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## **HISTORY OVERVIEW OF RICHARDS SHEFFIELD CUTLERY 1932 TO 1977.**



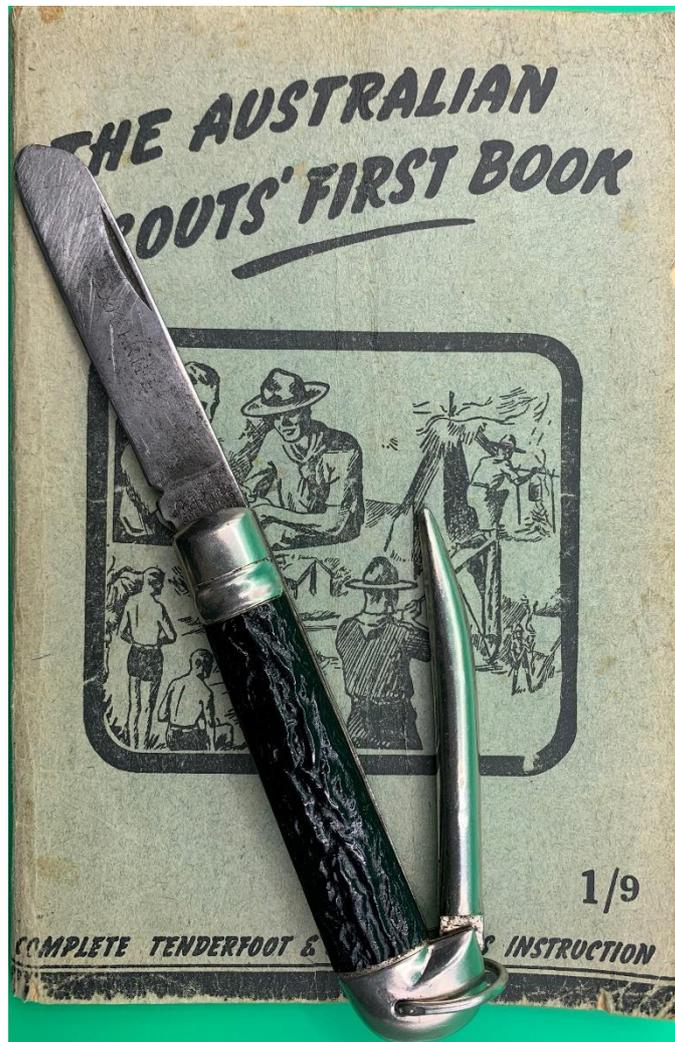
Knife box showing the Lamp Post trademark

### **A PERSONAL REFLECTION BY KEVIN COLEMAN**

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## HISTORY OF RICHARDS CULTERY

I was recently asked why I collect Richard's pocketknives when they have no or very little value in the collecting world. I have grown up with Richards and Richartz pocketknives since the age of 10 when I was given my first Richards Boy Scout Knife. This paper outlines the story of Richards Sheffield, England and hence my interest.



My first Richards Boy Scout pocketknife.

My first Richards Boy Scout Knife was given to me when I was 10. The Australian Scouts' first book was given to me when I joined the Boy Scouts in 1961.

To most collectors of pocketknives, the Richards pocketknives are referred to as "cheap knives". In my view a better description is inexpensive knives. The bolsters are I believe pressed metal; scales are made of celluloid which made it possible to produce scales in a range of colours which I rather like. The steel is good quality Sheffield steel. From my years of experience using the Richards pocketknives, when '*looked after*' they kept a good edge and did the job well.

It is the story behind Richards I find most interesting. Richards of Sheffield Ltd as they became known was regarded to be the only cutlery firm in the 1900s to “*make a fortune*” from the manufacture of pocketknives<sup>1</sup>.

The story began in Solingen Germany in 1900 when the cutlery and knife manufacturer was owned by two brothers Heinrich and Johann Richartz. In 1921 the firm became Gerbr. Richartz & Sohne. In 1928 the firm was listed solely as “knifemaker” and was owned by Cuno and Ernest Richartz. Over the years several trademarks were registered by Richartz.

Knives made by Richartz were, and still are, quality pocketknives. As farmers and country people we have used Richartz stockman pocketknives since the early 1920s. Two of the trademarks which became probably the most well-known, and were used only on pocketknives, were the lamp post - registered in 1919, and the whale registered in 1911<sup>2</sup>. The whale continues to be used today.



Richartz 3-blade Stockman with the Lamp Post trademark.

This knife would date no later than 1932 when the Sheffield firm Richards was established.



Richartz 3-blade Stockman with the Whale trademark.



Richartz, two blade Stockmen with the whale trademark.

The two knives shown immediately above are stockmen knives with the Whale trademark – and both are made in Solingen. The Lamp Post marked knife shown at the top of the page is Solingen made and therefore dates prior to Stephan Richartz, son of one of the founding members taking the trademark to Sheffield – see explanation on the following page.

The following two Richartz 2-blade pocketknives dated c.1920s appear to be identical, however the top knife has the Lamp Post trademark with the bottom having the Whale trademark.



Richartz c.1950 camping/Boy Scout pocketknife has the Whale logo on the tang



The plate immediately above is a current camping or hobo pocketknife produced with the current Whale trademark used by Richartz. The Whale logo signifies that the knife was made in Solingen using German Steel<sup>3</sup>.

During the late 1920s business had declined in the German cutlery trade. To expand the business, Stephan Richartz, son of one of the founding members, was sent to Sheffield to establish a cutlery and knife making business. The name became anglicized to "Richards Bros & Sons". Over time this name was to dominate the Sheffield knife industry. In 1932 two trademarks were registered in Sheffield. The Lamp Post and Tent. The Whale continued to be used by Richartz in Solingen.



c.1960s Richards 2-blade knife with the Lamp Post trademark on the tang.



