Read & Elvidge (London retailer) 'Sheffield Made'	Alloy grips

E. Pattern 817 ??? with uncommon features – not described by Sweeney. These knives have all the characteristics of the pattern 817.../1914 knives but may be post-WW1 knives produced for commercial sale.

E.1.		Maker; 'A. MILNS & CO. SHEFFIELD'.	jigged black plastic/composite scales
------	---	------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

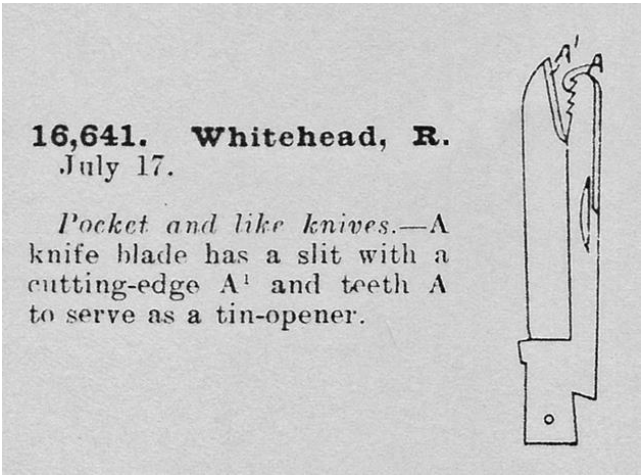
E.2.		Maker: 'H.G. LONG & CO. SHEFFIELD'	Black chequered fibre scales. A well-used knife.
		Maker: 'H G LONG & Co. Sheffield'	Brass scales. Other examples are known, but rare. From the collection of Kevin Coleman

Pattern 8173/1914 Pattern Clasp Knives with unusual Tin Opener

Here are two more unusual 8173/1914 Patten knives recently acquired by Martin Cook which show variations to the usual 'spear-point' tin opener found on these WW1 knives. The first knife was made by '[C.J] Johnson, Western Works, Sheffield', with a most unusual 'crab claw' style tin opener marked PATENT 16641-12.

It is shown below with an 8173/1914 by 'Bird & Co.'

With assistance from fellow collector Neal Punchard this number was traced to a patent registered by R. Whitehead on July 17th, 1912, regarding a tin-opener for '*pocket and like knives.*' This looks like the fore-runner to tin openers used on the 'easy-opener' knives from the 1920's and the later WW2 Bexoid War Department knives.



The second knife is the same size and specifications as the 8173/1914 knife but with a large 'crab claw' tin opener identical to those used on later British military jack knives. Both blades have an identical 'J. Derby & Sons Sheffield' trade mark. The knife is not an 8173/1914 with the blade & tin opener swapped out and the age patina indicates the blades are contemporary to the knife body. Also, interestingly the tin opener blade has a W.D. broad arrow stamp which looks correct & original and is seen on other items of cutlery contracted by the War Department. Shown here with a knife by H.G. Long.





## JACK-KNIFE PART OF TOMMY'S KIT

Contains Big Blade, Can  
Opener and "Marlin-  
Spike."

Behind British Lines in France, June 12.—(Correspondence of the Associated Press).—Every soldier in the British army in France is provided by the government, as part of his overseas kit, with a jack-knife.

The military jack-knife is built for service. It has only three parts—a big blade of Sheffield steel, a can-opener, and a "marlin-spike." The whole thing clamps into a solid steel or bone handle four inches long, which is provided with a ring so that it can be hung to the belt.

The can-opener is an indispensable part of the provision for a soldier's well-being at the front. Several important items of his daily menu are supplied to him in sealed cans.

The Sheffield blade has numerous uses too obvious to need mention, but it is noticeable that Tommy Atkins frequently uses it for purposes of eating in preference to the table knife in his kit.

The knife-blade is also used constantly as a wood-cutter. In the trenches the lighting of a brazier is frequently a difficult operation owing to the vital necessity of avoiding smoke. The Germans have a strong antipathy to smoke, and the sight of it rising from the British trenches arouses in them disturbing evidence of envy, hatred, malice and uncharitableness. It is well, therefore, to avoid smoke. So the wood for the brazier must be split up into thin sticks and shavings, and for this purpose the official jack-knife is the ideal instrument.

When the soldier is withdrawn from the trenches it is his first duty to make himself and his belongings clean and presentable for inspection. Tommy hangs his coat on a peg and "shaves" it with the knife blade.

The marlin-spike attachment is useful for prying open wooden boxes, for cleaning stones and mud out of the horses' hoofs, for adjusting belts and harness. Braziers for the trenches are made from biscuit tins punched full of holes to admit a draught.

The Germans were, for a long time, greatly puzzled by the marlin-spike attachment which they found on every British prisoner's jack-knife. They made great capital out of a story that it was used to gouge out the eyes of German wounded. In the official report of the British Prisoners of War Commission, several instances of this fable are recorded.

Captain Beaman testified before the commission that he was harried by a German colonel for permitting his men to use their marlin-spike on the eyes of German wounded. Captain Browne told the commission of listening to a Uhlan major who was giving a lecture and who exhibited a British jack-knife, showing the marlin-spike attachment and describing it as used for torturing German prisoners. The story appears to have been deliberately cooked up by the German military authorities for the consumption of their troops.

## APPENDIX 2: Joe Sweeney Posts on Pattern 6353 and "Gift Knife".

SOURCE: <http://www.britishblades.com/forums/showthread.php?63126-Circa-WW1-Military-Folders/page5> post 69. The post is no longer available following the demise of the 'BritishBlades' website some years ago.

*I'm new to this forum and saw a link posted on another forum so I came in to see what was what.*

*Everyone maybe over-using the designation of pattern 6353. Flook's work is good but did not consult the RACD pattern registers which have the details on Clasp knives--Not the LoC.*

*The pattern of knife on issue at the beginning of the war dated back to 1905 with pattern 6353/1905, 2 August 1905. This pattern replaced two patterns then on inventory, 116a/1902 "knives, clasp with marline spike, buffalo handle" and 4563a/1902 "knives, clasp with marline spike, black horn handle".*

*The manufacturing instructions issued for pattern 6353 in 1905 describe the "Knife, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike" as such:*

*" 3. The blade and Tin Opener to be made of best cast steel, free from flaws, properly hardened and tempered, and to be as thin and as well ground as the Standard Pattern; the edge of the Blade to be wetted on an oilstone; to be 3 ½ inches long from "kick" point, to be 11/16 inch wide; the Bolster to be ½ inch long, to be solid, and made from the best iron; the "Springs" to be made of best spring steel, properly hardened and tempered. The Marline Spike to be made of cast steel, properly hardened and tempered. Length of Marline Spike when shut to be within 1/8 inch shorter than Spring; and the point, when shut, to be fitted close on the spring to prevent catching in the pocket.*

*4. The Length of the Handle to be 4 7/8 inches; the Scales to be checkered black horn 4 3/8 inches long Bolster ½ inch; to be riveted to plates with two iron rivets; the Shackle to be made of copper wire, No. 11 gauge, same size and shape as that of the Standard Pattern, and riveted with brass wire. The Blade, Tin Opener, and Marline Spike to be firmly riveted in, and to bear makers name on tangs."*

*The above specification description was modified in 1913 by the addition of specific dimensions for the tin opener to be 1 5/8 inches long by 11/16 wide. (this is in Flook's book the rest is not)*

*Very early in the war alternate patterns of knives were adopted to meet demands. Patterns were approved that introduced the clasp knife with only a tin opener and no marline spike. These patterns were:*

- 8171/1914 with Stag horn handle,
- 8172/1914 with checker black horn handle, and
- 8173/1914 with bone handle.

