

UPDATES:

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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first online edition and replaces the previous A4 editions that were initially circulated to some collectors and commentators in May 2021, and again in June 2021 to incorporate additional material provided by Sheffield based knife collector and eminent commentator Jack Black.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Collector Note is to document the range of variations in the style of knives that fall within the generally accepted classification of a knife as a “pruner” pattern or style, based on knives in the authors collection (unless otherwise stated), in order to broaden the knowledge of collectors regarding the broad history of Sheffield-made pruning knives and thus enhance the enjoyment of collecting.

3 CONTEXT

Blades designed for horticultural activities have been an important part of the process of domestication of civilizations for millennia. Along with blades for butchering and skinning, the ‘pruning knife’ is perhaps the most easily recognised - together with grafting and budding knives, billhooks, sickles, and scythes. It is known that pruning knives were manufactured in Sheffield at least from the 14th century and are still manufactured there today. The publication of “*Smith's Key*”¹ in 1816 (see following page 4 for details) provides a most useful insight into what Sheffield pruning knives looked like in the early 19th century and possibly much earlier, and in-fact there is also much consistency in terms of blade and handle characteristics from that period right through to the early 20th century.

Another interesting characteristic of pruning knives, especially in the 19th century is the variety of styles and patterns of pruners – both in terms of handles and blade profiles; the display of over thirty different patterns in cutlery manufacturers’ catalogues is not uncommon; for example [Appendix 1](#) to this Collector Note ([here](#)) shows 27 pruning knives displayed in the Joseph Mappin and Sons catalogue² dated c.1860 (from a price list of 33 items), the subtle differences of which can be difficult to discern. This illustrates that in this second decade of the 21st century we no-longer appreciate the subtleties related to the design of hand-tools for specific purposes (e.g. including hammers, axes, saws etc. as well as knives) - which was common knowledge in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

4 ATTRACTION

One of the principal attractions of pruning knives for the collector is their availability, as they were produced in vast numbers by most of Sheffield’s cutlery manufacturers for a century or more. Most of the pruner knives more commonly available today appear to date from the start of the Victorian era (1830’s) through the first World War (1914 – 1918) and become less common up to the 1960s. As mentioned above, the Mappin Brothers c.1860 catalog contained details of 33 “*Celebrated Pruning and Budding Knives*” providing a variety of size, shape, and handle material (see [Appendix 1 here](#)); similarly, the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue (see [Appendix 4 here](#)) detailed 36 such items but their 1961 catalogue (see [Appendix 5 here](#)) displayed only 15. The Joseph Rodgers catalogue³ circa 1912 showed 22 such items (see [Appendix 2 here](#)). Also of interest is the variety of blade and tang stampings used – particularly by the main manufacturers: SAYNOR, GEORGE

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WOSTENHOLM, THOMAS TURNER, CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON, and JOSEPH RODGES, as the stampings can provide some indication as to the possible date (or era) of the knife.



Photo 1: Author's pruning knife collection

Given that pruners were produced as a hand-tool they are commonly found with heavily worn blades, however in most cases the handles are still in good to excellent condition, as they were constructed to be robust. This is evident in my collection – where I have placed an equal emphasis on variety rather than just quality and/or originality of the item.

As a consequence, having access to such a large number of knives (85 shown in the adjacent **Photo 1**) enables apparent styles and common characteristics to be identified and possible conclusions drawn covering a broad range of manufacturers.

I am aware that some collectors focus on a specific manufacturer, blade pattern, or handle type (e.g. butt cap pruners – see details on page 3 following) and I have endeavoured to cater for such speciality in the following details.

5 DESCRIPTION & CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 Typical Examples

The following two knives are typical examples of what are usually available to collectors - the first with a round butt end to the handle and the second with a flat steel butt end to the handle; in both examples the blades appear to be near full, and neither has a wide butt end (see further details following on page 3).



Photo 2. Top: Johnson Western Works, length closed 4 5/8 inches closed. Stag scales. hawkbill blade. Bottom: John Petty and Sons, length 4 1/8 inches closed, smooth bone scales, 'hooked pruner' blade - probably peach pruner. SOURCE: author's collection

In reality, the pruning knife pattern is one of a range of patterns that can loosely be described as 'English Jack Knives': that is, a large usually single bladed knife of sturdy construction that was produced as a hand-

tool for workers in various trades, activity or service. The word "Jack" is possibly derived from common usage as being 'a knife for jack' – "jack" being a slang word for a manual worker such as a lumberjack, steeplejack, jacktar, "jack of all trades", etc.

Some such knives have a blade designed for a specific purpose such as the hawkbill blade in pruning knives, in other cases the tasks were less specific and therefore a "sheepfoot" blade was more useful (see [photo 78 here](#) and accompanying text for an example and description). As will be shown in the following sections however, not all pruning knives had a hawkbill blade as more specific pruning task demanded a different shaped blade such as coffee pruners and peach pruners. Conversely, not all knives with hawkbill blades were used for horticulture purposes, other industries also used knives with hawkbill blades, such

1: Yorkshire Historical Dictionary57
 2: Personal correspondence to the author from Jack Black57
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leatherwork, electrical workers (e.g. some “TL29”⁴ knives) etc. where hard cutting was required, and of course “Plumber Knives” as detail on page 42 [here](#) of this Collector Note.

5.2 Worn Blades

What is commonly available to collectors however is a knife that may have done over a hundred years of service - resulting in the knife blade having been sharpened to such an extent that the original shape of the blade is no longer discernible – see following examples. My assumption is that the top knife blade was probably originally a hawkbill given the slight curve to the back (top edge), and the bottom knife blade was possibly originally a sheepfoot given that the back is flat over the most part; or maybe not. In both cases the knives appear to have lost more than 50% of their profile.



Photo 3. Top: George Butler, 4 5/8 inches closed, Staghorn scales, blade probably sheepfoot
 Bottom: Saynor Cooke & Ridal, 4.5/8 inches closed, Staghorn scales, blade probably hawkbill
 SOURCE: authors collection

Such blade wear is not always the result of horticultural work as I have seen references to pruners (or knives with hawkbill blades) being more recently proposed for use by linoleum layers or for cutting plasterboard and rubber in manufacturing processes (see example [here](#)) - which placed heavy wear on the point which in turn

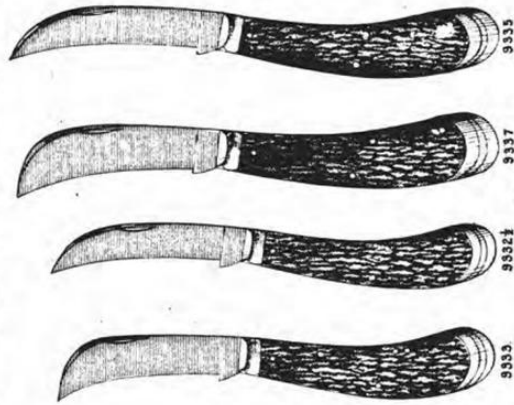
lead to more regular sharpening and consequent reduction in the blade profile.

5.3 Butt ends

In addition to blade shape, a further physical characteristic that applies to pruners is the shape of the handle butt (i.e. the opposite end of the handle to the blade/tang). There are variations, being: ‘round butt’ – probably the most common; ‘flat butt’ – always with either a steel or brass butt cap (sometimes missing); and a ‘wide butt’ - where the butt end is significantly wider than the tang end when viewed from all sides. A wide butt will have either a round butt end or a flat butt end. In the preceding **Photo 3**, the top knife has a flat butt, and the bottom knife has a round butt but neither has a wide butt. In the following **Photo 4** all knives have a ‘wide butt’ end. It appears that wide butts were common up to the 1850s but were far less common after that.

		Photos 4A and 4B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamped “DUKE” on blade • Dated c1840s – 1850s • See here for details
		Photos 4C and 4D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamped “THOMAS TURNER & COMPYS PRUNING KNIFE” on blade face • Dated c.1830s – 1840s • See here for details
		Photos 4E and 4F <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamped “CAST STEEL” on blade face • Dated c1850s • See here for details

Photo 4: Pruners with wide butt ends. Source: Owner’s collection



The adjacent drawing is copied from the illustration following page 9 of the “Mappin Brothers Illustrated Catalogue” circa 1860 (see following for details). They are all described as a “Gardener’s Pruning knife”, with the bottom two Patterns 9333 and 9332½) having a close length of 4 inches, and upper two (patterns 9337 and 9335) having a closed length of 4 ½ inch (2nd from top) and 4 ¼ inches (top). Of the twenty-seven pruner patterns shown in the catalogue only these four have the butt end

shown in this style and it is assumed they are intended to show a “wide butt”. They are also the only ones described as being a “Gardener’s Pruning knife”, which appears to have been an important distinction at that time.

6 DATING AND CONTEXT

Dating antique knives is usually a very difficult and uncertain process; it can be done to a degree by looking at the knife, the pattern and the materials used etc.; a major clue can also be how the blades and tangs are “marked” (i.e. stamped and/or etched). Importantly, there was little uniformity of standards and practices obvious between the myriad of manufacturers that operated in Sheffield – especially during the 19th Century, perhaps apart from some traditional patterns. The result is that a high degree of caution is required when endeavouring to assign a date or era of manufacture to a specific knife. Regarding blade and tang “marking”, Jack Black has advised that *“a particular difficulty in Sheffield was the 'Little Mester’⁵ system, which meant that a variety of tang stamps could be around at the same time, with stamped blades being made up from old stock found in cupboards and under benches, decades after they were made”*.

There are however some useful indicators, in addition to the matters described in the preceding paragraph – these being trade catalogues that were produced primarily by the major manufacturers and generally from the middle of the 19th Century, although such catalogues were rarely dated. The ones that I have found useful in respect to pruners are:

- “Explanation or Key to the Various Manufactories of Sheffield ...” part, published by Joseph Smith in 1816, and now commonly referred to as “Smith’s Key”. Available from www.knifemagazine.com, - then click on “The Vault” and select “Digital Library”. See page 7 following, and [here](#) for illustrations.
- “Mappin Brothers Illustrated Catalogue” circa 1860. Available from www.knifemagazine.com, - then click on “The Vault” and select “Digital Library”. See Appendix 1 [here](#) for relevant Illustrations.
- “Lockwood Brothers’ Colonists’ Guide to the selection of Cutlery” undated but assume circa 1860s – 1870s. Author’s Collection.
- “John Wragg & Son” catalog, assume dated circa 1880s. Author’s Collection
- “George Wostenholm & Son, Ltd. Washington Works, THE I*XL CUTLERY Sheffield England” undated but assumed to be c.1885 (or possibly later). Reproduction published by Beinfeld Publishing, Inc. North Hollywood, California, undated. Author’s collection. See Appendix 4 [here](#) for illustrations
- “Thomas Turner & Co.” catalogue (part) dated 1902. Internet download.
- “Joseph Rodgers & Sons Cutlers” assume dated circa 1912. Catalog reprint by Adrian Van Dyk, undated. Author’s collection. See Appendix 2 [here](#) for details
- “Lockwood Brothers Sheffield” assume dated circa 1912. Author’s Collection
- “Thomas Turner & Co. Cutlery Catalogue Sheffield England” dated 1925. Author’s collection.
- “House of Wostenholm I*XL” undated but assume c. 1962. Author’s collection. See Appendix 5 [here](#) for details

In addition to these trade catalogues, the April 2021 edition of Knife Magazine has an excellent lengthy article on “English Pruning Knives” by Neil Punchard and Jack Black, which has a focus on pruning knives’ role as a tool for gardeners and includes excellent photos.

Having regard to this broad range of indicators I propose the following generalized timeline as a basis for assigning a possible date or era to a specific knife based on common characteristics. It is important to acknowledge however that there was no specific start or finish to each era and therefore a blending of characteristics is common. The best that can be achieved is to identify an element or elements that appear common to knives of a particular era. So, from this point on – almost all is conjecture.

The broad categories for this timeline are:

6.1 The 'early years'

Being the 18th and early 19th centuries - that is, well-prior to the publication of "*Smith's Key*" in 1816 (see above and page 7 following) which was intended to promote to the US market the best of Sheffield's cutlery available at that time. I assume that pruning knives of this era will usually display a less refined appearance (even rustic) than those displayed in *Smith's Key*, although I have little hard evidence to underpin this assumption.



Photo 5. SOURCE: Author's collection

I collected the four knives in the two adjacent **photos 5 & 6** over a period of many years in the expectation that they were examples of the 'early days' of Sheffield pruning knives. Now that I am forced to be a little more scientific in the preparation of this Collector Note, such a

conclusion is difficult to sustain.



Photo 6. Source: Author's collection

Whilst it is perhaps possible that the first two knives are from Sheffield, it is more probable that the second two knives are of French origin. Appendix 3 (see [here](#)) to the Collector Note shows two pages from the book "*GARDEN TOOLS*"⁶ which appears to have a

focus on French gardening. The double page spread (pages 112 and 113) illustrates 32 pruning knives and the assumption (by me at least) is that they are French pruning knives. It is however possible that some of those knives illustrated (especially those with a metal bolster) may be of English origin. Interestingly, none of the four knives shown above has a swage⁷ which is also a characteristic of the pruners displayed in the *GARDEN TOOLS* book, whereas the inclusion of a swage appears to be almost universal in Sheffield pruners from the early 19th century based on the examples described in this Collector Note.

Specifically, the first two knives have scatted⁸ bone handles which was common on English pruners in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and the butt ends are both round and wide. The first knife has some evidence of a touch mark⁹ – but insufficient to identify precisely. The second knife has the remains of a blade stamp – part of which is quite clear, and which has some similarity to tang stamps on French pruners illustrated in "*GARDEN TOOLS*" book (see also page 211 of the book). The third knife has a clearly stamped touch mark on the blade but there is no indication as to country of origin. The fourth knife is clearly stamped "*ACIER FONDU*" which is French for CAST STEEL. My conclusion now is that it is doubtful that any of these four knives are of Sheffield/English origin.

6.2 The 'Smith's Key' era

Being knives that reflect the characteristics of knives displayed in Smith's Key. This is principally a narrow tang with (usually) squared kick – the actual knives in the illustration being a good example (see also **photos 28 – 30** [here](#)), and a blade stamping often limited to the makers name, or sometimes no stamping at all. *Smith's Key* was published in 1816 and thus reflects the style of knife that existed in the years immediately prior to that date. *Smith's Key* displays one plate of knives described as *Pruning Knives*, (see full page illustration in the following **Photo 7**) although there are other pages displaying *Pocket Knives* that have blades that would also be suitable for pruning.

Pruning knives from this era often have similar characteristics in terms of handle materials and blade shapes as pruners in the following eras up to the 1920s. It is probably the narrow tang and squared kick, together with limited company name stamping that are the distinguishing features. It was not uncommon for pruning knives from this era to lack any stamping of a maker's name or place name.



Photo 7 – SOURCE: "Smith's Key"

I have only one knife in my collection that has some similarity to a knife illustrated in *Smith's Key* – being knife "275 276" on the adjacent illustration (second from right).

Smith's Key includes examples of knives with scatted bone handles, but not on any of the "Pruning Knives".