The knife shown above is post 1932 Richards pocketknife with the Tent trademark showing on the scales near the shackle. This pocketknife by Richards has metal scales.



The plate above is a Richards knife box showing the Lamp Post trademark used by Richards.



The adjacent plate is a Richards knife box showing the Tent trademark used by Richards.

In 1937 Stephan's brother, Paul, joined the business. Wilhelm Muller had already moved from the Solingen plant to join Stephen in managing the business. By the end of 1938 trade had prospered and 400 people were employed by the firm. Export markets were established in the late 1930s which included Australia where as well as pocketknives they advertised stainless kitchen cutlery.

During WW11 the original factory had been damaged by the Luftwaffe bombing and a new factory was built in Moore Street Sheffield to mass produce "cheap" pocketknives which sold in their millions thus accounting for sixty percent of the business. These knives were very often displayed on cards in various retail stores. Due to the price, they become affordable to everyone.

Although these were described as "cheap" knives in the documents of the day, I stand by my opening comment, to me a fairer description would be inexpensive, as the word "cheap" to me indicates worthless not in price but as a usable and as a functional tool. I suppose some of the "tourists" small pocketknives with pictures may have some very limited use. More a memento of one's holiday at the beach etc.

During World War two both Stephan and Paul along with Wilhem Muller were interned. Given the demand for producing equipment for the war effort, Wilhem was released to manage the production of clasp knives, bayonets and other items required for the war effort. Following is an example of a 3-bladed WW11 clasp knife dated 1945 and stamped with the “↑” mark denoting government ownership, that was made by Richards. This is a high-quality knife with steel bolster.



Paul died in 1961, and Stephan retired in the mid 60's with Wilhem becoming chairman until the business was sold in 1977 to Imperial Knife Associated Companies of America. Trading ceased in 1983 after another sale of the business and the building was demolished.

Following are two examples of Richard's pocketknives c.1960, top with clip blade and pen blade, bottom knife with sheepsfoot blade and marline spike marked Scout Knife on the blade.



A "Camping" pocketknife c,1960 with bottle opener, tin opener and leather awl.



This following plate also shows two examples c1960, top knife with spray blade and pen blade, with the Lamp Post trademark on the blade, and the bottom example with a hawkbill blade.



Eventually, the pocketknives were "blanked out of sheet steel" and as stated the previously the use of celluloid enabled the scales to be made in a variety of colours and enabled advertising to be put on the scales.



The adjacent plate shows skiing in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales (Australia).

Richard's novelty pocketknife of Wales

Two other examples of advertising pocketknives made by Richards.

Following is another example of a Richards "Boy Scout" – 'Camping' pocketknife c1960. I have used this pattern for many years. Lamp post trademark can be seen on the tang.



Richard's pocketknives were placed on advertising cards and sold in toy shops. One example known to be sold in toy shops were the Barlow style pocketknives. The photo below is a Barlow style which I understand was one of the many styles sold in toy shops.



The adjacent plate is another example with Richards Boy Scout pocketknives placed on advertising cards and sold in toy shops

Authors photo from internet download<sup>4</sup> .



The adjacent plate shows two Boy Scout knives. The first knife is by Richartz with the Lamp Post trademark which dates this knife to pre-1932. The knife below is a Richards Boy Scout Knife with Lamp Post trademark, hence Sheffield made 1950-1960s. Both have a sheep's-foot blade and marline spike.

The photo below is a novelty knife set sold by Richards. This is the only example I have seen and accordingly I have not been able to date when these would have been sold. Also, were they designed as a child's toy and sold in toy shops or to be carried in a lady's handbag or a gent's pocket?



The two plates following show two more examples of Richards pocketknives. The top plate is a small single spear point blade and the second is a small two blade, clip point and pen blades.



I believe that Tweedale sums up the Richards story very well, as follows:

*“While Richards pocketknives were a world away from nineteenth century Sheffield products, their pocketknives sold in their millions to a public who now cared more about price than craftsmanship.”<sup>5</sup>*

A quote by my father when I was given my first Richards Boy Scout Knife at the age of 10 *“a pocketknife is a vital tool in the bush and on the farm. Look after it, it will look after you,”* our Richartz and Richards pocketknives have certainly served us very well over the years and continue to do so today.

My father on his horse in 1927. The Richartz knife on the left is his, the knife on the right is my grandfather's, and my Richartz stockman's knife on the top of the page.



The adjacent plate is my Richards 2-blade, clip point and pen blade pocketknife. I have used this knife for many years.



As I stated above: **look after these Richards knives and they will serve you very well.**

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- Levine's Guide to knives and their value, Bernard Levine, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.
- Tweedale's Directory of Sheffield Cutlery Manufacturers 1740-2013.revised and expanded second ed. Geoffrey Tweedale.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I would like to thank my friends and fellow collectors Lawrie Wilson and Jim Patterson who have kindly donated pocketknives by Richard's to me to include them in my collection which adds to the history of Richard's Cutlery.

\*All knives shown are from the author's collection.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Tweedale's Directory of Sheffield Cutlery Manufacturers 1740-2013, Revised and Expanded 2ed.page 509

<sup>2</sup> J. Anthony Carter, German Knife and Sword Makers, the definitive directory of makers and marks 1850-1945 page 455 &456

<sup>3</sup> Internet download. Sarwik.Com Richartz

<sup>4</sup> Authors photo from internet download

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Tweedale's, Tweedale's Directory of Sheffield Cutlery Manufacturers 1740-2013, revised and expanded 2ed.Page 509

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