*All of these alternate patterns were declared obsolete on 18 May 1920.*

*The year 1917 saw a further introduction of a multitude of provisional patterns for clasp knives.*

- *Pattern 9401/1917, 26 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Nickle Scales”.*
- *Pattern 9402/1917, 23 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales”.*
- *Pattern 9403/1917, 20 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Fibre Scales”. (i.e. no marline spike)*
- *Pattern 9404/1917, 26 April 1917, introduced “Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Steel Scales” (i.e. no marline spike).*

*Dimensionally all of these knives adhered to pattern 6353, although material substitution was allowed, i.e. copper wire replaced by steel.*

*Patterns 9402/1917 and 9403/1917 were modified by patterns 9799/1917 and 9798/1917, respectively, on 12 February 1918. This modification simply specified that the tin opener should be ground bright and sharpened.*

*Patterns 9401/1917 and Pattern 9404/1917 were not modified until patterns 9814/1918 and 9813/1918, respectively, were approved on 10 April 1918. This modification again simply specified that the tin opener should be ground bright and sharpened.*

*By mid-war it was intended that only knives with Marline Spikes went to ‘Mounted’ men and those without (Marline Spikes) ‘Dismounted’.*

*Take Care  
Joe Sweeney*

A follow-up post by a frequent contributor to the ‘BritishBlades’ forum RETDPMSO raised the following question for Sweeney:

*What are the RACD\* registers and where did you locate them? I have just tried the National Archives search engine and couldn't locate them there.  
RETDPMSO*

The following is Sweeney’s response:

Re: Circa WW1 Military Folders

*RETDPMSO,  
They are in the NA, look under WO359/13 through 17 for WWI era clothing and equipment.  
Joe Sweeney*

\* RADC = Royal Army Clothing Department.

### APPENDIX 3: Joe Sweeney Post on 'The Society of The Military Horse' Forum.

Topic - British Enlisted Pocket Knife - Thu Nov 18, 2004 8:57 am

*Response to Pat,*

*The following link will take you to some info I posted on the 14/18 forum concerning Clasp Knives.*

*Clasp Knives were some of those items that changed management/procurement responsibility in the DEOS. In the 1890's responsibility for Clasp knives changed from QMG Branch 9 "Stores" to QMG Branch 7 whose major component was the RACD. From that date patterns were no longer tracked via the List of Changes but instead by the Registry of Changes of the RACD. In the NA records the actual manufacturing specifications still exist for Clasp knives from 1905 through WWI.*

*The link is with photo of a 1917 dated original; Pattern 9402/1917, 23 April 1917, "Knives, Clasp with Tin Opener and Marline Spike with Fibre Scales":  
[http://1914-1918.org/forum/index.php?sh ... =18560&hl=](http://1914-1918.org/forum/index.php?sh...=18560&hl=) [I cannot open this link. ed.]*

*The Specification stated:*

*Clasp Knife pattern 6353/1905 with manufacturing specs no. 429a approved 1 Sept 1905, This pattern reintroduced the Marline spike. (all previous Clasp knife (no Marline spike) patterns being declared obsolete/ FYI the LoC designated knives John points out had already been declared obsolete by the 1890's Clasp knives with no Marline spike):*

*"3. The blade and Tin Opener to be made of best cast steel, free from flaws, properly hardened and tempered, and to be as thin and as well ground as the Standard Pattern; the edge of the Blade to be wetted on an oilstone; to be 3 ½ inches long from "kick" point, to be 11/16 inch wide; the Bolster to be ½ inch long, to be solid, and made from the best iron; the "Springs" to be made of best spring steel, properly hardened and tempered. The Marline Spike to be made of cast steel, properly hardened and tempered. Length of Marline Spike when shut to be within 1/8 inch shorter than Spring; and the point, when shut, to be fitted close on the spring to prevent catching in the pocket.*

*4. The Length of the Handle to be 4 7/8 inches; the Scales to be checkered black horn 4 3/8 inches long Bolster ½ inch; to be riveted to plates with two iron rivets; the Shackle to be made of copper wire, No. 11 gauge, same size and shape as that of the Standard Pattern, and riveted with brass wire. The Blade, Tin Opener, and Marline Spike to be firmly riveted in, and to bear makers name on tangs."*

*During the war alternate patterns were approved that touched on handle material and with or with out Marline spike.*

*All updates in pattern were to adhere to the 1905 dimensions save handle material and sometimes without marline spike. I have these records.*

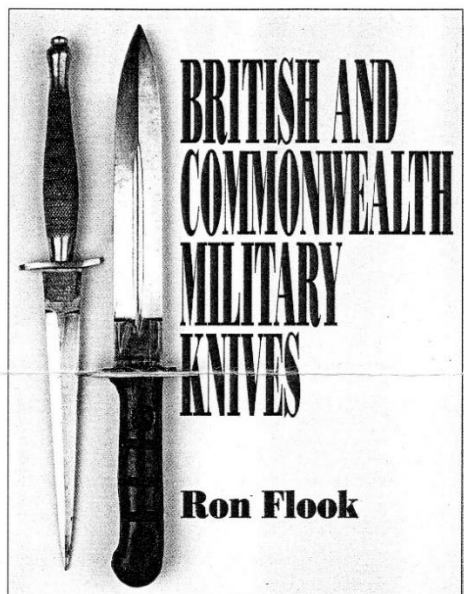
*Could knives of other dimensions have been issued--of course, but unless it had iron clad provenance, I would not consider it a WWI issue knife.*

*Joe Sweeney*



## APPENDIX 4: Copy of Flyer for Ron Flook's Book "British & Commonwealth Military Knives"

### NEW BOOK INFORMATION



*Imprint:*

**AIRLIFE**

*Title:*

**BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH  
MILITARY KNIVES**

*Author:*

**Ron Flook**

*Publishing Date:*

**MAY 1999**

*Binding:*

**Casebound**

*Format:*

**246 x 189mm**

*Extent:*

**256 pages**

*Illustrations:*

**520 b/w photographs and 70 line  
drawings**

*ISBN:*

**1 85310 986 X**

*Price*

**£29.95**

### DESCRIPTION

This book presents the first major guide on those knives issued to and used by British and Commonwealth military personnel from approximately 1850 up until the present day, illustrating and describing over 500 knives. Many of the pieces are correctly identified or illustrated for the first time in any book. The book contains chapters on British knives including the Victorian, 1st and 2nd World Wars, SOE items, aircrew and Royal Navy knives, and items used by today's forces, Australian, Canadian, Indian and New Zealand knives. Within its text the book identifies or shows for the first time items such as the RAF commando knife, previously unrecorded patterns of Robbins of Dudley knives and the documented history of the commando knife in the post-World War II period.

### THE AUTHOR

Ronald Flook is a Marine Electrical Engineer and is presently working in support of a major ship management contract. He has collected military knives for over 20 years, specialising over the last ten in British and Commonwealth. He has written and privately published *A Photographic Primer to Military Knives*, a guide to military knives from all over the world, which contained many pieces never previously described in print. He is a member of the Wilkinson Sword Collectors Society, United Kingdom Blade Association, and reflecting an interest in Japanese swords, the UK To-Ken Society. He lives near Bath.

### KEY FEATURES:

- ★ Extensive coverage from Victorian era to present day
- ★ Vital reference with over 500 illustrations
- ★ Related title: *Japanese Military and Civil Swords and Dirks*  
(ISBN: 1 85310 986 X)

*Trade Sales and  
Information Enquiries:*

**Airlife  
Publishing  
Limited**

101 Longden Road  
Shrewsbury SY3 9EB  
Shropshire, England  
Tel: (01743) 235651  
Fax: (01743) 232944

Please note: All specifications are subject to change without notice.

(68)

APPENDIX 5: "Specification No. A.C.D. 685" copied from Ron Flook's Book "British & Commonwealth Military Knives".

BRITAIN

SPECIFICATION No. A.C.D. 685

N.B.—This supersedes Specification No. A.C.D. 429A

KNIFE, Clasp, with Marline Spike  
and Tin Opener ... ..

Pattern No.  
6353  
1905

Approved, 22nd July, 1913.

To govern manufacture and inspection.

1. *Patterns*.—The knives must correspond in every particular with the Standard Pattern, which may be seen in the Pattern Room, Royal Army Clothing Department, Grosvenor Road, London, S.W., as regards shape, make, workmanship, and quality of materials, and with this Specification as regards measurements.

2. *Material and Dimensions*.—The Blade and Tin Opener to be made of best cast steel, free from flaws, properly hardened and tempered, and to be as thin and as well ground as the Standard Pattern; the edge of the Blade to be whittled on an oilstone; to be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches long from "kick" to point, to be  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide; the Tin Opener to be  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches long and to be  $\frac{1}{16}$  inches wide; the Bolster to be  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch long, to be solid, and made from the best iron; the "Springs" to be made of best spring steel, properly hardened and tempered. The Marline Spike to be made of cast steel, properly hardened and tempered. Length of Marline Spike when shut to be within  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch shorter than the Spring; and the point, when shut, to be fitted close on the Spring to prevent catching in the pocket.