The knife on the left-hand side of the adjacent illustration shows a "narrow tang with ... squared kick". The two knives on the right-hand side also shows the same but both are less "squared". The knife second-left in the illustration is most likely a fixed-blade pruner.



Photo 8. SOURCE: Author's collection

The adjacent illustration and photo show my knife together with knife "275 276" for comparison purposes. It is the narrow tang and small squared kick that are the specific points of similarity, however my knife also has common elements from following c.1820s – 1840s

era being "CAST STEEL"¹⁰ stamped on the blade together with remnants of a maker's name on the narrow tang – being: "... HILL" and "... SMITH" over 2 lines. It has a wide butt end and a flat butt cap. This highlights the difficulty in being too specific in terms of assigning a knife to a particular era. Also, pruners with a heavily curved handle such as illustrated above are shown in catalogues through to the early 20th century.

6.3 Circa late 1820s – late 1850s.

The familiar characteristics of pruning knives are well established by this time in terms of handle materials and blade shape, making it often difficult to distinguish between knives manufactured in the 100 years between c.1820 and c.1920.

Knives from this era generally include the following characteristics:

- Integral iron liners¹¹ and bolsters are the norm, and perhaps universal.
- Larger tangs to enable stamping of the manufacturers name and other details, and incorporation of the kick into the tang (rather than being “squared”) became common but certainly not universal, as for example knives with narrow squared kicks are included in the Joseph Rogers catalogue dated c.1912 – albeit uncommon.
- Recognition of the need to feature the manufacturers name, sometimes accompanied by the name of the “WORKS”, for example Sycamore works, Richmond works, Trinity works, Western works, etc. usually on the tang, but occasionally on the bade.
- Some inclusion of the word “Sheffield” as part of the tang stamp
- Some stamping of “CAST STEEL” on the blade face
- Some stamping of a company name or logo on the blade
- Scratred bone handles are less common.

The following is a selection of pruning knives that have characteristics that are common to the 1820s – 1850s era. All have Integral iron liners and bolsters and are between 4 ¼ and 4 ¾ inches closed



Photo 9. SOURCE: Author's collection

This knife has a tang stamp that is almost illegible although the last letters are “... R & Co.”. It has “CAST STEEL” stamped on the blade, and a split backspring¹². The scatted

scales probably reflect an earlier era. The cutting blade is down by approximately 50%.



Photo 10. SOURCE: Author's Collection

The only stamping on the adjacent knife is the manufacturer's name on the bade “GEO. HALL & SON” however I cannot find

any reference to such name in any of the standard references. The scales appear to be smooth stag but could be bone. The blade appears to be full and is sometimes described in trade catalogues as a ‘hooked pruner’ blade.



Photo 11. SOURCE: Author's collection

The only stamping on this knife is the “TRADE [barrel logo] MARK” on the blade face which is the mark of John Petty & Sons. Tweedale¹³ states that “John Thomas Petty was a pen

blade forger ... in 1841” and again in the 1860's and beyond.



Photo 12. SOURCE: Author's collection

The blade on this knife is stamped "THE ALPHA [logo] KNIFE" and the tang is stamped "HARRISON BROTHERS & HOWSON"

over 3 lines. The scales appear to be pressed stag horn. No place name is provided. Tweedale states that the partnership was formed in 1849.



Photo 13. SOURCE: Author's collection

The blade on this knife is stamped "WADE WINGFIELD & ROWBOTHAM" and the tang is stamped "82 TENTER St SHEFFIELD". Tweedale states that Wade had

retired from the partnership by 1851. It can be assumed that soon after that date knives were stamped with the name of the new company - which was WINGFIELD, ROWBOTHAM & Co. and suggests that the date for this knife is c.1850. However, contrary to this suggestion, UK collector & researcher Paul Stamp has advised (September 2020) that WADE WINGFIELD & ROWBOTHAM continued to use this stamp well after the retirement of Wade and at least until the company's demise (and sale to Thomas Turner) in 1898, and probably much later. Interestingly, the knife does not have the 'Harp and Crown' trademark stamping which, according to Tweedale, was not registered by Wingfield Rowbotham & Co until 1885, so the possibility remains "that the date of the knife is c.1850."



Photo 14. SOURCE: Author's collection

The knife blade face is stamped "CAST STEEL" and the tang is stamped "W. WEBSTER SYCAMORE WORKS". The pile side tang has the stag head trademark but no words.

The tang on the saw blade is stamped the same as the knife blade on both the mark side and pile side. Tweedale notes that in the 1860s the business was "restyled William Webster & Son", so it can be assumed that this knife dates from the c.1850s or early 1860's.

6.4 Circa early 1860s – late 1880s.

Knives from this era generally include the following characteristics:

- Both integral iron bolsters and liners and non-integral (i.e. separate) bolsters and liners common.
- Inclusion of "SHEFFIELD" becomes much more common, primarily used in association with the company's name on the tang.
- stamping of a company name or logo on the blade is more common

The following is a selection of pruning knives that have characteristics that are common to the 1860s – 1880s era.



Photo 15. SOURCE: Authors collection

This is an interesting knife in that it has characteristics common to some of the preceding eras. The blade is stamped "CAST STEEL"

and it has a prominent (part squared) kick. This knife does not have a wide butt even

though it looks that way when viewed from the side; however, when viewed from the top the widths of the scales are almost uniform. The tang is stamped “GEO. BUTLER TRINITY WORKS SHEFFIELD” – with the word Sheffield almost totally covered by the bolster. It has integral iron liners and bolsters, and butt plate. It does not have either of the Butler marks noted on knives in the later eras. Tweedale notes that Butler acquired the ‘ART’ mark in 1861, and also notes that in 1864 Butler moved to ‘TRINITY WORKS’. This suggests that this knife can be attributed to the early 1860s.



Photo 16. SOURCE: Author's collection

This knife has integral iron liners and bolsters, and butt plate. The tang is stamped “J. FENTON & SONS SHEFFIELD on the

mark side and the company’s mark of a Maltese Cross and double diamond on the pile side. Tweedale infers that this company name was most likely first used in 1857 following the dissolution of the previous operating partnership.



Photo 17. SOURCE: Authors collection

This knife has separate (non-integral) liners and bolsters. The company mark NON.XLL is heavily stamped on the blade face, and the tang

is stamped “NON.XLL JOSEPH ALLEN & SONS SHEFFIELD” over 4 lines. Tweedale notes that this mark was acquired by the company in 1883.

6.5 Circa late 1880s – early 1920s.

Knives from this era generally include the following characteristics:

- Separate (i.e. non-integral) liners and bolsters appear to be the norm
- Inclusion of “SHEFFIELD ENGLAND” is commonly used in association with the company’s name on the tang, although is certainly not universal.
- stamping of a company name and/or mark on the blade is common.

The following is a selection of pruning knives that have characteristics that are common to the 1890s – 1920s era.

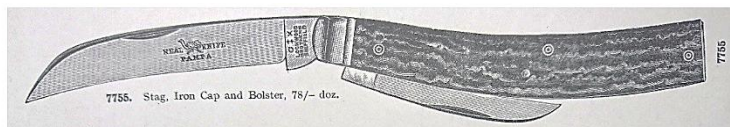


Photo 18. SOURCE: Authors collection

Main blade is stamped ‘REAL [running bird mark] KNIFE, with the word “PAMPA” below. The tang is stamped with the mark “C + X” and the words “LOCKWOOD BROTHERS SHEFFIELD”. The pen blade (broken) is stamped “LOCKWOOD

BROTHERS SHEFFIELD” on the tang. The knife has integral iron liners, bolsters and butt plate, and no ENGLAND stamp.

The top illustration above is copied from an undated “Lockwood Brothers Limited, Sheffield” Catalogue (page 125). It shows that the Lockwood pattern number is 7755 and is described as “Stag, Iron Cap and Bolster” beneath the heading “Pruning Knife”; an interesting (and perhaps unique) feature of this pattern is the use of “Birdseye” rivets for the 3 main pins. The subject knife is shown next to it for comparison and appears to be identical (see also [photo 83 here](#)). Dating the catalogue is difficult, however it’s certainly

after 1891 when Lockwood Brothers became a limited company and given that the catalogue includes a “Boy Scout Knife” (the Boy Scouts were established in UK in 1908) it can be assumed that it post-dates 1908. I suggest a date of circa 1912 for the catalogue as Tweedale states that “By the First World War the company was in decline and losing money” (page 260). This suggests that a post WW1 date is unlikely for a catalogue containing such an extensive range of knives razors and scissors (116 pages).



Photo 19. SOURCE: Author's collection

This knife has separate iron liners and bolsters, an iron butt plate, and has a length of 4 3/8 inches closed. The face of the blade is stamped with the Geo. Wostenholm mark I*XL and the tang is stamped “GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD ENGLAND over four lines. The inclusion of “England” suggests a date of late 1880s - early 1890s. The US Tariff Act that came into effect in 1891 required that all goods imported into the USA had to show the country of origin, however Wostenholm had been a prolific exporter to the US for many years prior, so it is speculated that their knives were marked “England” well prior to the date of enforcement, although such usage is not evident in the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue. This knife is illustrated in Wostenholm’s 1885 catalogue as pattern 172 (see Appendix 4 [here](#))



Photo 20. SOURCE: Author's collection

This knife is 4 1/4 inches closed, has separate liners and bolsters and an iron butt plate. The face of the blade is stamped “SUTTON & SONS” which is assumed to be the name of a retailer. The mark side tang is stamped with the key mark (which Butler acquired in c.1882) over “BUTLER & Co”, and the pile side tang has the ART mark (that Butler acquired in 1861) surrounded by the words “SHEFFIELD ENGLAND”. The blade profile has lost 30% – 40% due to sharpening.

6.6 Circa early 1920s – c.1960s.

Knives from this era generally include the following characteristics:

- Separate (i.e. non-integral) liners and bolsters appears to be universal, as is the absence of wide butts and flat butt caps.
- Inclusion of “SHEFFIELD ENGLAND” is commonly used in association with the company’s name on the tang, although the inclusion of “England” is certainly not universal.
- Stamping of a company name and/or mark on the blade is common.
- Tang stamps tend to have a modern (i.e. ‘sans serif’) typeface.
- The knives tend to be uniform in shape - particularly the flat-sided and narrow scales, as shown below and in the following photos:

The following is a selection of pruning knives that have characteristics that are common to the 1930s – 1960s era. All four of these knives have separate liners and bolsters.



Photo 21: SOURCE: Author's collection



Photo 22. SOURCE: Author's collection

The first knife has the blade face stamped with "W [company mark] R" followed by "HUMPHERYS & COMPANY" followed by "CUTLERS SHEFFIELD ENG"

over three lines. The mark side tang is stamped "HUMPHERYS RADIANT SHEFFIELD" over 3 lines, and the pile side tang is stamped "HAND FORGED". It is difficult to tell whether the scales are jigged bone or more probably second cut stag horn. According to Tweedale the company was still active until the 1960s.



Photo 23. SOURCE: Authors collection

The blade face of the second knife is stamped "REAL [company mark] KNIFE" and the tang is stamped "TAYLOR SHEFFIELD over two lines. There is no

ENGLAND stamp. According to Tweedale the name of TAYLOR had long been associated with the firm Needham, Veal & Tyzack who took over Taylor's business following his death in 1870, however this knife does not have the characteristics of a pruning knife of that time. It is likely this knife dates from the 1960s as Tweedale notes that "In 1965 the firm (i.e. Needham, Veal & Tyzack) was styled as Taylor's Eye Witness" which is consistent with the stamping on the knife.



Photo 24. SOURCE: Author's collection

The only stamping on the third knife is "NEEDHAM HILL STREET SHEFFIELD" in a modern 'san-serif' typeface on the mark side tang. Tweedale identifies four

entries that include the name Needham; however, he notes in regard to the entry for "William Needham" that "by 1939 Needham's had moved to Portland works in Hill Street". He also notes that the company was still active "... at the address in 1973". The scales are dyed and jigged bone intended to look like stag.



Photo 25. SOURCE: Author's collection

The only stamping on the fourth knife is "WILLIAM RODGERS SHEFFIELD" using a small 'san-serif' typeface on the mark side tang. The bolsters are a brass alloy,

and the scales are a pressed synthetic material. Tweedale notes that John Clarke company used the mark 'I CUT MY WAY' (formerly belonging to the William Rodgers) in the 20th

century, and further notes that “... the mark was acquired after the 1980s by the Eddington group”. This suggests a 20th century date for the knife.

7 SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS

There are some generalities that appear to be relevant to the dating of antique Sheffield pruning knives, as follows:

1. In the ‘early years’ and perhaps up to c.1820s bone scales (particularly scatted) and wide butts appear to be in common usage.
2. ‘Wide butts’ become increasingly less common from c.1840s. and with very few evident from c.1870s and beyond.
3. Integral iron liners and bolsters were the norm until at least the c.1880s
4. Separate (i.e. non-integral) liners and bolsters are evident in the c.1880s, are common from the 1890s, and probably universal from c.1900s.
5. The blade stamping CAST STEEL is used in the period c.1820s to c.1850s. The J. Mappin c.1860 catalogue shows just one example amongst the 27 pruning knives illustrated.
6. The lack of a place name is common to the c.1840s; the inclusion of SHEFFIELD is common from c.1850s – 1880s; the inclusion of SHEFFIELD ENGLAND in the norm from 1890, but not universal.

What the above analysis shows is that there are considerable variations and anomalies associated with the grouping of knives according to “era”, probably as a resulting of overlapping due to individual manufacturers implementing changes to their patterns, styles, and stampings at significantly different times. Perhaps this generalized timeline is really only successful in illustrating the overall trends in the evolution of pruning knives from “the early years” to the mid-20th century. A more informative outcome may be achieved by identifying the trends associated with individual companies rather than by the ‘whole of industry’ approach as attempted above. This is the focus of the next Section of this Collector Note.

8 EXAMPLES OF PRUNERS FROM PROMINENT COMPANIES

The following examples are manufacturing companies that were prominent in Sheffield from at least the 1820s, and all of whom produced a comprehensive range of pruning knives. The knives are grouped according to the stampings on their blades and particularly on their tangs with a primary focus on the mark-side tang stamp.

8.1 Thomas Turner & Co.



Photo 26. SOURCE: Author's collection

I have access to two Thomas Turner & Company catalogues – one hard copy from 1925 and one from 1902 available online, however I cannot match the Turner pruning knives in my collection to any of the illustrations in these catalogues. There are similar patterns in the catalogues to the four stag-handled knives shown in the photo opposite

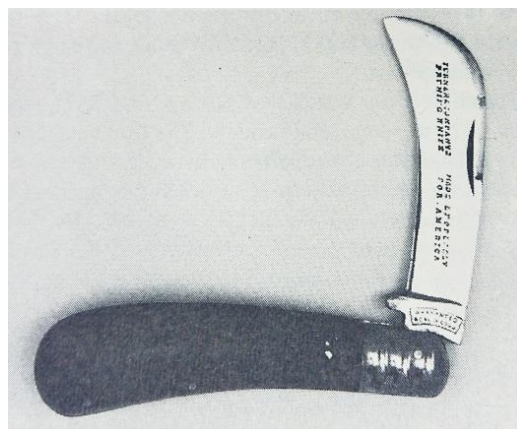
but either the bolsters or the stampings (or both) do not match. Certainly, the five knives in the photo with the dark wood scales (probably either ebony or cocco) are from a much earlier era (c. 1830s -1850s - see details following), although knives with the Barlow-style (i.e. extra-long) bolsters fluted with three wide grooves are illustrated in both the 1902 and 1925 Turner catalogues.