3. The length of the Handle to be  $4\frac{7}{8}$  inches; the Scales to be checkered black horn,  $4\frac{3}{8}$  inches long, Bolster  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch; to be riveted to plates with two iron rivets; the Shackle to be made of copper wire, No. 11 gauge, same size and shape as that of the Standard Pattern, and riveted with brass wire. The Blade, Tin Opener, and Marline Spike to be firmly riveted in, and to bear the maker's name on the Tangs.

H. A. ANLEY, Colonel,  
for Director of Equipment and Ordnance Stores.

WAR OFFICE.

(s 9964) Wt. w. 1796—s43 230 7/13 H & S G. 13,504.

Plate 303

133

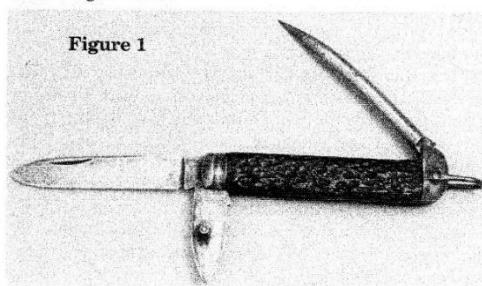


## Canadian WWI Military Folders

by Don Lawrence

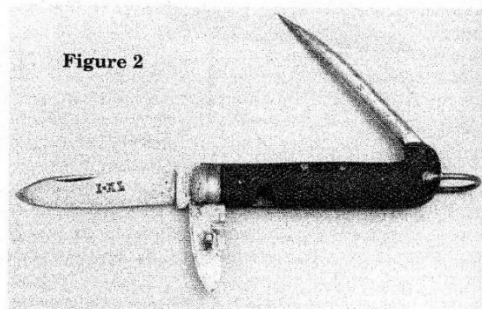
Although I have collected military items of various types for the past thirty years it has only been during the past two years that I have managed to acquire the five knives described here. Since first becoming interested in Canadian and British military folding knives. I have discovered, to my surprise, that there are a number of American collectors also interested in them. However, there seems to be a general lack of knowledge about them, probably because there is virtually no written material available. The only mention and/or photos of any of them located by me is in *Levine's Guide to Knives and Their Values*. Although five are shown and described by me in this article it is quite possible that other types and/or makers exist.

In the war years of 1914 to 1918 Canada had two excellent sources for military items — England and the U.S.A., and it was from these two countries that the knives were obtained. Both of these countries had numerous knife manufacturers so it was only natural that quality knives were ordered to meet Government specifications. It appears to have been the thinking of the Canadian military authorities to select one type of knife to suit the needs of all branches of the armed forces. Indeed this practice has continued right up to the present time, as exactly the same knife as Figure 5 is still being issued, although by a different maker. All of the knives shown are extremely well made and reflect the excellent workmanship of English and American factory cutlers in the early years of this century. Each has a blade, marlin spike, can opener and bail, and all are same length closed.

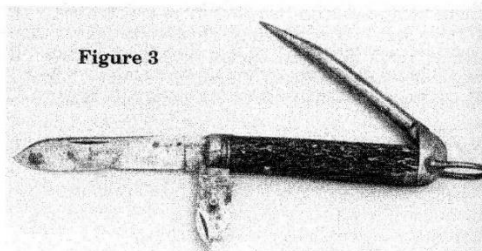


**Figure 1** was made by Camillus Cutlery Co. of Camillus, New York. Handles are somewhat flattish and made of jigged bone. The Canadian Government ownership mark, the letter encircling a broad arrow, is stamped on the marlin spike. The date 1915 is stamped on the tang along with the maker's stamp and the blade

is a spear point. The knife shown was obtained by my brother from an elderly gentleman who said that his brother had it when he served in the Canadian Navy in World War I.

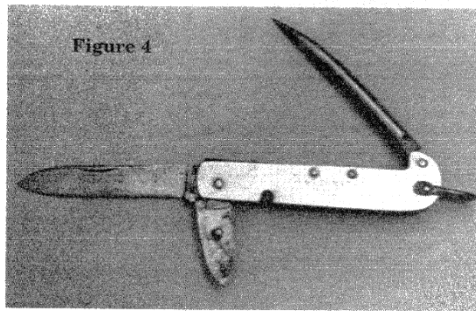


**Figure 2** was made by George Wostenholm of Sheffield, England. Handles are roundish, checkered black horn, blade is spear point and the Canadian mark is also on the spike. The specimen shown was issued to a Major in the Canadian Engineers in WW I.



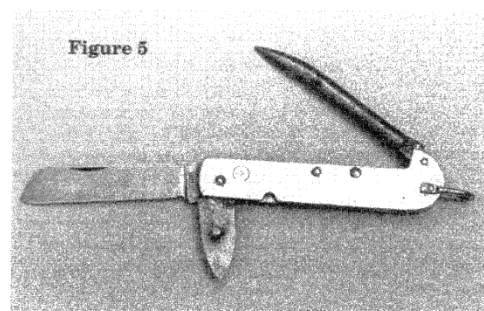
**Figure 3** was made by Schatt and Morgan Cutlery Co., of Titusville, Pennsylvania, circa 1915. It is very similar to the Camillus except that the handles are slightly narrower in width and the can opener is a different shape and has a nail mark. The Canadian mark is on the spike. These were evidently only manufactured for export to Canada.

**Figure 4** was made by Thomas Turner and Co. of Sheffield, England (trademark "Encore"). It is almost identical to the Case pattern M346 that appeared in World War II and afterwards, except that the blade is a spear point instead of a sheepfoot. Handles are flat steel and stamped on one side in large letters is "M & D Canada / 1915" (M & D means Militia and Defence). This government mark was in use from circa 1895 to 1900, at



which time the letter C encircling a broad arrow came into use by government orders. However, all rules are meant to be broken and for some unknown reason "M & D" continued on into the First World War. I also have one with the date 1914 on it.

**Figure 5** is absolutely identical to the Case M346, including a sheep foot blade. The maker's stamp on the tang is "O M F", surrounded by a rectangle with pointed ends and the Canadian mark is on one handle. To date I haven't been able to find out what "O M F" stands for. The only mention of it that I have found is in *Levine's Guide* which says that this stamp is found on Canadian sailors' knives circa 1915. I have checked with several military historians, collectors and checked a number of books but no luck as yet. The fact that there is no Country of Origin included in the maker's stamp would seem to indicate that it could have been made in Canada



and not intended for export. There have been, and still are, a very few factory cutlers in Canada. Two interesting variations are that the previous four knives all have bails made of copper but on this one it is made of steel, also the previous four blades are spear points while this is a sheep foot.

These knives are reminders of a period in history (1914 to 1918) when Canada, with a population of 8,250,000 had 437,837 serving in the Armed Forces. This ratio (5.3%) per population was the highest of any country in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Hopefully these Service men and women will be remembered by those who collect the knives they carried. They have been by me because five of my uncles served in the Canadian Army during that period.

*This article appeared in Knife World October 1989*



## APPENDIX 7: Note on the Difference Between Scales Material Commonly Used on WW1 and Inter-War Years Clasp Knives.

A research paper by Martin Cook

### Explanation

Like many collectors I sometimes struggle to tell the difference between what exactly is the black scale material of my various jack knives - is it made from horn, leather or fibre? Of course, after 70 to over 100 years of exposure to various elements, the natural changes to the composition of the materials does not help.

The accompanying photographs are all of Pattern 6353/1905 knives that appear to comply dimensionally with the updated "Specification No. A.C.D. 685" that was approved on July 22, 1913, although only the first two knives have "... Scales to be checkered black horn" as required by the specification; the 3<sup>rd</sup> knife has leather scales, and knives 4 and 5 have fibre scales.

### Pressed horn

Pressed horn is cow horn, or 'buffalo horn' as the knife makers call it. In its natural colour it exhibits shades of green and brown and is often translucent, see knife 1, a private purchase example. It was always dyed black for British military knives from 1902 until 1939 when it ceased to be used. It is very hard and impervious. It is layered when viewed from the side and may de-laminate over time. It is prone to chipping and shrinking and may break off in quite large pieces. It is easily melted with a hot iron, sometimes we find soldiers numbers branded into the scales. Not uncommonly, the black dye fades and the natural colour of the horn is seen, this can be seen on knife two.

Being so hard the chequered pattern is not easily worn and smoothed.

It is not too difficult to differentiate from leather or fibre scales.

Knife 1. Bird & Co Sheffield



Knife 2. Hunter Sheffield



### Pressed leather

Pressed leather is obviously just that, leather compressed and formed with a chequered surface for knife scales. The pattern is less well defined than horn chequering, see knife three. It is softer and less prone to cracking than fibre, but it is also easily gouged or scratched. It was used more often in Victorian times for the likes of explorer/campaign fixed blade knife scales and for pre 1888 British bayonets, by WW1 it was less frequently used. When old it is can be either very hard and shiny, or soft and dull depending upon

how it has been stored, and it can shrink and warp and may de-laminate like horn. Being softer the scales are often worn smooth especially around the edges. It usually retains its black colour. Being somewhat porous it will absorb any liquids which in turn may affect its composition.

Knife 3. NON XLL Joseph Allen & Sons Sheffield



## Fibre

Fibre is 'Vulcanised fibre' which was patented in 1859. It is paper made from cotton rags to which is added zinc chloride. It is then processed & pressed to make sheets from which, for example washers and WW1 dog tags were made. It was made in various grades and density. (See Wikipedia for more details).

This is the 'fibre' often used on WW1 and interwar jack knives scales. In particular, all the 'easy-opener' clasp knives (see details of pages [19 – 25](#) above) I own and have seen, have fibre scales, although one exception appears to be the one with rounded scales featured on "Tales from the Supply Depot" knife (see page [23](#) above) wherein it states: *"This example of the knife has the standard bexoid scales to either side of the knife"*, and suggests that it may be a commercial example. "Bexoid" is a hard plastic material developed in the 1930's that was extensively used on WW2 military clasp knives.

Fibre is softer than horn but harder than leather, the pressed chequered pattern (less so the jiggged pattern of knife five) can be worn smooth on well used knives. The knife scales are often thick and flat, not rounded like horn or leather scales usually are. It is impervious but will absorb oils.

Of note is that the pattern never goes over the edge of the scale, unlike horn and leather. This can clearly be seen in the 'top-down' photos of knives 4 and 5 following.

Over time the fibre very commonly warps, the scales arching away from the liners and it cracks. The cracks are not longitudinal like those found on delaminating horn or leather scales, but usually at right angles to the flat scale, knife 4 exhibits some of these. Fibre may become brittle, it is prone to splitting and loosing pieces around metal pins and rivets holding the scales.

When used on British military knife scales it is always manufactured in black, but over time this may fade to a semi-matt dark brown colour.

Knife 4. J. Davenport & Co. Sheffield



Knife 5. Scotia J. McClory Sheffield



Using these clues I hope it will be possible to identify what material your clasp knife scales are made from.

Martin Cook  
*April, 2021*

Addendum: July 2022

Recently I wondered if some of the WW1 era jack knives with fibre scales may not be fibre but possibly early plastic? I am thinking of the grooved (not chequered) pattern seen on the knives of J. McClory (see knife immediately above) , E.C. Simmons (see page 12 - knife in the collection of the Museum of Victoria) and A. Milns (see Schedule 2, knife E.1.)

The reason I suggest this is due to noting the very thick very hard and very shiny black scales which tend warp upwards at the ends.

There were other synthetic materials around at that time like Galalith, popular with continental knife makers, and a feature was that it tended to warp & splinter. Galalith (Erinoid in the United Kingdom) is a synthetic plastic material manufactured by the interaction of casein and formaldehyde. This new plastic was presented at Paris Universal Exhibition in 1900. It was produced under other names such as Aladdinite in the US, Casolith in the Netherlands and Lactoloid in Japan.

Celluloid originated in 1856, when Alexander Parkes created Parkesine, generally considered the first thermoplastic. In 1869, Daniel Spill, who had taken over Parkes' firm, renamed Parkesine as Xylonite. In the same year, John Wesley Hyatt patented it at the US Patent Office as Celluloid. Celluloid was easily molded and shaped, and it was first widely used as an ivory replacement.

We also have Xylonite (a fore runner of Bexoid), Halex and other celluloids, and no doubt several other compounds existed. Like vulcanised fibre these were usually made in preformed sheets (or rods) and could not be moulded.

Any of these materials could be a candidate for some late WW1 clasp knife scales which we generalise as 'fibre'.

Martin Cook.  
*July 2022*

## APPENDIX 8: Research by Paul Stamp on Government Contracts for Sheffield Pocket Knives 1914 – 1919

Note that this Appendix 8 does not include reference to Navy clasp knives.

This research was inspired by an example of an “8172/1914 with chequered black horn handle” knife in my possession and marked for W Whiteley.



Maker: “W. WHITELEY  
SHEFFIELD” stamped on the  
main blade tang, together with  
“332” above

I wanted to determine if it was originally issued under Government Contract or sold privately, and, as William Whiteley & Sons is still operating, I hoped the company might have records dating back that far. Unfortunately, although very helpful, they were not able to find anything relating to this period.

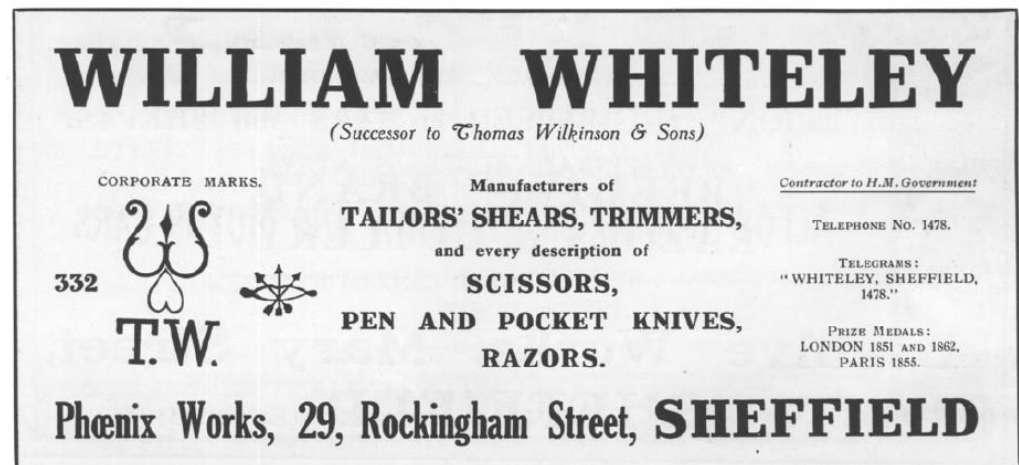


Image: Advertisement in 1919 Register Of Trademarks Cutlers Co Sheffield

However, this inspired me to research further and, after noticing that their advert in 1919 proudly states “Contractor to H.M. Government,” I decided to look through old Sheffield newspapers from the period 1914-1919, in search of references to Government contracts.

The newspapers soon proved to be a very rich resource, providing a lot of information through notices, articles, references, and advertisements.

I’ve so far researched Government Contracts reported through the Sheffield Newspapers back to 1871, and the following is a distillation of my research for 1914-1919:

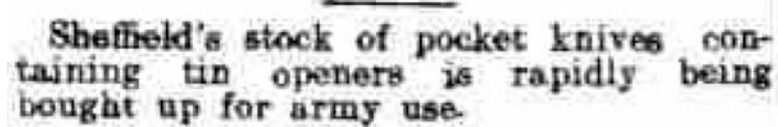


## The Early Weeks of the War

When Britain entered the war in August 1914 the cutlery trade had already been used to supplying Britain's military needs. However, the industry, and the army, was evidently not prepared for the sheer scale of the quantities that would now be needed. In a retrospective article of 19<sup>th</sup> July 1919, in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph and titled: "*Equipping The Troops*," Frank Ridlington says:

*"What came as a surprise was the gargantuan quantities which were required. The experience of the trade had been confined to the wants of an army of some two hundred thousand, whereas during the war the forces under arms reached nearly seven millions."*

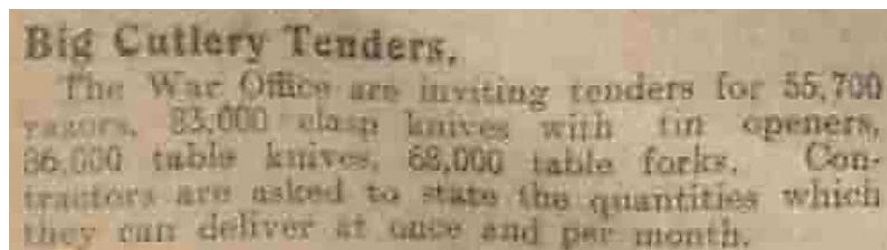
As the supply of tinned food to soldiers 'in the field' was now common practice, it follows that every soldier would need a tin-opener, and, on the 11th August 1914 the Sheffield Independent reports that:



Sheffield's stock of pocket knives containing tin openers is rapidly being bought up for army use.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

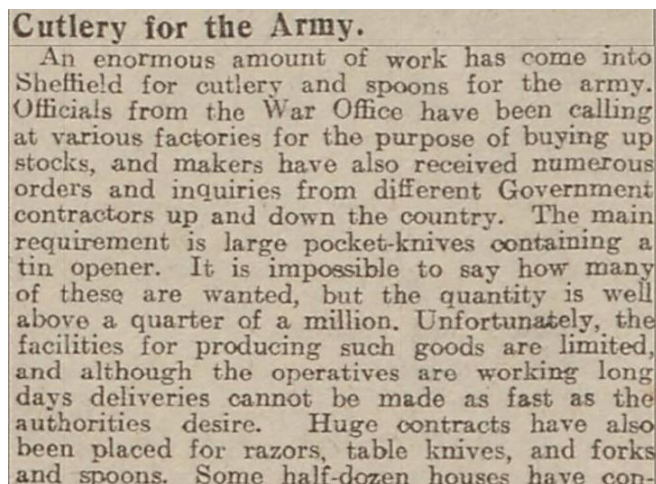
The following day the Daily Telegraph announces the first "*Big Cutlery Tenders*" invited by the War Office, which include "*83,000 clasp knives with tin-openers.*"



**Big Cutlery Tenders.**  
The War Office are inviting tenders for 55,700 razors, 83,000 clasp knives with tin openers, 86,000 table knives, 68,000 table forks. Contractors are asked to state the quantities which they can deliver at once and per month.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

Later on August, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1914 the same paper carries a short article that carries a bit more detail:



**Cutlery for the Army.**  
An enormous amount of work has come into Sheffield for cutlery and spoons for the army. Officials from the War Office have been calling at various factories for the purpose of buying up stocks, and makers have also received numerous orders and inquiries from different Government contractors up and down the country. The main requirement is large pocket-knives containing a tin opener. It is impossible to say how many of these are wanted, but the quantity is well above a quarter of a million. Unfortunately, the facilities for producing such goods are limited, and although the operatives are working long days deliveries cannot be made as fast as the authorities desire. Huge contracts have also been placed for razors, table knives, and forks and spoons. Some half-dozen houses have con-

## Government Work

From the newspaper coverage of the next few weeks and months of the war, several issues become apparent:

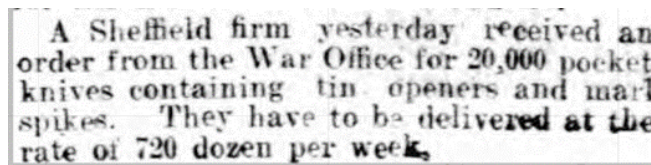
- The whole Sheffield Cutlery Industry is very quickly turning over almost entirely to war work.
- The stocks of existing 'suitable' patterns for army use is now almost non-existent.
- Despite the industries best efforts, they are not managing to fulfil the new War Office orders fast enough.

This is illustrated by the following extracts:

From the Sheffield Daily Telegraph of 5<sup>th</sup> September 1914:

*"The making of army knives, forks & razors is the only active branch of the cutlery trade. Although the operatives are working to their fullest capacity on such goods, and putting in any amount of overtime, they are unable to meet the requirements of the War Office. In addition to making good the wastage of the war, cutlery outfits have to be provided for many thousands of people who are volunteering for military service. Makers are turning every possible workman onto these goods."*

And from the Sheffield Independent of the same day:



A Sheffield firm yesterday received an order from the War Office for 20,000 pocket knives containing tin openers and marl spikes. They have to be delivered at the rate of 720 dozen per week.

From Sheffield Daily Telegraph 26<sup>th</sup> September 1914:

*"'The Day' for Cutlers"*

*"The extraordinary pressure on the cutlery trade by the military authorities has again increased in intensity this week, orders having come in in shoals from scores of towns in Great Britain where new corps have been formed. Difficulty has been experienced in inducing makers to take them on. Most of them have already more work on hand than they can possibly execute within the next six months, whilst some of them have booked sufficient to last them twelve and even eighteen months."*

In the Sheffield Daily Telegraph 7<sup>th</sup> November 1914 there is a report of a "Rush of "Diverted Trade"

*"Business diverted from German sources has poured into the Sheffield cutlery and tool trades like an avalanche. This rush of trade has come, unfortunately, at a moment when the cutlery makers have their hands so full of military work that the majority of them are unable to look at anything else. The military authorities are insisting on being served in preference to any other requirements, and it has been hinted that if the execution of these orders is not speeded up very considerably, they may decide to take over some of the*

*works and run them exclusively on cutlery for the army. For this reason the bulk of the diverted work will scarcely be looked at."*

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915 there is a report in the Sheffield Evening Telegraph relating to cutlery orders under the title "Commercial Notes" which contains an interesting sentence:

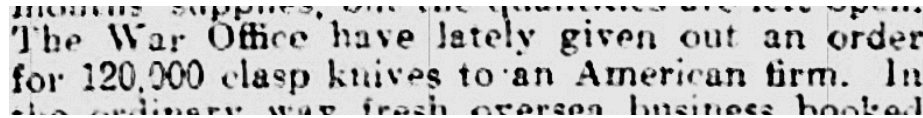


Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

This is the only reference that I have been able to find of War Office orders for clasp knives given outside of Britain, but it does suggest that some American-made knives may have been issued to British troops. This reference is further explained in the following [Appendix 9](#) "American E.C. Simmons 'KeenKutter' Jack Knives Contracted by the British Government During WW1. Research by Martin Cook".

A slightly different slant on the scarcity of clasp knives during this period is presented by an article in the Sheffield Independent 10<sup>th</sup> May 1915 in an article titled: "LURE OF DRINK. Sheffield man Hinders Output of Soldiers Knives"

*"...a spring-knife hafter named George H. Turton, of Rockingham Street, was charged with stealing six dozen Army pocket knives....the property of his employers...the firm had a contract for the supply of pocket knives to the soldiers....when asked what he had done with the knives, [he] said he had been selling them to soldiers at public houses."*

Suggesting the difficulty ordinary soldiers may have been having obtaining a clasp knife at this time.

## Different Patterns of Knife

From August 1914 through to the end of the war, but particularly prevalent 1915-1916, are a whole series of advertisements for various cutlery trades to work on Government or army clasp knives. The vast majority are for either "Government (or army) spike knives" or "Government (or army) tin-opener knives." This suggests that there were mainly two distinct patterns of army clasp knife being made at the time, and that the patterns were well known enough for the brief descriptions to be sufficient for the reader to understand the difference. (There are also a couple of advertisements for "3 thickness spike knives.")

The first advertisement mentioning "tin-opener knives" exclusively, appears in the Sheffield Evening Telegraph 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915:

*"CUTLERS Wanted, to make 4in. Rat Tail Tin Opener Knives, workshops available on the premises. – Apply Needham, Veall and Tyzack, Ltd.. Milton st."*

Although this advert does not specifically reference 'Government Work,' the vast majority do. Sheffield Daily Telegraph 6<sup>th</sup> December 1915, as follows:

**G**OVERNMENT WORK. — Four-inch Tin-Opener Knives.—DATAL MEN Wanted; wages £2 per week, 52 hours; overtime paid; twelve months' work guaranteed; no person resident more than 10 miles away, or already engaged on Government work, will be engaged.—Apply 21, Howard Lane.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

The addition of "4 inch" to the description occurs in about half a dozen advertisements over this period.