The following notes are an endeavour to provide a timeframe for the use of the stampings that are applied to Thomas Turner pruning knives, based on the knives in the author's collection. It is important to emphasise however that these stampings are only those that have been identified on pruning knives in my collection and consequently is probably not a comprehensive analysis of all Thomas Turner company marks, whether it is pruners or any of the other patterns manufactured by Thomas Turner & Company over many years.

There is one knife however which has excellent documentation (see **photo 27** following) – being the first knife in the following **GROUP 1** section following. This is the actual knife pictured on page 104 of "**Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values – 4th Edition**"¹⁴, and is described as follows "*This 1820s – 1830s Thomas Turner Sheffield, knife exemplifies the elaborate stampings possible after 1814. It is stamped TURNER & COMPANY'S PRUNING KNIFE, MADE EXPRESSLY FOR AMERICA, WARRANTED REALLY GOOD. Knife has integral iron bolster-liners and a narrow square kick.*" The provenance being that the knife passed from Bernard Levine to the late George Nisselle in Australia, and from George to me.



Photo 27. SOURCE: Author's collection



Levine also featured this knife in an article in Knife World magazine dated September 1986 titled "WARRANTED REALLY GOOD", and this article was itself featured in the book "**The Best of Knife World– Volume III**"¹⁵. In the article Levine describes the knife as "*It is a 4-inch round end pruner. ... it has dark reddish brown, wooden handles. The bolsters are fluted with three wide grooves*". The theme of the article was to explain how the Thomas Turner company went to extraordinary lengths to woo the American market that had been decimated by the War of 1812 – 1815, by the incorporation of blade and tang stamping designed specifically to appeal to American patriotism.

It is noted that these **GROUP 1** knives did not specify a location such as SHEFFIELD, but that was soon rectified as shown in the **GROUP 2** knives - which have many stylistic similarities with **GROUP 1** knives.

The following list of features that appear to be significant on pruner blade and tang stampings on Turner pruning knives are all sourced from Tweedale page 404:

- Thomas Turner and Co. were based in the *Suffolk Works* by at least 1837 (and perhaps earlier). It is possible that the **GROUP 1** knives were not manufactured at the *Suffolk Works*, however it was also common for knives manufactured in this and earlier eras not to include a location in their stamping.
- Turner's 'ENCORE' trademark was granted in 1805. The absence of a trademark stamp does not indicate an earlier date, as such absence was common in the early 19th century.
- "*By the 1850s the company's reputation was secure. In 1851 it won a prize medal at the Great Exhibition*". It is probable that company's success in building an image

of high quality in the 1820s and 1830s motivated the changing in stamping in the 1840s to one that gave prominence to the company name and location. See **GROUP 2** knives following.

GROUP 1: "TURNER & COMPANYS PRUNING KNIFE, MADE EXPRESSLY FOR AMERICA, WARRANTED REALLY GOOD"

Bernard Levine suggests that these knives date from **circa 1820s – 1830s**.



Blade stamp	Mark side tang stamp	Features/comment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No place names • Barlow-style bolsters • No company logo • Have a narrow square kick



Photo 28. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The knife has a length closed of 4 inches with integral bolsters and liners, and the scales appear to be ebony. The knife has a narrow-squared kick and a round and wide butt end. This is the same knife shown in **photo 27** above.



Photo 29. SOURCE: Author's collection.

As above, including stamping on the blade face but with significant blade wear.



Photo 30. SOURCE: Author's collection.

As above, including stamping on the blade face but with different bolsters and damage to top scales on both sides.

GROUP 2: "[logo]THOMAS TURNER & COMPYS PRUNING KNIFE, SUFFOLK WORKS SHEFFIELD"

The absence of the US patriotic symbolism on the blade and a greater emphasis on promoting the company name and location suggests that the company now has an established and recognizable profile that can be exploited. This suggests a date of **circa 1840s**.



Blade stamp	Mark side tang stamp	Features/comment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes location on the tang. • Has company logo together with company name on the blade, but <u>no</u> "ENCORE" mark. • Has a triangular shaped kick



Photo 31. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Same pattern as **GROUP 1** above including a length of 4 inches closed, but with totally different blade and tang stamping.



Photo 32. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The knife has a closed length of 4 ½ inches with integral bolsters and liners, and the scales appear to be

ebony. The knife has a round and wide butt end.

GROUP 3. "[logo] ENCORE THOS TURNER & CO SUFFOLK WORKS SHEFFIELD

This appears to be the standard stamping on pruners from circa 1850s to late 1880s


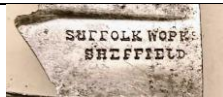
Blade stamp	Mark side tang stamp	Features/comment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company mark including ENCORE on blade stamping, together with company name. • Includes location on the tang.



Photo 33. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Length closed is 4 1/8 inches. Integral bolsters and liners, iron butt cap, and stag scales.



Photo 34. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Length closed is 3 5/8 inches. Integral bolsters and liners, brass butt cap, and stag scales.

GROUP 4. "[logo] ENCORE T. TURNER & CO CUTLERS TO HIS MAJESTY SHEFFIELD ENGLAND

The inclusion of ENGLAND normally suggests a date of post 1891. However, the reference to HIS MAJESTY suggests a date of **post-1901** when Edward VII became King following the death of Queen Victoria.

Blade stamp	Mark side & pile side tang stamps	Features/comment
	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large company trademark with ENCORE on the blade • Mark-side stamp includes reference to HIS MAJESTY • Location stamp on reverse (pile-side) tang includes ENGLAND



Photo 35. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Length closed is 4 inches. Integral bolsters and liners, brass butt cap, and stag scales.

GROUP 5. "THOMAS TURNER & Co SHEFFIELD ENCORE"

Despite the absence of ENGLAND on the tang, this stamping has been noted on Turner military knives dating from the **early 20th century**.

Blade stamp	Mark side tang stamps	Features/comment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No blade stamping No England Company trademark with ENCORE on tang at right angle to company name is in common usage in 20th century



Photo 36. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Length closed is 3 ½ inches. Separate liners and bolsters, round butt, probably jugged and dyed bone scales but could be staghorn.

8.2 George Wostenholm I*XL

The Wostenholm 1885 trade catalogue¹⁶ has illustrations of fourteen "Pruning Knives" and a further eight "Budding Knives" spread over three pages, with variations available in some examples- primarily in terms of handle length and material. [Appendix 4 \(here\)](#) of this Collector Note shows the two pages of pruning knives. It is not uncommon for a knife to be in production for many years; two patterns illustrated in Wostenholm's 1885 catalogue are also featured in their 1962 catalogue¹⁷ (see [Appendix 5 here](#)) as detailed in the following **Group 7** section - albeit with different tang stamping.

The following two photos show the greater part of the author's George Wostenholm I*XL collection upon which the following notes are based. As with most knife collections, a major difficulty lies in making sense of the seemingly myriad variety of blade and tang stamping. Certainly, George Wostenholm I*XL pruning knives is no exception.



Photo 37. Single and multiblade pruners with stag scales. SOURCE: formerly Author's collection, now five of the knives are in the Ernie Franken collection



Photo 38. Single blade pruners with ebony, cocobolo, and metal scales. SOURCE: Author's collection.

[Appendix 6 \(here\)](#) is a copy of part of a post from the now defunct "BritishBlades" website which I found most useful as a guide to the range of marks used by Wostenholm. It was posted by "Wellington" who was a highly regarded expert on Sheffield knives and a frequent contributor to the website.

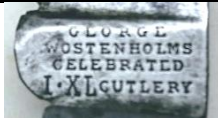
The following notes are an endeavour to provide a time frame for the use of the stampings that are applied to Wostenholm pruning knives, based on the knives in the author's collection together with an examination of the pruning knives primarily illustrated in the Wostenholm catalogue dated 1885. The time frame used is: '**Group 1**' (oldest c.1840s – 1850s) to '**Group 7**' (newest c.1945 – 1970s). It is important to emphasise however that these stampings are only those that have been identified on pruning knives primarily from those two sources, and consequently is not a comprehensive analysis of all Wostenholm I*XL company marks.

There are six features that appear to be significant in pruner blade and tang stampings on Wostenholm pruning knives:

- Wostenholm acquired the "I*XL" trademark in 1826. Any knife bearing the I*XL trademark must be assumed to have been made after 1826.
- The use of the word "CELEBRATED". This word has a strong association with Wostenholm knives that were included in the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition. However, there is also a small number of knives illustrated in the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue that include "CELEBRATED" in their tang stamping.
- The inclusion of the letter "S" at the end of the Wostenholm name so that it reads "WOSTENHOLMS". None of the pruners illustrated in the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue appear to have this characteristic. It appears to be in use in circa.1840s to circa late 1870s.
- The inclusion or absence of a place name. The variations are:
 1. **no place name** – generally common up to the c. 1870s,
 2. **Sheffield** - in common usage from the 1870s - 1880s and possibly some years earlier,
 3. **Sheffield England** - in common usage from 1890 and possibly some years earlier.
- The USA McKinlay Tariff Act of 1890 required that all goods imported into the US had to be marked with their country of origin. As Wostenholm was a major exporter of cutlery to the US the inclusion of ENGLAND on most knives of their knives was the norm by at least the start of the 1890s and probably much earlier.
- All of the Wostenholm pruners in this analysis that have a place name included in their mark (i.e. either SHEFFIELD or SHEFFIELD ENGLAND) also have separate liners and bolsters; conversely, the knives that lack a place name all have integral liners and bolsters. This suggests that for Wostenholm knives the change from integral to non-integral liners and bolsters occurred at the end of the 1870s or very early 1880s. There will of-course be exceptions: for example the Wostenholm pruning kit detailed on the following page [45 \(here\)](#) has a handle with Integral liners and bolsters, and it is possible that this kit dates from the early 20th century.

On the currently available evidence it appears that there are seven mark-side tang stamp styles that have been applied to pruners, with additional variations to the blade stamp and the pile side tang. Examples following are grouped according to style applied to the mark-side tang, as follows:

Group 1: "GEORGE WOSTENHOLMS CELEBRATED I*XL CUTLERY"			
It appears that this mark was prominent c.1840s – c.1860s . This was a high point in Wostenholm's manufacturing with the production of intricate high-quality knives that were successfully displayed in the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition.			
Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment



- WOSTENHOLMS (i.e. with an S)
- “CELEBRATED” used in promotion of knives for the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition
- No place name
- No blade stamping
- Tang stamp not evident in the 1885 catalogue.



Photo 39. SOURCE: Ernie Franken collection

This pattern is not shown in 1885 catalogue. It has three backsprings and a folding ivory grafting spud, and at 4 inches closed is smaller than the other pruning knives in this **Group 1**. It has a round (but not wide) butt end and integral liners and bolsters.



Photo 40. SOURCE: Author's collection

This pattern is not shown in the 1885 catalogue. It is a large and heavy knife with a length of 4.5 inches closed. It has a round (but not wide) butt end and integral liners and bolsters.



Photo 41. SOURCE: Ernie Franken collection

The top illustration is taken from the 1885 Wostenholm catalogue. The knife in the photo following has the same style of bolster and it is the only example of this style of bolster in the ‘Pruning Knife’ section of the 1885 catalogue. The subject knife (**photo 41**) has a wide-

butt-end however it is unclear if the knife from the catalogue is the same. The main difference between the two is that the saw blade in the catalogue is longer than the subject knife. Both knives are 4 ½ inches closed, and the subject knife has integral liners and bolsters.



Photo 42. SOURCE: Ernie Franken collection

This pattern is not shown in 1885 catalogue. It is however similar in style to the knife shown above – except for the saw bade, in that the handle is 4 ½ inches closed and has a

wide butt-end and has integral liners and bolsters. No blade face stamp is evident, however.

This pattern is not shown in 1885 catalogue, however there is some similarity to pattern



Photo 43: SOURCE: Author's collection.

173 in handle profile and to pattern 163 in blade profile – both of which are featured in the 1885 catalogue. This pattern also has a different bolster style to 173 & 163. The length is 4 ¼ inches closed

and has integral liners and bolsters. No blade stamp evident.

Group 2: "GEORGE WOSTENHOLMS I*XL CUTLERY"

It is assumed that this mark was **in use c.1860s – 1870s** primarily due to the absence of a place name.


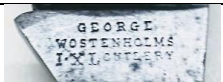
Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WOSTENHOLMS (i.e. with an S) • Tang stamp not evident in the 1885 catalog • No place name.





Photo 44. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This pattern is not shown in the 1885 catalogue. Its length closed is 4 ¾ inches, and integral liners and bolsters. The handle size is the same as pattern 1535 – which is also the

largest pruner in the 1885 catalogue. The catalogue also shows a variation available for pattern 1535 – being 1536 which has "cocoa" wood handles which is the same as the subject knife. There are other differences being the subject knife has a round butt, a different bolster style, and a blade profile that is assumed to be more like pattern 163 in the 1885 catalog. This is a large pruner, which together with the integral liners and bolsters suggests the dating of 1860s – 1870s.

Group 3: "I*XL GEORGE WOSTENHOLM CELEBRATED"

This mark is difficult to date as it features the company name in the format that appears to be universal from at least the time of 1885 catalogue (i.e. WOSTENHOLM) and almost certainly before, but also features the word CELEBRATED which was common in marks from an earlier era. It is suggested that this mark was **in use c.1860s – 1870s** primarily due to the absence of a place name.

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images copied from 1885 catalog - no knife example available. • "CELEBRATED" used in promotion of knives for the 1851 Exhibition • No place name.

This image is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue but appears to be the only knife displayed in the catalogue




Photo 45. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalog.

that has this mark. This suggests that the mark may have been in common use well prior to the publication of the catalogue in 1885. It is

also interesting in that it has a standard hawkbill blade together with a non-standard pen blade. In all other two-bladed pruners that I have seen, the second blade is a sawblade.

Group 4: "GEORGE WOSTENHOLM I*XL CUTLERY"

It is suggested that this mark was **in use c.1860s – 1870s** primarily due to the absence of a place name.

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images copied from 1885 catalog - no knife example available. • No place name.

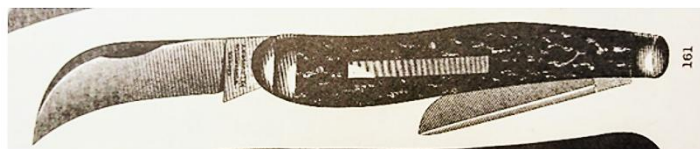




Photo 46. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalog.