An example of an advert for 'Spike knives' from the Sheffield Daily Telegraph 23rd February 1915:

**C**UTLERS Wanted, to make Government Spike Knives, Joint Board prices.—Apply Manager, "Eye-witness" Works, Milton st, Sheffield.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

A letter in the Sheffield Evening Telegraph of 6<sup>th</sup> July 1915, complaining about the attitude of cutlery workers, again implies the common understanding of the two different pattern descriptions:

*"...all that you can get cutlers and grinders to work upon is tin-opener knives and spike knives..."*

### Further Government Measures: "A Famine in Cutlery"

Sheffield Daily Telegraph 8<sup>th</sup> January 1916:

#### Remarkable Cutlery Situation.

In the cutlery branches an extraordinary state of affairs has arisen. The whole trade may be said to be under control, in effect if not nominally, as every manufacturer is under strict orders—or rather a command—from the authorities to give first consideration to the needs of the military. There is no possibility of this command being evaded without grave consequences to the offender. It has been calculated that the requirements for the next eight months equal the total output of Sheffield and Birmingham for the period named. Spoons, forks, knives and razors are being bought for the armies from America and Sweden, but even with this relief makers here will not be able to supply much to the public. Indeed, a famine in ordinary cutlery is almost a certainty. Already makers are discontinuing the production of many familiar patterns of pocket-knives, because the men who put them together are fully occupied on Government patterns. Scarcely any of the cheaper goods are now being made. With regard to the

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers



The article continues under the heading: *"Makers Seek Outside Help"* describing how many makers are sending out work to cutlery repairers and dealers up and down the country to help out:

*"...Most of the cutlery dealers in London and the provinces run a workshop for repairs and these are now being requisitioned for grinding razors and scissors, and even putting together some of the simpler patterns of pocket knives...."*

Two articles in September and December 1916 further illustrate the pressure of the Government contracts. Both feature prosecutions for the disregarding of safety regulations whilst completing urgent Government work. Sheffield Evening Telegraph 12<sup>th</sup> September 1916:

*"....he knew that as a general rule apparatus ought to be installed, but it was commonly understood that this was not required in the case of urgent orders for Army knives. He knew fifty places that had no exhaust pipes, and not more than two that had them."*

### Contracts from 1916 Onwards

From late 1916 onwards the reporting on Army contracts in the newspapers is a lot sparser, with articles mostly confined to 'Latest Lists' of firms awarded Government contracts.



**WAR OFFICE CONTRACTS**

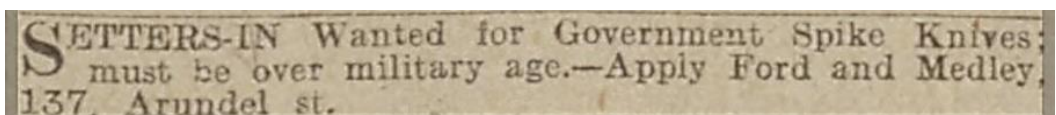
**Latest List of Successful Sheffield Firms.**

The following is a list of new contracts placed with Sheffield and district firms by the War Office during July:—

Belting and laces: T. A. Ashton, Ltd.  
Ankle belts: Heginbotham, Stoney Middleton.  
Meat choppers: R. Sorby and Sons.  
Bib and stop cocks: G. and W. G. Gummer, Rotherham.  
Disinfectants: Newton, Chambers, and Co., Thorncliffe, near Sheffield.  
Forges: A. Harrop, Ltd.  
Clasp knives: I. and J. Barber, H. Barnascone, Baum Bros., Birr and Co., E. Blyde and Co., Brookes and Crookes, W. and S. Butcher, G. Butler and Co., J. Christie and Sons, J. Clarke and Son, H. Clegg and Sons, E. M. Dickinson, T. Ellin and Co., J. Elliot and Sons, Ford and Medley, Hale Bros., J. Hatfield and Co., Jacobs and Co., C. Johnson and Co., Lockwood Bros., J. McClory and Sons, Mappin and Webb, F. Mills and Co., J. Milner and Co., W. Morton and Sons, F. Newton and Sons, J. Nowill and Sons, A. Oates, W. H. Roberts, H. M. Slater.  
Railway plant: C. Cooper and Sons.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

Advertisements for workers also slow down with many of them, following on from conscription, now specifying "*must be over military age.*" – Sheffield Daily Telegraph 16<sup>th</sup> December 1916:



**SETTERS-IN** Wanted for Government Spike Knives;  
must be over military age.—Apply Ford and Medley,  
137, Arundel st.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

On 29<sup>th</sup> June 1917, the Sheffield Daily Telegraph reports some interesting statistics as part of an article titled: "WAR PURCHASES."

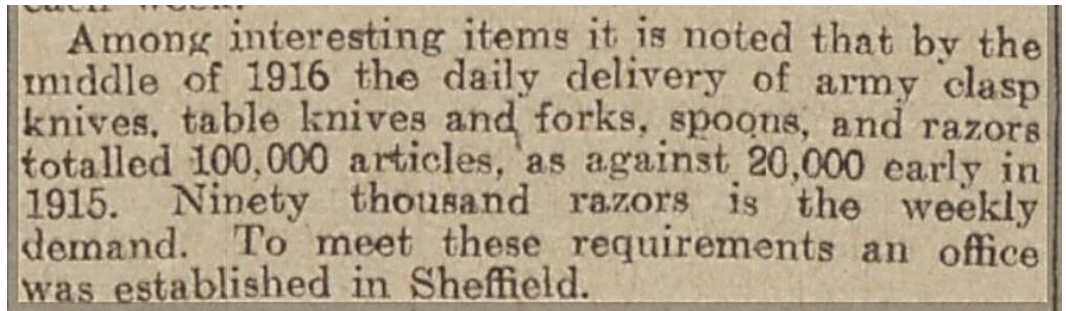


Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

By 26<sup>th</sup> January 1918, the Sheffield Daily Telegraph is reporting once again on the scarcity of cutlery items for the public:

*"...cutlery makers can sell anything they have to spare without effort. Travelling for orders is quite unnecessary, although some firms keep up this service with the sole object of maintaining personal relationships with customers. It is difficult to obtain in Sheffield even small quantities of pen-knives, razors or scissors."*

And on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1918:

*"The general demand for cutlery is reported to be brisk, but the output of pocket-knives seems to be dwindling to the vanishing point, because so few spring cutlers are left, and the Army has made serious inroads upon the grinders. As regards the military pocket-knife, some of the makers are grinding the blades in machines."*

A Retrospective

To return for the final word to Frank Ridlington's retrospective article of 19<sup>th</sup> July 1919 "*Equipping the Troops*," an extract:

**MIRACLES**  
**Of the Cutlery and Silver**  
**Industries.**  
**EQUIPPING THE TROOPS.**  
**(By Frank Ridlington.)**

more elaborate than before the war. Among other extras was a large clasp knife. Taking everything into consideration, we should say that for one piece of military cutlery supplied in peace days, Sheffield supplied forty or fifty during the nearly five years of war. Notwithstanding that, the trade was compelled to part with a considerable proportion of its operatives for service with the troops, or to work on actual munitions. We doubt whether a single individual six years ago would have believed the trade capable of executing the task, and the fact that it rose to such an unprecedented occasion reflects credit upon all who took part in the work.

Image © Johnston Press plc part of JPL Media Ltd.  
Image reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

## Summary/Conclusions

I feel that the above research, taken from the Sheffield Newspapers of 1914-1919, suggests several things concerning the question of Government Contracts for army clasp knives during WW1:

- Upon the outbreak of war there was an urgent need to supply vast numbers of new recruits with pocket-knives containing tin-openers.
- As the Army bought up most all existing stocks of pocketknives containing tin-openers at the start of the war, and presumably issued them, any pattern of pocketknife dating from this period and containing a tin-opener could conceivably have been an issue item.
- There was at least one order by the War Office of clasp knives from America which would presumably have then been issued to British troops.
- The Sheffield Cutlery Trade very quickly became totally dominated by Government work which included a great many Government contracts for clasp knives.
- There seem to have been two main patterns of Government Contracted army clasp knife, generally distinguished from one another by the terms 'spike knives' or 'tin-opener knives' (the latter sometimes referred to as 4-inch tin-opener knife, although it is perhaps possible that they are denoting two separate patterns of tin-opener knife.)



- For the duration of the war, there seems to have been limited output by the industry of pocket knife patterns for civilian purchase.

### Further Information:

All newspaper images in this Appendix have been reproduced with the kind permission of Sheffield Newspapers.

The images are all © Johnston Press plc which is owned by JPL Media Ltd.

All the articles referenced may be viewed via two subscription-based websites (both operated by Findmypast:)

British Newspaper Archive: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Findmypast: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers>

Paul Stamp

*April 2021*

## APPENDIX 9: American E.C. Simmons 'KeenKutter' Jack Knives Contracted by the British Government During WW1. Research Paper by Martin Cook.

### CHRONOLOGY

6 February 1915: The article found by Paul Stamp in the Sheffield Evening Telegraph – see previous Appendix 8 “RESEARCH BY PAUL STAMP ON GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS FOR SHEFFIELD POCKET KNIVES 1914 – 1919

19 February 1915: The US Orange County Times Press reports an English knife order for Walden.

7 May 1915: The US Middleton Times Press reports 10,000 dozen knives en route to England were lost when the R.M.S. Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk.