This image is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue but appears to be only one of a few knives displayed in the catalogue

that has this mark. This suggests that the mark may have been in common use well prior to the publication of the catalogue in 1885. Also, as is detailed in **Group 7** following, this knife remained in the Wostenholm inventory through to the 1960s. Interestingly, Joseph Rodgers includes an identical knife in their c.1912 catalogue (P. 1834 on page 190) which suggests that this was probably a "town pattern" – that is, a pattern that was produced by most of the major Sheffield manufacturers. It is usually referred to as "the Amateur Gardener's knife".

Group 5: "GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD"

This is the common mark on pruning knives in the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue. This suggests that this mark **was in common usage from the 1870s to 1880s** and possibly some years earlier. It is worth noting that there is no apparent inclusion of ENGLAND in any of the various marks evident in the 1885 catalogue.

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First use of SHEFFIELD • No I*XL on the tang

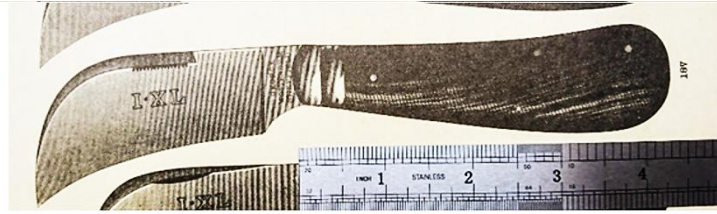


Photo 47. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalogue.

integral) liners and bolsters.

This illustration is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue and is pattern 187 with cocoa wood scales. The length of these knives closed is 4 ¼ inches and has separate (i.e. non-



Photo 48. SOURCE: Author's collection

The catalogue also shows a variation available – being pattern 187 S which has “Stag” scales – see adjacent photo. This knife has separate liners and bolsters.



Photo 49. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalogue

This illustration is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue and is pattern 165 with “Metal” handles, and measures 3 ¾ inches closed.



Photo 50. SOURCE: Author's collection

the illustration (including the tang stamp) measures 4 ¼ inches closed.

The catalogue also shows a variation available – being pattern 167 which has a closed length of 4 inches. Interestingly, the knife in the adjacent photo which appears to be identical to

Group 6: “GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD ENGLAND”

Because all of the knives in this group are illustrated in the 1885 catalogue (albeit with a different mark), it is assumed that this mark was **in use by at least by 1891 to comply with US import tariff requirements and continued well into the 20th century.**

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment



- First use of SHEFFIELD ENGLAND
- No I*XL on tang

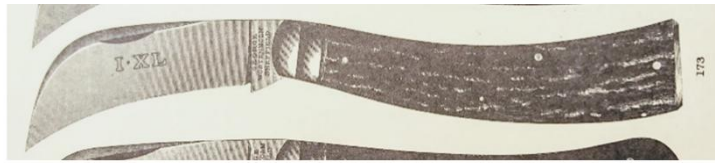


Photo 51. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalogue

This illustration is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue (see [here](#)) and is pattern 173 with “Stag” handles, and measures 4 3/8 inches

closed. The catalogue also shows three variations available – being: “Ebony – 172, Cocoa – 171, Broader – 188”.



Photo: 52. SOURCE: Author’s collection.

This knife is identical with the above illustration but with Ebony scales and is therefore pattern 172. This knife has separate liners and bolsters.

This illustration is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue and is pattern 168 with cocoa wood scales. The

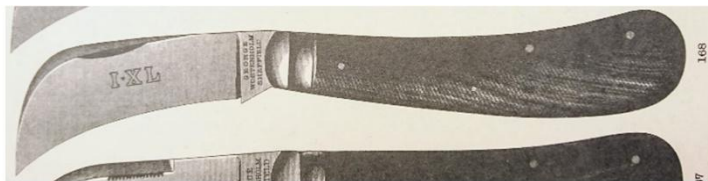


Photo 53. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalogue

length of this knife closed is 4.25 inches.

catalogue also shows two variations available – being “Ebony” scales which is pattern 169 and “Stag” scales which is 170. The



Photo 54. SOURCE: Author’s collection.

The knife in the adjacent photo is identical to that illustrated above (except for the tang stamp) and has ebony scales. Therefore, it is pattern 169. This knife has separate liners and bolsters.



Photo 55. SOURCE: Owner’s collection.

The knife in this photo is identical (apart from the tang stamp) to pattern 187 in the 1885 catalogue – as shown in in GROUP 5 above, including the cocoa scales. However, the blade is broader by approximately 1/8 inch and therefore is probably a variation that post-dates the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue.

The knife in this photo is identical (apart from the tang stamp) to pattern 187 in the 1885 catalogue – as shown in in GROUP 5 above, including the cocoa scales.



Photo 56. SOURCE: Author’s collection.

The knife in this photo is identical (apart from the tang stamp) to pattern 187 in the 1885 catalogue – as shown in in GROUP 5 above, including the cocoa scales.

This knife has separate liners and bolsters.



Photo 57. SOURCE: Author's collection.

measures 4 ¼ inches closed.

The knife in this photo is identical (apart from the tang stamp) to pattern 165 in the 1885 catalogue – as shown in **GROUP 5** above, including the metal scales. The knife



Photo 58. SOURCE: Wostenholm 1885 catalogue.

162 S which has “Stag”. The length of these knives closed is 3 ¾ inches.

This illustration is copied from the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue and is pattern 162 with cocoa wood scales. The catalogue also shows a variation available – being



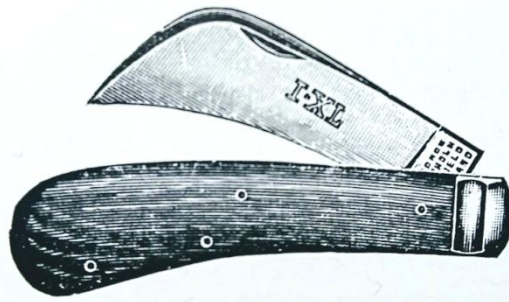
Photo 59. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The knife in the adjacent photo is identical to the illustration above – apart from blade wear and is therefore pattern 162. This knife has separate liners and bolsters.

Group 7: “I*XL GEORGE WOSTENHOLM SHEFFIELD ENGLAND”

This mark appears to be in common usage after 1945, however there are indications that it may have been in use in the **early 20th century**. All the knives in this Group are featured in the Wostenholm c.1961 catalogue. All of the knives in this Group have separate liners and bolsters.

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Features/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are the stamps for the following knife 1.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the stamping as shown in the illustration of Knife 2
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the actual stamping on the blade and tang of knives 2, 3 and 4 as shown in the photos.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the stamping on the tangs of Knife 5



168 Pruning Knife. Coco wood handle.
Length (closed) 4¼".

Photo 60. SOURCE: "Wostenholm I*XL Cutlery" catalogue c.1961

therefore been included in the Wostenholm inventory since at least 1885.



7973 Pruning Knife. Coco wood handle, with strong brass lining and rivet, designed for heavy use, with smooth and comfortable grip. Length (closed) 4".

Photo 61. SOURCE: Wostenholm I*XL Cutlery" catalogue c. 1961.



Photo 62. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Knife 1: This illustration is snipped from the Wostenholm 1961 catalogue (see [here](#)), and the knife is identical to pattern 168 in the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue, including the cocoa wood scales – see **Group 6** above, except for the tang stamp. This pattern 168 knife has

Knife 2: This illustration of pattern 7973 is clipped from the Wostenholm 1961 catalogue. It is also illustrated in an earlier Wostenholm catalogue tentatively dated c.1930s where it is described as "No. 7973 The I*XL Flat-sided Pruning Knife" with further text that is not legible. It is part of a full-page advertisement headed "Something new in Gardening Knives – The new I*XL blade with the flat side".

Knife 2: This is the knife described above as pattern 7973 above. Note that there is no evidence that the blade was stamped WOSTENHOLM as shown in the illustration. This knife does have a flat-side as described in the above text from the c.1930s catalogue.



7972 Pruning Knife. As 7973 but with a strong nickel silver bolster.

Photo 63. SOURCE: "Wostenholm I*XL Cutlery" catalogue c.1961

Knife 3: This illustration of pattern 7972 is clipped from the Wostenholm 1961 catalogue



Photo 64. SOURCE: Author's collection.

the c.1930s Wostenholm catalogue for pattern 7973.



Photo 65. SOURCE: "Wostenholm I*XL Cutlery" catalogue c. 1961

advertisement headed "*Something new in Gardening Knives – The new I*XL blade with the flat side*".



Photo 66. SOURCE: Author's collection.

rather than "imitation stag" (i.e. jigged and dyed bone) as described in the 1961 catalogue. The knife appears identical to pattern 161 in the Wostenholm 1885 catalogue, including the stag scales – see **Group 4** above, except for the tang stamp. This pattern 161 knife has therefore been included in the Wostenholm inventory since at least 1885. Because of these differences, it is probable that this knife dates from the early 20th century – primarily because of the tang stamp

Knife 5: This knife does not appear in any of the available catalogues. It is however a well-



Photo 67. SOURCE: Author's collection.

made knife, with wood scales (possibly cocoa) and therefore it is assumed that it dates from the early 20th century – primarily because of the tang stamps. The length of the knife closed is 3 3/16 inches.

Knife 3: This is the knife described above as pattern 7972. Note that there is no evidence that the blade was stamped WOSTENHOLM as shown in the illustration. This knife does have a flat-side as described in the above text from

Knife 4: This illustration of pattern 17051 is snipped from the Wostenholm 1961 catalogue. It is also illustrated in an earlier Wostenholm catalogue tentatively dated c.1930s where it is described as "*No. 817051 The Ideal Knife for Amateur Gardeners*" with further text that is not legible. It is part of a full-page

Knife 4: This is the knife described above as pattern 17051 in the 1961 catalogue and as 817051 in the c.1930s catalogue. Note that there is no evidence that the blade was stamped WOSTENHOLM as shown in the illustration. Another difference is that the scales appear to be real stag



Photo 68. SOURCE: Author's collection

Full details of this pruning kit are provided in the final section of this Collector Note under the heading "Pruning Knife Kits" (see page 45 [here](#)). The handle has a length of 4 ¾ inches and all three of the knife blades are stamped on the mark-side tang:

GEORGE
WOSTENHOLMS
CELEBRATED
I*XL CUTLERY

This stamping and the inclusion of non-integral bolsters and liners suggests that it be included in **Group 1** above, dating c.1840s – 1860s, however the patent for the blade-locking mechanism was registered in 1899 which suggests an alternative possible date for the kit of early 20th century.

8.3 JOSEPH RODGERS & SONS



Photo 69. SOURCE: Author's collection.

I have a copy of the "Joseph Rodgers & Sons Limited" catalogue¹⁸ which appears to date from c. 1912. The catalogue has two double-page spreads of "pruning knives, coffee pruners, budding and grafting knives" (see [Appendix 2 here](#)), however apart from the coffee pruner (second from the top in the photo opposite) I cannot precisely match any of the other three knives to the pruners illustrated in the catalogue,

and my assumption is that they each date from a much earlier era. I note also that two pruning knives in the catalogue have the mark-side tang stamped "RODGERS CUTLERS TO HER MAJESTY" which is a reference to Queen Victoria who died in 1901 which is at least 11 years prior to the publication of the catalogue in c.1912. This suggests that such knives had been in the Joseph Rodgers inventory since the late 19th century (see knife illustrated in Group 3 following).

On this small sample of Joseph Rodgers pruning knives, the only difference in the stamping is the inclusion of either "SHEFFIELD" or "SHEFFIELD ENGLAND" on the mark-side tang. All four of the knives described below have integral liners and bolsters.

Group 1: "JOSEPH ROGERS & SONS No 6 NORFOLK St SHEFFIELD"

It is probable that this stamping on the mark side tang was in use c.1850s to late 1880s

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place name SHEFFIELD stamped on mark side tang.



Photo 70. SOURCE: Author's collection.

squared kick.

Length closed is 3 ¾ inches closed, with round butt. Scales appear to be stag horn. Integral liners and bolsters with a pronounced

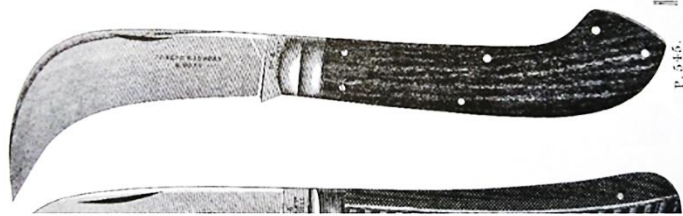


Photo 71. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The following illustration is copied from the circa 1912 Joseph Rodgers catalogue (pattern number P. 545.) where it is described as a "Coffee Pruner". It is probable that this pattern was part of the Joseph Rodgers inventory from well prior to c.1912. An identical pattern knife made by W & S Butcher has been noted with a suggested date of c.1819 – 1830s. The only difference being that the Butcher knife lacked a kick of any sort.



Photo 72. SOURCE: Author's Collection.

This knife is identical to the pattern P.545 shown in the preceding illustration. Its length is 5 ¼ inches closed, it has integral liners and bolsters, a steel butt cap and gnarly stag scales. The blade appears almost full, apart from slight wear at the tip. The knife was sourced from Tasmania Australia which historically was well-known for its apple orchards, but I am not aware that there was any coffee cultivation.

Group 2: "JOSEPH ROGERS & SONS No 6 NORFOLK St SHEFFIELD ENGLAND"

It is probable that this stamping on the mark side tang was in use from early 1890s through to the early decades of the 20th century.

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENGLAND added to the address on the mark side tang.



Photo 73. SOURCE: Author's collection.

20%.

Length is 4 ¾ inches closed, with round butt. Scales appear to be stag. Integral liners and bolsters. Blade profile is probably down by



Photo 74. SOURCE: Author's collection.

close to original with only minor loss due to sharpening.

Length closed in 4 ¼ inches closed, with round butt. Scales appear to be stag. Integral liners and bolsters. Blade profile is probably

Group 3: "JOSEPH ROGERS & SONS RODGERS CUTLERS TO HER MAJESTY

Given the mark side tang stamp reference to HER MAJESTY, it is assumed that the knife (P.373) was made **late 19th century** and was still in Rodgers inventory at c.1912

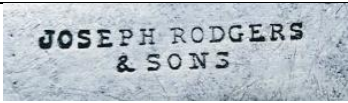
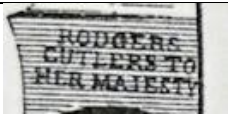
Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
		Not Known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENGLAND added to the address on the mark side tang. Image copied from 1885 catalog - no knife example available



Photo 75. SOURCE: Joseph Rodgers catalogue c.1912

Illustration copied from 'Joseph Rodgers & Sons Limited catalogue' (page 42) dated c.1912 (see [here](#)).

8.4 SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL.



Photo 76. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Tweedale (pages 364 – 366) explains that Saynor Cooke & Ridal and W. Saynor were two separate companies, however I have always (obviously incorrectly) assumed them as one.

In the adjacent photo the eleven knives shown horizontally are all Saynor Cooke & Ridal, and the two shown vertically are W. Saynor - see page 32 ([here](#)) for W. Saynor knife details.

Tweedale also provides details regarding the evolution of the Saynor Cooke & Ridal name that can be summarised as follows:

- Samuel Saynor & Son – by 1845
- Saynor & Cooke – by 1852
- Saynor Cook & Ridal – after 1872

Given that all eleven knives shown horizontal in the adjacent photo are stamped Saynor Cooke & Ridal, they must

all have been manufactured after 1872.

On the basis of these eleven examples, there are at least seven different stamping styles that apply to the period 1872 – to mid-20th century.

Group 1: "SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL OBTAIN"

The absence of a place name (such as "Sheffield") usually suggests a date of 1850s – 1870s however this does not apply here. Similarly, the absence of "England" usually suggests a date of prior to 1891, however this date is only applicable to knives for export to USA – not for sales within UK and to the colonies. Therefore, it is assumed that the timeframe is: **early 1870s to early 20th century**

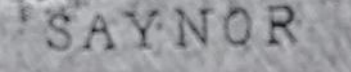
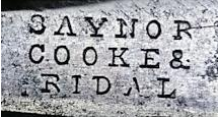

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamped OBTAIN on pile side tang • No place name



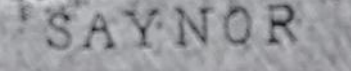


Photo 77. SOURCE: Author's collection.

These two knives appear to be identical, apart from shackle on the top knife which is assumed to be a non-factory modification. Both knives have round butt ends, are 4 ½ inches closed with stag scales and integral liners and bolsters. Both knives have extensive blade

wear with the bottom knife down by over 50%. The bottom knife has extensive damage to the blade due to poor sharpening. Also, this knife has no discernible stamping of SAYNOR on the blade and it is assumed that it has been obliterated by the poor sharpening. The SAYNOR stamp is discernible on the blade of the top knife.

Group 2: "SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL OBTAIN WARRENTED"

As for Group 1 knives, it is assumed that the timeframe is: **early 1870s to early 20th century**

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamped OBTAIN WARRANTED on pile side tang • No place name

The following three knives have been in my pruner collection for some years; however it is only now that I realise that their blades are not worn hawkbill blades but rather are near full sheepfoot blades, and therefore are perhaps better described as large English Jack knives (or a 'farmers jack'?). The criteria for a sheepfoot blade are that the cutting edge is flat, and the back edge and cutting edge are parallel for most of their length, and this is certainly the case with the top two knives but perhaps less so for the third knife.



Photo 78. SOURCE: Author's collection.

scales are stag.

The length of this knife is 5 inches closed, it has integral liners and bolsters, and a steel flat butt end. The blade is a sheepfoot and the



Photo 79. SOURCE: Author's collection.

scales are stag.

The length of this knife is 4 ½ inches closed, it has integral liners and bolsters, and a round butt end. The blade is probably a sheepfoot and the



Photo 80. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The length of this knife is 4 inches closed, it has integral liners and bolsters, and a round butt end. The blade appears to be a sheepfoot however it could also

be a worn hawkbill assuming the blade had lost 20% to 30% of its profile due to sharpening. The scales are stag.

Group 3: SAYNOR - W. ADAMSON - OBTAIN WARRANTED

As for Group 1 knives, it is assumed that the timeframe is: **early 1870s to early 20th century**. It is possible however that the absence of the "Saynor Cooke & Ridal" name could indicate a date prior to 1872.

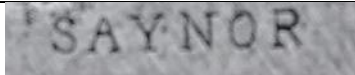


Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stamped OBTAIN WARRANTED on pile side tang The knife lacks the common stamping SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL It is possible that W. ADAMSON was a retailer. No place name.



Photo 81. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The length of this knife is 4 ½ inches closed, it has integral liners and bolsters, and a steel flat butt end. The blade is a hawkbill and the scales are stag.

Group 4: "SAYNOR - DICKSONS & Co – SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL"

As for Group 1 knives, it is assumed that the timeframe is: **early 1870s to early 20th century**

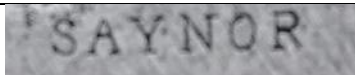
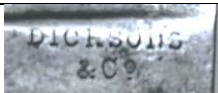
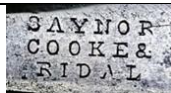
Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not stamped OBTAIN nor OBTAIN WARRANTED No place name. The stamping SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL on the pile side tang is unusual. It is possible that DICKSONS & Co. was a retailer.



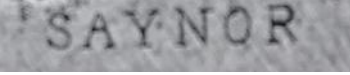


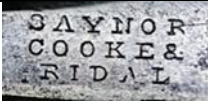

Photo 82. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The length of this knife is 4 ½ inches closed, it has integrated liners and bolsters, and a steel flat butt end. The blade is a

hawkbill and the scales are stag. The blade has lost 20% to 30% of its profile due to sharpening.

Group 5: "SAYNOR – FARQUHAR – OBTAIN WARRANTED"

The inclusion of the place name ENGLAND suggests that it was manufactured after 1891 when the US Tariff Act was being enforced, and an identical pattern is shown in the Lockwood Bros. catalogue which is dated c.1912. This suggests a **date range of c.1891 to early 20th century.**

Blade 1 - face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamped OBTAIN WARRANTED on pile side tang • Place name ENGLAND. • It is possible that FARQUHAR was a retailer
Blade 2 - face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	
			

This knife has a length of 4 inches and is commonly referred to as Peach Pruners because of its relatively small size (when compared to conventional pruners). It has "birds-eye" pins, an iron butt cap, integral iron liners and bolsters, and stag scales. This is the same



Photo 83. SOURCE: Author's collection.

knife shown in photo 18 [here](#).

Group 6: "SAYNOR COOKE & RIDAL - OBTAIN SHEFFIELD ENGLAND"

The probable date range is **c.1891 to early 20th century**

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tang stamped OBTAIN • Has place name SHEFFIELD ENGLAND



Photo 84. SOURCE: Author's collection.

to 30% of its profile due to sharpening.

The scales are probably stag but could be jigged and dyed bone.

The length of this knife is 4 inches closed, it has separate liners and bolsters, and a steel flat butt end. The blade is a hawkbill and has lost 20%



Photo 85. SOURCE: Author's Collection.

This knife has a length of 3 ¾ inches and is commonly referred to as a Peach Pruners because of its relatively small size (when compared to conventional pruners). It has a round butt end, separate iron liners and bolsters, and probably cocoa scales.

This knife has a length of 3 ¾ inches and is commonly referred to as a Peach Pruners because of its relatively small size (when compared to conventional pruners). It has a round butt end, separate iron liners and bolsters, and probably cocoa scales.

Group 7: "SAYNOR SHEFFIELD ENGLAND"

The probable date range is **early to mid-20th century**

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has place name SHEFFIELD ENGLAND in very small type.



Photo 86. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Apart from the tang stamp this knife appears identical to the knife immediately above in Group 6. That is: This knife has a length of 3 ¾ inches and is commonly referred to as a Peach Pruners because of its relatively small size (when compared to conventional pruners). It has a round butt end, separate iron liners and bolsters, and probably cocoa scales.

Apart from the tang stamp this knife appears identical to the knife immediately above in Group 6. That is: This knife has a length of 3 ¾ inches and is commonly referred to as a Peach Pruners because of its relatively small size (when compared to conventional pruners). It has a round butt end, separate iron liners and bolsters, and probably cocoa scales.

8.5 W. SAYNOR LTD

Tweeddale (page 366) notes that the firm "was probably established in 1865", but that "By 1910 the firm had become a limited company". The firm appears to have still been in business in the mid-20th century. **DEPEND** was one of their trademarks.

Group: 1 "W. SAYNOR Ltd SHEFFIELD ENGLAND – DEPEND"

Given that the mark side tang is stamped W. SAYNOR Ltd. it can be assumed these knives can be dated as **post-1910**.

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company name on mark side tang is W. SAYNOR Ltd Has place name SHEFFIELD ENGLAND Has DEPEND trademark.



Photo 87. SOURCE: Author's collection.

These knives appear to be identical although the lower knife has a significantly more blade loss and also has a brass butt end plate. The knives are 4 1/8 inches closed, with stag scales, separate liners and bolsters, and the top knife has an iron

butt end plate.

8.6 CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON & CO.



Photo 88. SOURCE: Author's collection.

It is difficult to draw any definite conclusions regarding approximate dates of manufacture of Christopher Johnson pruning knives by reference to their stampings, based on my limited sample of eight knives.

There is a high degree of uniformity in the stamping of the mark side tangs of the top seven knives, being the inclusion – or not, of the place name SHEFFIELD. The bottom knife has quite different stampings.

Tweeddale (pages 240 – 242) provides some details that may assist in the dating of these knives, as follows:

- Christopher Johnson “was based in Western works in Howard Street” in 1854.

- In 1868 the company name was changed to CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON & CO.
- By 1939 the company had become a limited company.

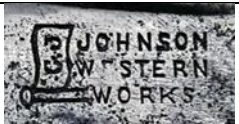
Group 1: [logo] JOHNSON WESTERN WORKS			
Given the absence of a place name, and the known date of 1854 when the company was operating in the Western Works, a date range of late 1850s – 1860s is proposed.			
Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No place name • No blade stamp



Photo 89. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This is a large knife having a closed length of 5 inches, has integral iron liners and bolsters and a round butt end. There is no evidence of a blade stamp. It is probable

that the blade was a hawkbill but is now down by 40 - 50%.



Photo 90. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This is an unusual knife in that the 3 pins securing the wood scales to the liners are copper. It has a length of 4 ¾ inches closed, integral Barlow style bolsters and liners and a flat brass butt end. The blade was most likely a hawkbill but could have been a sheepfoot as is now down by 40% - 50% due to sharpening.

Group 2: FLAG KNIFE [logo] JOHNSON WESTERN WORKS SHEFFIELD

Appears to be in common usage from the **1870s - 1880s** and possibly some years earlier,

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a place name Blade stamp is: FLAG [logo] KNIFE



Photo 91. SOURCE: Author's collection.

Knife has a length of 4 5/8 inches closed, gnarly stag scales, and integral liners and bolsters. The blade appears to be near full. This is the same knife shown previously in Photo 2 [here](#).



Photo 92. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The blade of this knife would originally have had a half-circle end with a hawkbill style tip – it would have been designed for a particular horticultural purpose, but I am unable to find any specific reference to it, although coffee pruner is certainly a possibility. It has a length of 4 ¾ inches closed, integral bolsters and liners and a flat brass butt end.

Group 3: REAL KNIFE [logo] JOHNSON WESTERN WORKS SHEFFIELD

It is speculated that at some point in the 1870s – 1880s Johnson changed from integral liners and bolsters to separate liners and bolsters, and possibly at the same time changed the blade stamp from FLAG KNIFE to REAL KNIFE. Given that Tweedale notes that Johnson had a significant export market to the English colonies that did not require country of origin to be stated, it is probable that this mark was in use from **c.1880s to at least the 1920s**.



Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a place name Blade stamp is: REAL [logo] KNIFE



Photo 93. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The top two knives appear to be identical, are 4 inches in length closed, have separate liners and bolsters, and a round butt end. The scales appear to be pressed stag or similar composite material. The blades probably were hawkbill but have been worn down by 30% to 40%. The bottom knife in the group is a similar pattern with a closed length of 3 ½ inches. The scales appear to be checkered pressed stag or similar composite material. The bottom knife in photo 93 has the blade clearly stamped REAL [logo] KNIFE, the top knife has a similar but barely discernible blade stamping, and the middle knife has no discernible blade stamp.

The top two knives appear to be identical, are 4 inches in length closed, have separate liners and bolsters, and a round butt end. The scales appear to be pressed stag or similar composite material. The blades probably were hawkbill but have been worn



Photo 94. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This knife is included here because it has the same mark side tang stamp as the three knives above. The blade has been sharpened to such an extent that it is now impossible to determine its original profile with any certainty. Given that the nail nick is slightly angled it is possible that it was a “hooked pruner” blade similar to the knife in the following photo 95. Also, given that the text on the handle insert is “MCLEOD’S SHEEP DIP” it is possible that this knife was not used for horticultural purposes, but rather for docking lambs.

This knife is included here because it has the same mark side tang stamp as the three knives above. The blade has been sharpened to such as

Group 4: REAL KNIFE [logo] JOHNSON WESTERN WORKS SHEFFIELD ENGLAND

It is assumed that this knife dates from **early to mid-20th century**

Blade face	Mark side tang	Pile side tang	Feature/Comment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blade notation REAL [logo] KNIFE is etched not stamped. Includes ENGLAND in the place name. Pile side tang stamp states HAND FORGED followed by 8100.



Photo 95. SOURCE: Author's collection.

A well-constructed knife suitable for light horticultural work, having an overall length of 3 ¾ inches closed. It has separate liners and bolsters, cocoa scales, and a round butt. The knife pattern is referred to by Johnson as a “Footrot knife” – see following illustration photo 96 copied from a Christopher Johnson catalogue.

A well-constructed knife suitable for light horticultural work, having an overall length of 3 ¾ inches closed. It has separate liners and



Photo 96. SOURCE: Christopher Johnson catalogue (undated)

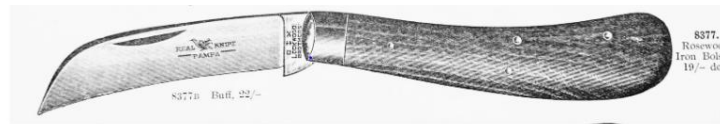


Photo 97. SOURCE: Lockwood Brothers catalogue c.1910

It is also possible that this knife is a peach pruner – see later section on “Peach Pruners”. The blade marking is identical to that shown in the illustration and appears to be ink etched rather than stamped.

Here is an almost identical knife copied from a Lockwood Brothers catalogue dated c.1910.

9 LOOSE ENDS AND ODDMENTS

In any collection based on a pattern or style of item (e.g. pruning knives), there are always items that do not easily fit into the presumed narrative, or are exceptions to the adopted criteria, and are thus in need of further research. Those in my collection that fit these requirements are as follows:

9.1 Fray & Ecroyd



Photo 98. SOURCE: Author's collection

This is a large knife with a length of 5 ¾ inches closed. It has separate liners and bolsters and a round butt end. The scales are probably cocoa. The blade is best described (by me) as a hooked hawkbill, and interestingly there is no tang visible when open apart from the edge of the shoulder, and it also lacks both a swedge¹⁹ and a nail nick. It would have been designed for a particular

horticultural purpose, but I am unable to find any specific reference to it, although coffee pruner is certainly a possibility. The blade is stamped with the trademark LAMA and FRY & ECROYD SHEFFIELD. Tweedale (page 150) notes that the company was at-least in business by 1874, but that “*In May 1875, Ecroyd was declared bankrupt ... and the partnership with Fry was dissolved*”. However, the business was resurrected (probably as HENRY ECROYD AND COMPANY Ltd and operated until 1885. There is no separate entry for Fry in Tweedale’s book. This information suggests that the knife dates from **c.1875**.

9.2 Beach Salisbury

The inclusion of the large sawblade strongly suggests that this knife is made for horticultural use, but not necessarily for pruning - as the cutting blade appears to be a sheepfoot; maybe it was more for a forestry use?