12 May 1915: The Warwick Valley Dispatch notes that the knives had been paid for and that the complete order was for one million.

15 September 1916: The Orange County Times Press reports the order was re-made.

The clasp knife photo from the 7th May 1915 newspaper article indicates that these knives were pattern 6353/1905 – the cherry on the cake!

Although no mention is made of KeenKutter in the newspapers, the following explains that KeenKutters were made at Walden;

### The Walden Knife Company 1870-1923

Source: Post by Miller Bro's » SunMay 16, 2010 @ Allaboutpocketknives forum.

Located in Walden, Orange County, New York, this company made excellent quality knives during their time in business. In 1870 the company was called "Walden Co-operative Knife Co.", knives with this stamp are very hard to find because they used that stamp for only about four years. Then they reorganized and the company was renamed Walden Knife Co. in 1874 . They produced knives on contract for other companies, you will see old knives marked Press Button, KeenKutter, and others.

They had their own unique jiggging pattern on the bone handles of their knives, so if you see an old knife with the same bone jiggging as a Walden, chances are they made it for that company on contract.

By 1893 George Schrade was looking for a place to manufacture his patented Press Button switchblades. He found a place at Walden Knife Co. These knives were made in their factory until about 1903, when George Schrade sold his patent and interest to Walden Knife Co.

They continued to manufacture lots of them, about 10,000 dozen Press Buttons witch blades a year! That patent purchase was a very good investment indeed. In 1902 the E.C. Simmons Hardware Co. took over management of the company and ran it successfully for the next nineteen years, till Winchester bought them out.

They made knives at the Walden plant for another year until Winchester decided to sell the property to Schrade Cut. Co., and move all the knife making equipment to their New Haven, Conn. manufacturing facility. Winchester used this equipment to make knives until the early 1940`s, then they too stopped making pocket knives.

Walden Knife Co. has a rich history and some big names in the cutlery industry associated with them.

The search started here with this information from Paul Stamp:

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915 there is a report in the Sheffield Evening Telegraph relating to cutlery orders under the title "Commercial Notes" which contains an interesting sentence:

The War Office have lately given out an order for 120,000 clasp knives to an American firm. In the ordinary way fresh overseas business hooked

I then found this article by Mary Ellen Matise:

## Walden Knives Sink With The Lusitania May 7, 1915

by Mary Ellen Matise, Village of Walden Historian

May 7, 2015, the press reminded us, was the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Cunard Lines' Lusitania off the coast of Ireland; the ship, its crew and almost 2000 passengers the victim of a German U-boat torpedo attack. As a lead up to the anniversary, the May 3rd edition of the Middletown TH-Record printed a review of the book, "Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania" by Erik Larson. The reviewer states that Larson 'puts us on the deck of the famous ship that fateful day.' But what the reviewer and the author don't tell us is that below that deck, in the cargo hold, is a story very close to home and one that had a direct impact on Orange County, and on the Village of Walden.

One hundred years ago on May 7, 1915, the Middletown Times-Press carried the following headline:

### **BIG KNIFE SHIPMENT FROM WALDEN IS LOST WITH THE LUSITANIA**

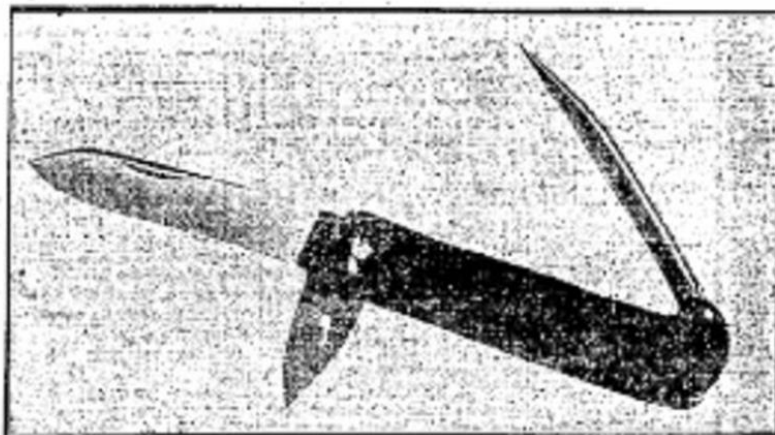


Photo shows one of the knives manufactured in Walden for the English army, 12,000 dozen of which were lost on the Lusitania.

**\$50,000 Knife Cargo from Walden Lost With Sinking of the Lusitania**

**MIDDLETOWN**



**TIMES-PRESS**

DAVID GREENBERG  
CIRCULATION FIG.

APRIL 5, 1913

LEADING NEWSPAPER IN ITS TERRITORY

TEN PAGES

NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED WEEKLY, MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY, SUNDAY, AND HOLIDAY DAYS.

VOL. XLII—NO. 154. One Cent.

\$2.50 a Year.

MIDDLETOWN, N. Y., SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1914

30 Cents a Week

TYPE SET

## **ONLY 51 AMERICANS OUT OF 188 ON LUSITANIA SAVED, NAMES OF PROMINENT CITIZENS NOT INCLUDED IN LIST, GERARD IS DIRECTED TO DEMAND FACTS FROM GERMANY**

A front page article described the knife order. '10,000 dozen knives, the result of weeks of work on the part of day and night shifts at the Walden Knife Works, went down with the big steam ship. The knives comprised the largest shipment yet made by the Walden concern as a portion of an order of a million knives received from the English government.'

'Fortunately the Walden concern received payment in full for the knives before the liner left port and the Orange county manufacturing concern will suffer no financial loss as the result of the sinking of the vessel.'

'...The factory has been taxed to its utmost capacity and the New York Knife Company and Schrade Company plants in Walden have been called into service to help fill the order.'

'The sinking of the Lusitania with the large shipment made last week by the concern will probably mean an additional order and the result will be an added benefit to the people of Walden.'

'The fact that all of the English cutlery concerns are at present engaged in the manufacture of ammunition was responsible for the orders for knives placed in this country. The Walden Works was found to be in a position to fill orders promptly and as a result was given a large share of the orders placed in the United States. The order was received through the English consul in New York...'

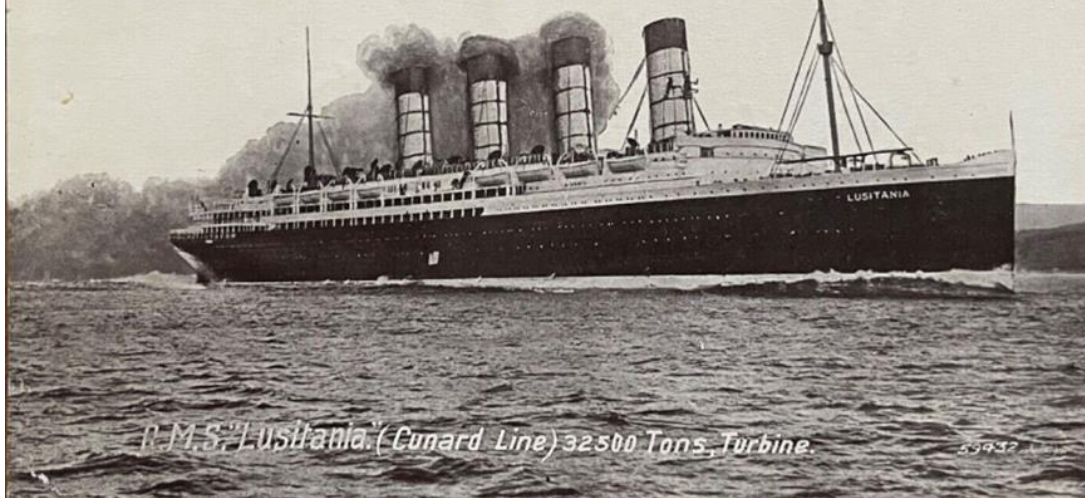
'The shipment lost on the Lusitania represents in cash an order of about \$50,000. The knives would retail, if sold in this country, at about a half dollar apiece.'

'The knives, as shown in the illustration, are designed entirely for the use of the English soldiers and marines. The long steel blade is intended for general use. The short blade has an attachment by which it may be used as a can-opener and for other purposes while the steel prong called a Marlin spike, is intended for use in splicing ropes. The spike, however, finds many other useful purposes and the knife forms a tool probably of great value to the men in the trenches and on board the ships of the King.'



## R.M.S. "LUSITANIA."

Sunk by German Submarine off  
Old Head of Kinsale,  
7th May 1915.



R.M.S. Lusitania (Cunard Line) 32500 Tons, Turbine.

Earlier that year, the February 19, 1915 edition of the Orange County Times Press ran an article announcing the receipt of the large knife order by the Walden Knife Works.

## Walden Gets Knife Order for England

Factory Employees on  
Night Shifts to  
Fill Demand

CUTLERY NEEDED  
FOR THE ARMIES

And Present Rush May Result  
in New Factory  
Building

Walden, Feb. 15.—The workmen in the Walden Knife Works connected with the material department started on a double shift on Monday, one part of the force working from 7 to 7 o'clock in the forenoon and the other shift working from 7 to 7 o'clock in the night. This rush of work has been caused by the large order of army knives for the British army which was contracted by the Simmons concern recently. Several other departments in the Walden knife works have been working overtime for a month or more.

A force of employees in the forging department connected with the manufacture of the handles used on these knives also started on double shifts on Monday. These workmen press out and drop the fibre handles under a pressure hammer that weighs 500 pounds. It is stated that this kind of a knife handle is hard as steel and cannot be injured by water or dampness. These knives are provided with a large blade with a cutting edge, a can opener and a large spike that can either be used by sailors in splitting rope or by the cavalry in picking out stones, etc., from their horses' hoofs.

In order to facilitate the prompt delivery of this big order a considerable amount of the material for the knives gotten out in the Walden knife works is being assembled into the finished product in other knife factories both in this village and out of town. The Walden Knife Company on East Main street has been working overtime in order to assist in supplying the knife handles.

Other activities are in prospect in the Walden knife works the details of which cannot be learned at this time. It was learned on very good authority on Monday that a building 30 by 100 feet in dimension was to be erected at the earliest possible time at the Walden Knife works but an inquiry made yesterday of Edmund Andrews, manager of the Simmons concern in this village, brought forth the reply that nothing definite could be told about the matter at this time.

Although the knife business in this country is fairly good at present, it is known that in Sheffield, England, the cutlery center of the world and the birthplace of many residents of Walden, the knife factories are working night and day and are in the midst of the greatest business activity in the history of the city, despite the fact they are in the heart of one of the countries implicated in the great war now raging.

## **Walden Knives on Lusitania.**

The Walden Knife Company shipped on the Cunarder Lusitania, 10,000 dozen army and navy knives for the English government. Fortunately the Walden concern were paid for cargo before the liner left the port. These are the knives that are being finished up by the Warwick Knife Company. The complete order for the English is for a million.

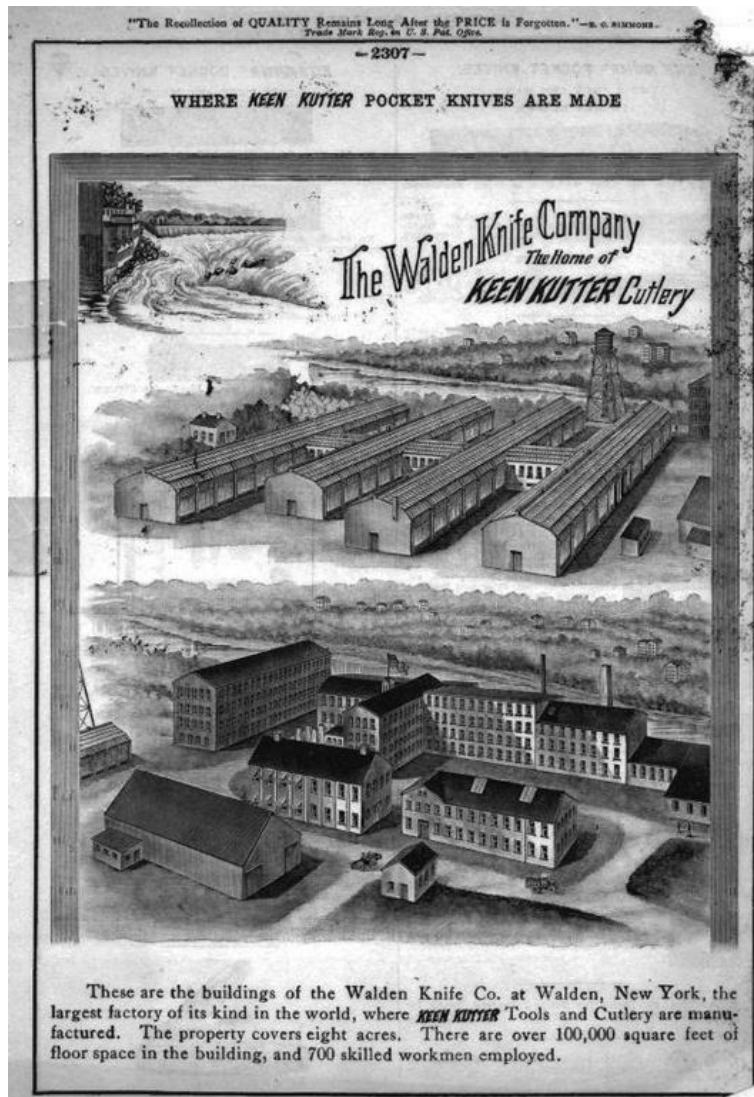
---

Article from the Warwick Valley Dispatch newspaper dated May 12<sup>th</sup> 1915, page 6.

Note the mention of Army and Navy knives, and the complete order was for a million.







A 2014 commemorative sign and period advert for The Walden Knife Company



A period photo of employees of the Walden Knife Co

The loss of the 10,000 dozen knives on the Lusitania was not the end of the story. Evidently, the knives were reordered by the English government and did become effective tools in the hands of the British soldiers according to the following 1916 article in the local press in which the Walden Knife Works claims to have produced 1,000,000 knives of this design during 1915.

ORANGE COUNTY TIMES-PRESS, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1916

## Knives Made in Walden Not Intended to Be 'Murderous' as German Papers Charge

**Makers Say Short Blade is Can  
Opener and Not Designed for Use in  
Blinding Men Attacked in Trenches**

Newburgh, Sept. 12.—That knives made in Walden for the British government are those with which the "Nettoyours" are armed, and that these knives are murder tools, is the charge now being made by the Germans. In the course of an article of more than a column in length, the New York Staats Zeitung, in Berlin dispatches, and in a description of its own investigations, contains the charge. The knife is pictured in the newspaper and the purposes of it are described from a German viewpoint. One feature of the knife is described as being for use in blinding the men captured in the German trenches, and another part of the knife is for the purpose of bringing about internal bleeding. The assertion is made that the soldiers are told to take prisoners, and the knives are the weapons used to dispose of those in the trenches, who are wounded, or surrender.

Inquiry in Walden Saturday developed that such knives as are described are manufactured there, but the uses to which they are put are not those described. The assertion is made that there is nothing extraordinary about the product, which is intended primarily for the use of the sailors. The blade, which is described as being for use in blinding the Germans, is said to be a can opener, which it resembles, while the device which is said to be for internal bleeding is for the use of sailors in unscrewing knots.

### Walden Skeptical of It

When inquiries were made in Walden concerning the manufacture of this knife, it was admitted that knives were made there for the Simmons Co., of St. Louis. Superintendent Emerson of the knife works said that fully 1,000,000 of these were made in 1915, but no one in the place was in a position to say that they were made for the use of the Allies. The order was placed by the St. Louis company and the knives were made. At the time the Lusitania was sunk, it was said that 30,000 of them had gone down with that vessel. That the knives were intended for any such use as the Germans describe was not for a moment thought, and it is not now believed they were for any such use.

The following knives are all WW1 period E. C. Simmons KeenKutter knives made for the British Army.

SOURCE: Martin Cook collection.







#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Paul Stamp, researcher and collector.

Mary Ellen Matise, Village of Walden Historian.

Martin Cook

May 2025.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ron Flook: *"British and Commonwealth Military Knives"*<sup>1</sup> published by Howell Press, 1999

<sup>2</sup> Michael Silvey: *"Pocket Knives of the United States Military"*, Published by the author, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Military Knives: <http://www.australianmilitaryknives.com/claspww1/privatep.html>

<sup>4</sup> "KNIFE Magazine" published by KnifeGuy Productions Knoxville USA. See: <https://www.knifemagazine.com/glossary/>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Military Knives : <http://www.australianmilitaryknives.com/clasp.html>