Photo 99. SOURCE: Author's collection.

It has a length of 6 inches closed and has integral liners and bolsters. The scales appear to be cocoa, and it has a round butt end.



Photo 99A.

The only stamping is on the blade, being BEACH SALISBURY, and there are two possible interpretations:

1. BEACH is the name of a retailer based in Salisbury, and therefore the knife was probably made in Sheffield,
2. BEACH was a knife manufacturer located in Salisbury - when Salisbury was in competition with Sheffield up until the early to mid-19th Century. Levine²⁰ (page 101) identifies a William Beach who was a cutler in Catherine Street from 1829 – 1880.

I prefer the latter interpretation – primarily to fulfill a desire to have an example of a Salisbury made knife in my collection. An interesting feature of the construction of the knife is that the three main pins: the pivot pin, the spring pin and the butt pin are steel, however the four pins on either side securing the scales are a very fine gauge nickel silver wire. Based on the perceived high-quality of its construction and other general characteristics, I date the knife as **c.1830s – 1840s**.

9.3 Duke



Photo 100. SOURCE: Author's collection.

There are aspects of this knife associated with the blade that are difficult to explain. It is of solid construction and appears to be designed for heavy work, with a length of 4

inches closed, integral liners and bolsters, and a round butt end associated with a wide butt. It has stag horn scales, and the only stamping is DUKE on the blade.

It is the characteristics of the blade do not fit easily with other knives in this collection, as follows:

1. The shape of the blade appears to be sheep foot, although it does have a slight curve to it, and there is a possibility that it once had a hawkbill style point.
2. The bade has a wide tang and clearly defined shoulder, but lacks both a choil²¹ and a kick

In reviewing earlier documentation contained elsewhere in this Collector Note, the following examples are relevant:



Photo 101. SOURCE: Copy of Photo 5 – see page 5 above.

Both of these knives illustrated in the section on “The Early Years” (photo 5 [here](#)) have blades that also lacks both a choil and a kick. They do not however have a tang that extends beyond the bolster – which the subject knife has.



Photo 102. SOURCE: detail from *Smith’s Key* – see Photo 7 page 6 above.

The knife in this illustration (photo 102) from *Smith’s Key* (designated “273 274”) has a blade with some similarities to the subject knife (and to the above two knives) but is probably a fixed-blade knife.

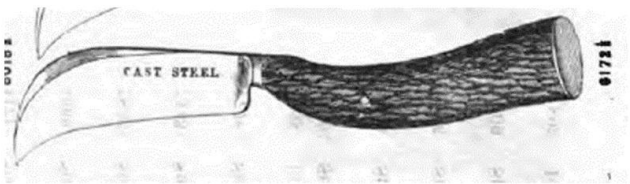


Photo 103. SOURCE: Mappin & Brothers catalogue c.1860.

Ditto with the knife in this illustration (**photo 103**) which is copied from the Joseph Mappin & Brothers catalogue dated c.1860. The blade does appear to have a shoulder adjacent to the tang. This

knife is definitely fixed-blade as it is described in the catalogue as “6172½ *Stag horn* 4 ½ *inch. Pruner, fast handle in sheath, with pin*” – see [Appendix 1 here](#). It is however the only pruner in the catalogue that has a blade that lacks both a choil and a kick – similar to the subject knife.

My conclusion is that it is a pruner designed for a specific purpose that has yet to be identified (and not necessarily for horticulture).

9.4 [Eye logo] Witness



Photo 104. SOURCE: Author’s collection.

This knife is of solid construction and appears to be designed for heavy work, with a length of 4 ½ inches closed, separate liners and bolsters, a round butt end and wood scales. The blade appears around full and looks to be designed for a

specific pruning purpose that has yet to be identified. Alternatively, they certainly could be used for a purpose that is not associated with horticulture. In this regard, UK collector Paul Stamp has advised (June 2021) that these knives were used in the coal mining industry in the UK “*right up until the demise of the coal mining industry in this country in the 1980s*” and were referred to as ‘Miners’ Belt Knives.’



Photo 105: The only stamping is “[*logo*] WITNESS SHEFFIELD ENGLAND” on the mark side tang - using a very small type size, see adjacent photo.

Dating the knife is difficult; according to Tweedale (pages 294-295) the ‘eye witness’ trademark was originally used by John Taylor but became part of Needham, Veall & Tyzack from c.1879, who continued to use the words “Talyor’s Celebrated [*eye logo*] Witness Cutlery” in much of their advertising - through to the mid-20th century. Tweedale notes that in 1965 the firm was styled as

“Taylors Eye Witness”. Given the minimalist style of the tang stamp including the absence of “Taylor”, I date the knife as **early to mid-20th century**. Jack Black has advised (June 2021) that in his opinion the knife may be of relatively recent manufacture as examples are quite common in the UK.

10 PEACH PRUNERS

“Peach Pruners” are included in this **Collector Note** as a sub-section of “Pruning Knives”, however there is an equally strong argument that it should be a separate Collector Note. The difficulty lies in establishing exactly what defines a peach pruner as there appears to be subtle variations in the characteristics presented by the various manufacturers in the 19th century. Further, in reviewing what limited documentation there is available, it is apparent that not all manufacturers made a distinction between peach pruners and pruners in general. Another consideration is that in this second decade of the 21st century we no-longer appreciate the subtleties related to the design of hand-tools for specific purposes (such as “peach pruner”) which was common knowledge in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Photo 106 below is of the six pruning knives in my pruner collection that I assume could be regarded as peach pruners. The following illustration (**photo 107**) was found by a Google search of “Peach Pruning Knives”, and it provides some insight into the definition of what constitutes a ‘peach pruner’.



Photo 106. SOURCE: Author's collection.

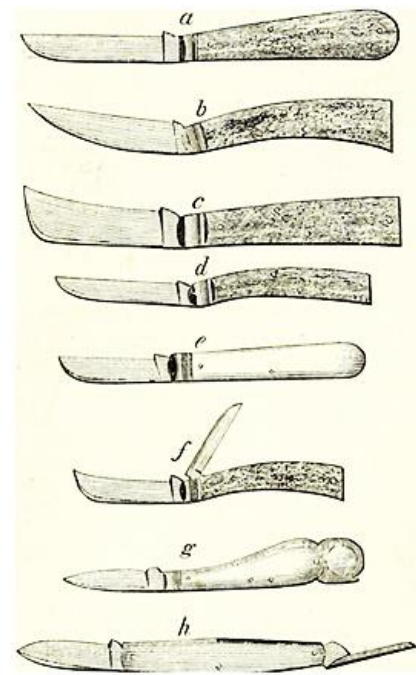


Photo 107. SOURCE: ALAMY – with permission

The source of the illustration appears to be the book “*The book of the garden*” having a date of c.1850s. There is some limited text associated with the illustration which aids in appreciating the characteristics of a pruning knife, as follows:

*“That of Saynor of Sheffield is deservedly popular. The London peach-pruner, **b**, of Barns of Sheffield, is also an excellent implement, tapering to a narrower point than the former [i.e. knife **a** above], and therefore, for the purpose of pruning, either when the shoots are close together or when they have not been disengaged from the wall, superior to it. They are the two best in use for the purpose. Either of these is well adapted for grafting purposes, the blades being thin. The strong pruner, **c**, of Saynor of Sheffield, is well adapted for all ordinary pruning where the branches to be removed are pretty strong. Some prefer the blade when more*

*curved towards the point; this, however, makes little difference in the working of the implement in proper hands. This may be considered the common garden-knife, and is a vast improvement over that of former times, which consisted of a blade fixed to the handle without a joint, enclosed in a sheath of leather or pasteboard (most generally the latter), and carried in a side pocket on the thigh of the operator. The present is a clasp or folding knife and may be carried with much greater safety to the person. The former is now nearly out of use. The blade of a knife cuts on the same principle as a saw; a hooked-pointed blade, therefore, is injurious when used in cutting woody shoots, and can never leave so clean a section as a blade with a straight edge. **d** and **e** are small peach-pruners, the one on top having a horn handle nearly cylindrical, but slightly curved, the other a bone or ivory handle somewhat ovate, tapering in a wedge form, much in the way of the common budding-knife, but less thin at the point. In cases of emergency it may, however, be used for budding also. They are both well adapted for peach-pruning, particularly when operating upon the young wood. Those we use are also of Saynor's manufacture”.*

Pruning knives are still made in Sheffield and a recent (2019) series of posts on BladeForums: <https://www.bladeforums.com/threads/the-peach-pruner.1692855/> provides some excellent examples. Note also on the second page of the post – the three pages of illustrations of 15 ‘peach pruners’ (although not specifically stated as such) from an undated Saynor Cooke & Ridal catalogue. Similarly, **Appendix 1** of this **Collector Note** ([here](#)) shows a page copied from the c.1860 Joseph Mappin & Brothers displaying 27 pruning knives – some with peach pruner characteristics but none described as such.



Photo 108. SOURCE: Thomas Turner catalogue c.1905

described as being a “peach pruner”.



Photo 109. SOURCE: Thomas Turner catalogue c.1905



Photo 110. SOURCE: Thomas Turner catalogue c.1905

To appreciate the subtle differences in blade profiles, the adjacent two illustrations (**photo 108 and 109**) are copied from the Thomas Turner & Co. catalogue dated 1902; similar illustrations are also shown in their 1925 catalogue, of which two are

For comparison, the knife in the adjacent illustration (**photo 110**) is from the same source and is described as having a “Hooked Ettrick Blade”.

Following are details of the seven knives that are assumed to be ‘peach pruners’, some of which have also been described elsewhere in this **Collector Note**.



Photo 111. SOURCE: Copy of Photo 18 – page 9 above.

The main blade is stamped 'REAL [running bird logo] KNIFE, with the word "PAMPA" below. The tang is stamped the logo C + X and the words "LOCKWOOD BROTHERS SHEFFIELD" below. The pen blade (broken) is stamped "LOCKWOOD BROTHERS SHEFFIELD" on the tang. It has a length of 4 inches closed, has integral liners and bolsters, a steel butt cap, birds-eye pins and stag scales. The assumed date of the knife is c.1870s – 1880s. It is identical to the knife shown in the following illustration and therefore it is assumed to be Pattern No. 7755. This knife is also previously described in **photo 18** ([here](#)).

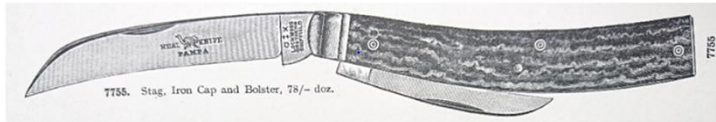


Photo 112. SOURCE: Lockwood Brothers Catalogue (undated)

The illustration is taken from an undated "Lockwood Brothers Limited, Sheffield." Catalogue (page 125). It shows that the Lockwood pattern number is 7755 and is described as "Stag, Iron Cap and Bolster" all under the heading "Pruning Knife". Precisely dating the catalogue is difficult however the range is after circa 1891 when Lockwood Brothers became a limited company, and perhaps the start of the first world war.



Photo 113. SOURCE: Author's collection

The main blade is stamped "SAYNOR" on the blade, and "FARQUHAR" on the tang. The reverse tang is stamped "OBTAIN WARRENTED". The pen blade is stamped "SAYNOR COOKE & RIDEL" on the tang and "ENGLAND" on the reverse tang. The ENGLAND stamp suggests that it was most likely made after the 1891. Note however the similarity to knife *f* shown in the illustration at the start of this 'Peach Pruners' section (**photo 107**), which is assumed to be dated c.1850s. This suggests that this knife may have been in the Saynor inventory from the 1850s – to possibly the first decades of the 20th century.



Photo 114. SOURCE: photos 85 and 86 – page 31 above.

Based principally on their tang stamping (see details in section on Saynor Cooke & Ridal above) the top one is dated '1891 to early -20th century' and the bottom one is 'dated early to mid-20th century'.



Photo 115. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The main blade is stamped "SAYNOR" on the blade, and "FARQUHAR" on the tang. The reverse tang is stamped "OBTAIN WARRENTED". The pen blade is stamped "SAYNOR COOKE & RIDEL" on the tang and "ENGLAND" on the reverse tang.

These two knives by SAYNOR are identical apart from the tang stamping. They have a length of 3 ¾ inches closed and a round butt end, separate iron liners and bolsters, and probably cocoa scales.

The only discernible stamping on this knife is the word PEARCE on the mark side tang; there are other words in an arc over the top

but they are illegible. It is 3 ¾ inches closed, brass liners and probably nickel silver bolsters and butt cap. The scales appear to be cow horn. Difficult to date, but probably last quarter of 19th century.



Photo 116. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This knife is approximately 4 ¼ inches closed, has integral iron liners and bolsters and an iron butt cap. The scales appear to be staghorn but could be polished bone. The only stamping is JOHN PETTY & SONS SHEFFIELD on the mark side tang. It probably dates from 1850s to 1880s. This is the same knife previously shown in **photo 2** (bottom photo) [here](#).



Photo 117. SOURCE: photo 95 – page 35 above.

As stated previously in the section on Christopher Johnson & Son [here](#): this is a well-constructed knife suitable for light horticultural work, having an overall length of 3 ¾ inches closed. It has separate liners and bolsters, probably cocoa scales and a round butt end. The knife pattern is referred to by Johnson as a “Footrot knife” (see similar in the illustration above copied from a Thomas Turner catalogue - **photo 108**), and it is also probable that this knife is a peach pruner. It is dated as early to mid-20th century.



Similarly, this knife has many of the attributes shown on the second knife in the illustration shown in Photo 108 – particularly the identical blade shape; further it has an overall length of 3 ¾ inches closed which is the same as the Christopher Johnson knife shown immediately above. The knife has “F. NEWTON SHEFFIELD” stamped on the mark side tang and “PREMIER [TRY inside a ‘swan’ logo] KNIFE” stamped on the blade face, and stag horn scales.

11 LIGHT PRUNING KNIVES

These knives are included here as an afterthought; I had not previously included them in the pruner collection but recently noted them in the Lockwood Brothers c.1912 catalogue under the heading “Light Pruning Knives” (page 128).

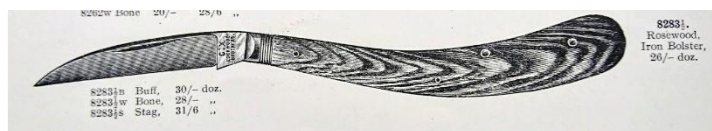


Photo 117 A. SOURCE: “Lockwood Bros., Sheffield.” Catalogue c.1912



Photo 117 B. SOURCE: Author's collection.

The adjacent picture is copied from the catalogue for comparison. The knives are not identical to the catalogue knife as the blades of the two knives in the photo extend from the handle in a straight line whereas the blade in the catalogue knife is curved. The handle shape is however identical. The blade of the lower knife has the same profile as the catalogue knife, has a closed length of

4 inches and appears full. The blade of the upper knife has lost over 50% of its profile due to sharpening.



This knife has the same profile and is the same size as the catalogue illustration, however the option of brass scales is not offered so it is assumed to be of a later date.



Photo 117 C. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This knife has a similar profile and is stamped on the tang "R. MEMBERY LTD BATH". It has a closed length of 3 5/8 inches and has both a wide butt and a round butt and separate liners and bolsters.

12 PLUMBER KNIVES

As with "Peach Pruners" above, Plumber Knives are included in this Collector Note as a sub-section of Pruning Knives. Primarily, this is because that is where they can usually be found in manufacturers and merchants' catalogues, and also because collectors recognize their general characteristics as being consistent with those of pruning knives. This is okay for peach pruners as they were also a horticulturalist's tool, but of course that connection does not apply to plumber knives – i.e. there is no connection between the work of a horticulturalist and that of a plumber.

The knives in the adjacent photo are the author's collection of 'Plumber Knives' and more details are provided in later paragraphs. The photo shows the principal distinction between a plumber knife and a pruning knife as being the absence of a swage²² This distinction is also clearly evident in the three illustrations following (**photo 119**) that have been copied from three different cutlery catalogues.

A review of the "Pruning Knives" plate in *Smith's Key* (see page 6 [here](#)) shows that 4 of the 5 pruning knives displayed have a swage, but it appears not so common in knives displayed in many of the other plates. A review of all of the knives reviewed in this Collector Note, dating from 1820's, shows that each has a swage of some sort (primarily a 'run-in' apart from a particular pattern of Wostenholm pruners which have a 'cut-in'), except for the four knives displayed in "The Early Days" section (see page 5 [here](#)) which don't have a swage – and which provides further support for the argument that they may not be of English origin. Also, the Fry & Ecroyd pruning knife described previously (see **photo 98**) lacks a swage.

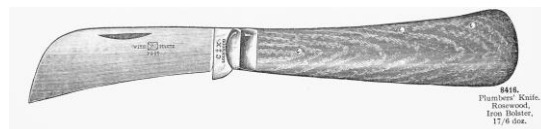


Photo 119A. SOURCE: Lockwood Brothers catalogue (undated)



5010A Plumber's Knife. Coco wood handle, iron bolster. Strong blade with thick back. Length (closed) 4".

Photo 119C. SOURCE: Wostenholm catalogue c.1962

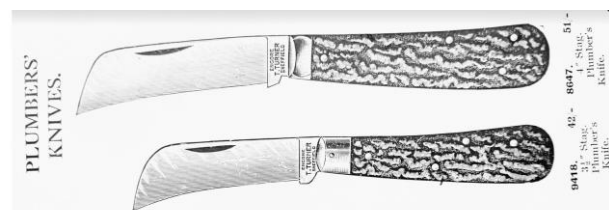


Photo 119B. SOURCE: Thomas Turner & Co. 1825 catalogue

12.1 Context

The trade of plumbing (including gas fitting) was probably well established in most cities and towns by the last decades of the 19th century, and initially would have been primarily associated with the reticulation of water in domestic, commercial and industrial premises

from a piped source established by a metropolitan 'water supply' authority. Associated with this was the removal of sewage, sullage and storm water from such premises via a metropolitan wide drainage system. The reticulation of coal gas for heating and lighting was also common in cities prior to the introduction of electricity in the mid - late 19th century.

I can think of two tasks for which a 'plumber and gas fitter' would require a sturdy knife; probably the primary task was the cutting of extruded lead pipe that was used for gas reticulation, which was achieved by holding a blade against the pipe and belting the back edge of the blade with a wooden mallet. This would explain why plumber knives are of robust construction (with blades and springs often made from ¼ inch steel plate) and why the absence of a swage was preferred. The second task was the cutting of hemp that was a necessary component in the joining of all water pipes (steel, copper and brass).

12.2 Details



Photo 120. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This knife has identical stamping to the Butler knife shown previously in **photo 15** (see page [9](#) [here](#)). The blade is stamped "CAST STEEL" and it has a prominent squared kick. The tang is stamped "GEO. BUTLER TRINITY WORKS SHEFFIELD" – with the word Sheffield almost totally obscured by the bolster. It has stag scales, a length of 4¼ inches closed, integral iron liners and bolsters, a round butt, and the blade and spring are forged from ¼ inch thick steel plate. It does not have either of the Butler marks noted on knives in the later eras. Tweedale notes that Butler acquired the 'ART' mark in 1861, and also notes that in 1864 Butler moved to 'TRINITY WORKS'. This suggests that this knife can be attributed to c.1860s. This date appears to be too early for plumbing trades, and it is possible that it was in production as a 'heavy-duty' knife that ultimately suited the needs of 'plumbers and gas fitters' in the 1880s. An alternative explanation is that reticulated gas (for street lighting) preceded domestic water supply and therefore was the tool of choice by gasfitters in the 1870s and 1880s.

This knife has identical stamping to the Butler knife shown previously in **photo 15** (see page [9](#) [here](#)). The blade is stamped "CAST STEEL" and it has a prominent squared kick. The tang is stamped "GEO. BUTLER TRINITY WORKS SHEFFIELD" – with the word Sheffield almost totally



Photo 121. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This knife is obviously made for purpose, having the blade stamped PLUMBER KNIFE. It has stag scales, a length of 4 1/8 inches closed. integral iron liners and bolsters, a round butt, and the blade and spring are 3/16 inch thick. The stamp on the mark side tang is JOHN PETTY & SONS SHEFFIELD over 3 lines. This stamping is consistent with John Petty knives made in the 1860s to 1880s.

This knife is obviously made for purpose, having the blade stamped PLUMBER KNIFE. It has stag scales, a length of 4 1/8 inches closed. integral iron liners and bolsters, a round butt, and the blade and spring are 3/16 inch thick. The stamp on the mark side tang is JOHN PETTY & SONS



Photo 122. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This knife has stag scales, a length of 4 1/8 inches closed. separate iron liners and bolsters, a round butt, and the blade and spring are made from 3/16-inch steel plate. The stamp on the mark side tang is NON XLL J. ALLEN & SONS SHEFFIELD over 3 lines. This stamping is consistent with

knives made in the 1860s to 1880s.

13 PRUNING KNIFE KITS



Geo. Wostenholm (1899 Edmonds patent) changeable blade, genuine stag, \$325. Courtesy Allen Dellenbaugh.

Photo 123: SOURCE: "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Value", 4th Edition

Pruning knife kits are probably a relic of 'bygone era' as they were most likely the preserve of gentlemen farmers or head gardeners rather than being a 'tool for Jack'. I have four kits in my collection, three of which have their own leather folder and one which appears to have been separated from its folder at some time in the past, assuming that is that it once did have one.

Collecting pruning knife kits is perhaps a rather obscure corner of 'Antique Sheffield Pruning Knives' overall. The only available documentation that I could locate is a brief reference in Levine's

Guide²³ (page 193) wherein he states: "*Circa 1900 Wostenholm made a changeable blade pruner that came with a hawkbill blade and a saw, and also sheepfoot and spey blades for grafting. When latched into place, any of the three knife blades (but not the saw blade) folded, just as in an ordinary jack knife. The end cap was the latch leaver.*" Levine also included a photo and accompanying text that referred to the "1899 Edmonds patent". See **photo 123** above.

13.1 George Wostenholm & Sons



Photo 124. SOURCE: Author's collection.

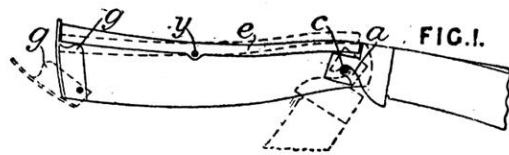
There is a high probability that this kit shown in the adjacent **photo 124** is in fact the actual one pictured in Levine's Guide as detailed in the preceding paragraph; it appears to be identical, including the pattern of the staining on the sawblade. Apart from some minor staining on all of the blades the kit appears to have had very little use, with no evidence of sharpening of the blades. The handle has a length of 4 3/4 inches and all three of the knife blades are stamped on the mark-side tang:

GEORGE
WOSTENHOLMS
CELEBRATED
I*XL CUTLERY

I consider it safe to assume that this knife kit would originally have been accommodated in a leather roll very similar to the John Petty & Sons kit following, as the changeable sawblade is of similar dimension.

The application of this tang stamping is detailed previously in this Collector Note in the Section on George Wostenholm commencing on page 17 [here](#), wherein it is noted that “*It appears that this mark was prominent c.1840s – 1860s. This was a high point in Wostenholm’s manufacturing with the production of intricate high-quality knives that were successfully displayed in the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition*” – see GROUP 1 page 17 [here](#). This date range however is not consistent with Levine’s association of this knife with the “1899 Edmonds patent”. Bernard Levine has since provided me with further details of the Edmonds patent, see following illustration in **Photo 124A**:

7432. Edmonds, C. R. A. April 8. 1899



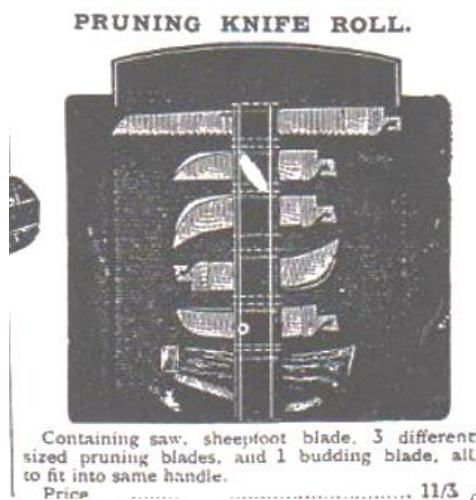
Pocket knives; horticultural knives; surgical knives.—The root of the blade of a clasp, pruning, budding, or surgeon’s knife, fleam, lancet, or like instrument is formed with an open slot *a* to take over the pivot pin *c* in the handle, and to further facilitate removal and replacement the backspring *e* is put on a pivot *y* and controlled by a hinged abutment *g*.

There is no doubt that the subject knife is totally consistent with the patent drawing shown in **Photo 124A**, and therefore the date must be treated as fact. Bernard does point out that “*inventions were sometimes “anticipated” by decades, or even centuries*”, and further states that “*I have seen no persuasive evidence that the Edmonds latching seal-cap patent was anticipated, although I suppose it is possible*”.

Photo 124A. SOURCE: Bernard Levine, with thanks.

From my perspective, on re-reading the knife and noting the similarities with the other pruner kits detailed in this **Collector Note** (for example the integral liners and bolsters), that the Wostenholm knife (and the John Petty knife that has an identical locking mechanism) lacks characteristics that I would normally associate with a Sheffield pruning knife from the early 20th century. This dilemma highlights the point that when researching and evaluating Sheffield knives from the 19th century - there will often be issues that defy a logical explanation.

Bernard Levine also provided a useful insight regarding stampings as follows “*As to blade markings, formats and typefaces (also marking technologies) are better helps to dating than what the marks say, but none are definitive for latest use, since markings sometimes were revived, both by their owners and by others. Put another way, it is usually possible to determine the earliest possible use for a marking, but it is rarely possible to determine the latest possible use*”.



Since writing the above, I have located a further reference to a “PRUNING KNIFE ROLL” in the “Army and Navy CSL catalogue” dated 1907 (page 992 of the catalogue) – see adjacent. The blade locking mechanism is identical to both the Wostenholm kit and the John Petty kit (see following). Given that the catalogue is dated 1907, this perhaps adds further credence to Bernard Levine’s proposition that these two kits date from the early 20th century based specifically on the patent date of 1899 for the Edmonds locking mechanism. A credible alternative scenario is that the mechanism was in use in the UK well before it was patented by Edmonds in the US.

13.2 John Petty & Sons



Photo 125. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This kit is accommodated in a leather role 9 ¼ inches in width and consists of a handle with a closed length of 4 ½ inches and six interchangeable blades. All five of the knife blades have the company trademark stamped on the face and “John Petty & Sons Sheffield” stamped on the mark-side tang. Apart from some minor staining on all of the blades, the kit appears to have had very little use, with no evidence of sharpening of the blades. The handle has integral liners and bolsters, and the blade locking mechanism is identical to

Wostenholm kit example.

13.3 J Nowell & Sons



Photo 126. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This kit is accommodated in a leather role 4 5/8 inches in width and consists of a handle having a closed length of 3 7/8 inches, with five interchangeable blades and a separate ivory spud. The handle has integral liners and bolsters, and all of the knife blades have “J Nowell & Sons Sheffield” stamped on the mark-side tang and the company trademark on the pile-side tang. Apart from some minor “spider web” staining on some of the blades they appear to have had very little (or no) use, with no evidence of sharpening of the blades. This kit appears to be of superior quality than the other three kits, with a better overall finish, each of the 12 pins securing the scales (6 on each side) appear to be polished brass (or

similar alloy), and two slide-out implements (a pick and a tweezer) are provided in the butt end. The mechanism for changing the blades works on over-riding the backspring in the closed position which enables the blade to remain secure when closed. Given that the tang stamp includes a placename (i.e. “Sheffield”) but does not include “England” it is probable that the kit dates c.1870s – 1880s.

13.4 Joseph Rodgers and Sons



Photo 127. SOURCE: Author's collection.

This is the actual knife featured in the book **Sheffield Exhibition Knives**²⁴ page 94. The text associated with a photo of the kit describes it as follows: ***“An Interchangeable Blade Set. This knife has a seven-piece interchangeable blade set, with a clip blade, a spey blade, a spear blade, a sheepfoot blade, a pruning or hawkbill blade, a large sheepfoot and a large spey blade. The handle is 3 1/8” long*, with top round nickel bolsters and noommel bolsters. The handles are beautifully mellowed. On the back of the handle is a button which, when pushed, will allow the blades to be inserted or removed from the knife. It comes in its original black leather roll with blue cloth liner. This is an exquisite set. [from the] Donald & Gloria Littman Collection”.*** The handle has integral liners and bolsters. *The handle actually measures 3 3/8” inches without a blade inserted. Ed.

Both this kit and the Nowell kit detailed above are quite light weight when compared to the Wostenholm and Petty kits, and therefore less suited to hard work normally associated with an orchard, or in fact in any situation that would be considered normal work for a

standard pruning knife. One possible scenario is that it is designed for work in a greenhouse where the plants are young and require delicate handling. An alternative scenario is that it was designed for use by ladies. The Leather roll which accommodates the knives is 4 4/8 inches in width (same as the Nowell). The bayonet style locking mechanism does not allow the blades to be folded back into the handle. It is probable that this kit dates c.1870s – 1880s.

The fact that each of the kits detailed in this section appear to be in unused condition is perhaps a good indication as to their actual usefulness in any situation.

14 GENERAL CONCLUSION

Given that pruning knives were manufactured in Sheffield from at least the 14th century and are still manufactured there today, means that there is a vast variety of styles and sizes of pruning knives available to collectors, particularly in terms of handle materials and blade profiles, that can in many cases be assigned to a particular date range or era.

However, as with most matters associated with cutlery manufacturing in Sheffield historically, there are very few practices that had universal application, and which therefore could be regarded as industry-wide standards. Well into the 20th century much of the actual manufacturing was undertaken by individual self-employed cutlers (known as “Little Mesters”) who were contracted by the “factors” (i.e. the manufacturing companies) to produce an agreed number of knives of a particular pattern that belonged to the company. These ‘little mesters’ would often rent space in one of the many ‘Works’ that were scattered around Sheffield. One result of this system was that, while the products would be consistent with the individual factor’s specification, it was not conducive to standardisation and the consequence was the vast variation in the styles and sizes of pruning knives available to collectors today. An excellent history of the cutlery trade in Sheffield is provided in the book “Mesters to Masters – A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire.”²⁵

Section 7 “Summary of Characteristics” (see [here](#)) describes some of the generalities that appear to be relevant to the dating of Sheffield Pruning knives, with the final paragraph emphasising the proviso that “*there are considerable variations and anomalies associated with the grouping of knives according to “era”, probably as a resulting of overlapping due to individual manufacturers implementing changes to their patterns, styles and stampings at significantly different times. Perhaps this generalized timeline is really only successful in illustrating the overall trends in the evolution of pruning knives from “the early years” to the mid-20th century*”.

The second major section of this Collector Note, starting at “*8 Examples of Pruners from Prominent Companies*” (see [here](#)) shows that within each of the main cutlery manufacturing companies it is possible to ascertain the general trends in the evolution of pruning knives by reference to subtle changes in their blade-face and tang stampings, in addition to the changes to overall style and shape.

15 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The preparation of this Collector Note “**Antique Sheffield Pruning Knives – Collector’s Handbook**” would not have been possible without the detailed research that went into the publication by Geoffrey Tweedale of his book “*Tweedale’s Directory of Sheffield Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2010*”.
2. Fellow pruning knives collector Ernie Franken reviewed the final draft, identified errors, and made useful suggestions for further technical explanations to assist the novice collector.

16 UPDATES, ELABORATIONS & CORRECTIONS

Much of the value of ‘web notes’ such as this Collector Note lies in their ability to be regularly updated, elaborated and corrected, so that in-reality there is no final version – it is in-fact a ‘never-ending story’. My purpose is to assist in filling the knowledge gap regarding antique Sheffield pocketknives and folding knives that was very apparent to me all through my collecting years - to encourage/assist new collectors and to generally promote the pleasure associated with such collecting.

To this end, any suggestions/contributions that fellow collectors may have that will improve the content of this Collector Note and thus expand the knowledge base will be most welcome, and I am sure will be greatly appreciated by all present and future collectors of antique Sheffield pruning knives.

Author:

Lawrie Wilson

APPENDIX 1: Extract from J Mappin & Sons catalogue c.1860

NOTE: not all of the knives detailed in this price list are included in the illustration following.

PRICES OF MAPPINS' CELEBRATED PRUNING AND BUDDING KNIVES.

For Drawings, see corresponding numbers on Plate.

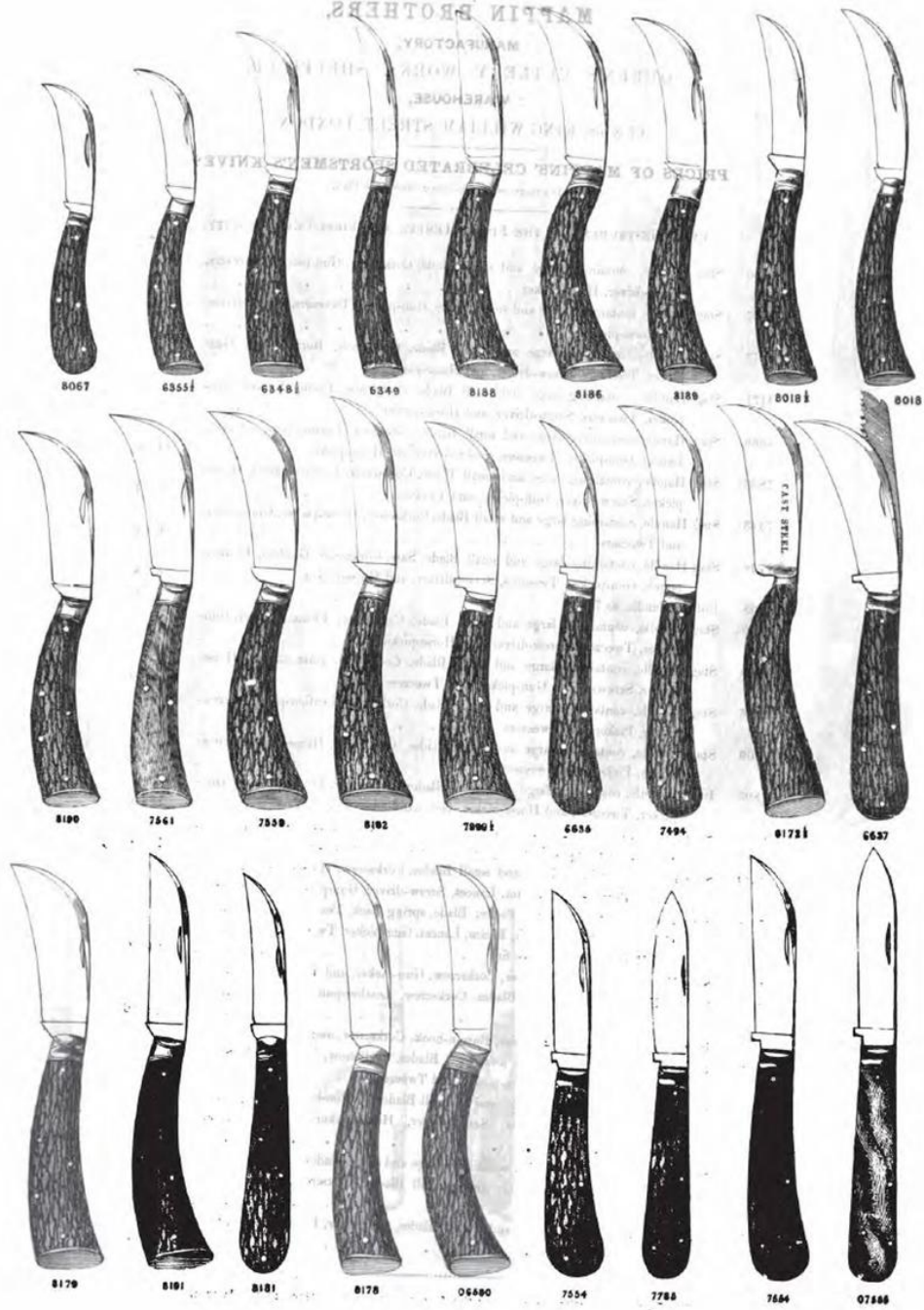
EVERY BLADE OF THE VERY FIRST QUALITY.

										per doz.
										s. d.
7920	Stag Horn	3½ inch	Clasp Pruner	.	.	.	.	.	.	13 0
8067	Do.	3½ inch	do.	.	.	.	.	.	.	15 0
6355½	Do.	3½ inch	do.	with cap and polished blade	.	.	.	.	.	26 0
6348½	Do.	3¾ inch	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	22 0
6349	Do.	4 inch	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	28 0
8188	Do.	do.	Clasp Budder	do.	.	.	.	.	.	26 8
8186	Do.	do.	Clasp Pruner	do.	.	.	.	.	.	28 0
8189	Do.	do.	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	26 8
8018½	Do.	do.	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	26 0
8018	Do.	do.	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	25 0
8190	Do.	do.	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	26 8
7561	Wood Handle	4½ inch	do.	with brass cap	.	.	.	.	.	21 0
7559	Stag Horn	4½ inch	do.	with steel cap	.	.	.	.	.	26 8
8192	Do.	4½ inch	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	32 0
7999½	Do.	4 inch	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	20 0
6635	Do.	4½ inch	Clasp Budder	.	.	.	.	.	.	17 0
7494	Do.	do.	Clasp Pruner	.	.	.	.	.	.	16 0
6172½	Do.	do.	Pruner, fast handle in sheath, with pin	.	.	.	.	.	.	13 0
6637	Do.	do.	Clasp Pruner, with Saw	.	.	.	.	.	.	33 0
8179	Do.	4½ inch	do.	steel cap	.	.	.	.	.	30 0
8191	Do.	4½ inch	Clasp Budder, steel cap	.	.	.	.	.	.	32 0
8181	Do.	do.	do.	.	.	.	.	.	.	17 0
8178	Do.	4½ inch	Clasp Pruner, steel cap	.	.	.	.	.	.	30 0
06580	Do.	4½ inch	do.	do. File shoulder	.	.	.	.	.	35 0
7554	Do.	4 inch	Clasp Budder	do.	.	.	.	.	.	10 8
7785	Do.	do.	Spear Point Clasp Knife	.	.	.	.	.	.	10 8
7554½	Do.	4½ inch	Clasp Budder	.	.	.	.	.	.	13 0
07555	Buffalo Horn,	4½ inch	Spear Point Clasp Knife	.	.	.	.	.	.	11 0
8068	Ivory Handle,	4 inch	"Curtis's" Budding Knife, Polished Blade, Brass Lined	.	.	.	.	.	.	32 0
5685	Do.	5 inch	Clasp Budding Knife	.	.	.	.	.	.	28 0
05685	Do.	do.	do.	do. Brass Lined and Polished Blades	.	.	.	.	.	32 0
8020	Do.	3½ inch	Clasp Rose Budding Knife	.	.	.	.	.	.	19 0
8021	White Bone,	5 inch	Budding Knife, with Sheath	.	.	.	.	.	.	13 0

The London Warehouse contains the Largest Stock of Cutlery in the World.

APPENDIX 1: continued

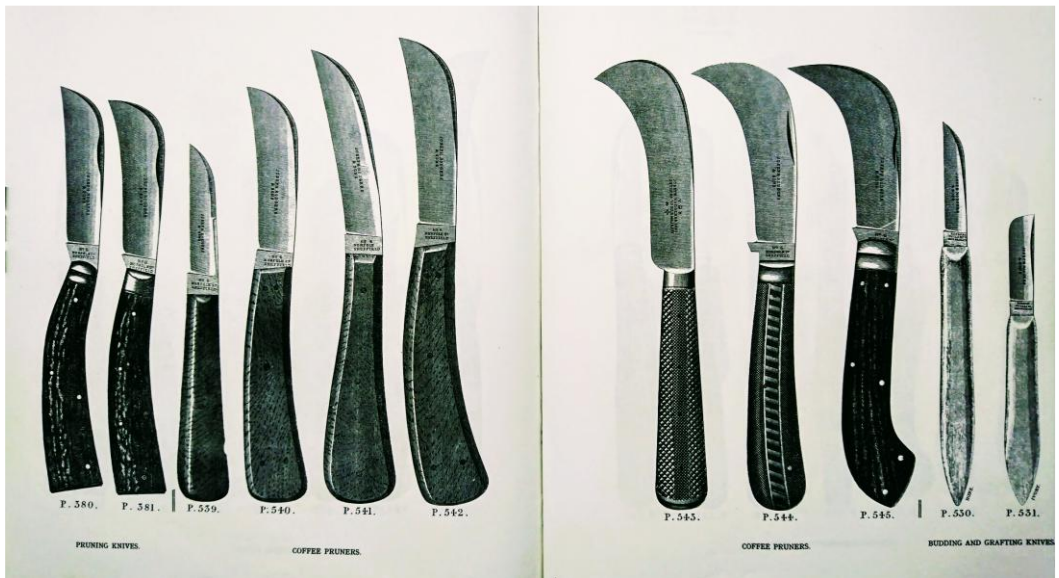
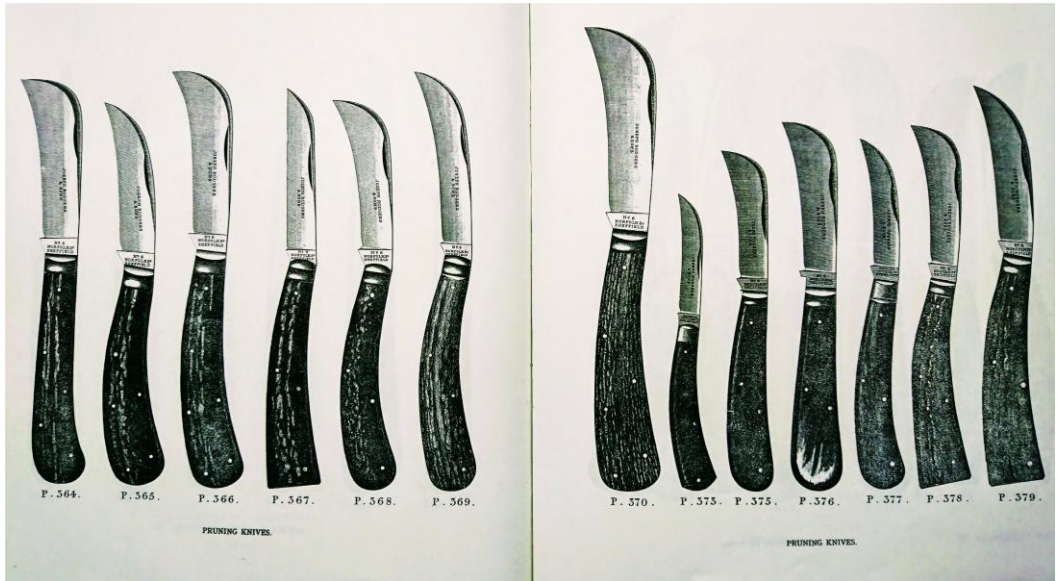
JOSEPH MAPPIN AND BROTHERS,
QUEEN'S CUTLERY WORKS, SHEFFIELD.



Stock ready at the Warehouse.
67 & 68, KING WILLIAM ST. CITY, LONDON.
Duncan & Co. Ltd. London

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX 2: Copy of pages 43 & 44 from Joseph Rodgers c.1912 catalogue



APPENDIX 3: Copy of pages 112 & 113 from the book "Garden Tools"



SOURCE: "GARDEN TOOLS", Suzanne Slesin [et. al.] authors. Published by Abberville Publishing Group New York, 1996

APPENDIX 4: Copy of Plates 1 & 2 from Geo. Wostenholm & Sons trade catalogue dated c.1885




WOSTENHOLM'S 1*XL CUTLERY


MADE IN SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND, SINCE 1745

Page 11


HORTICULTURAL KNIVES




166 Pruning Knife. Imitation stag handle. Length (closed) 4".




178 Pruning or Linoleum Knife. Rosewood handle, with hole for a lanyard. Length (closed) 4".




7979 Pruning Knife. Imitation stag handle polished iron bolster and cap. Length (closed) 4".




168 Pruning Knife. Coco wood handle. Length (closed) 4½".




5004 Pruning Knife. Coco wood handle. Length (closed) 3½".




7999 Pruning Knife. Curved Coco wood handle, specially designed for strength and comfortable grip. Length (closed) 4".




1570 Budding Knife. Ivory handle. Length (closed) 4".




5004 'Tyne' Pruning Knife. Brass handle. Length (closed) 3½".




8001 Burbank Budding Knife. Nickel silver handle, ivory end. Length (closed) 4".




8001H As 8001 but with horn end instead of ivory.




7963 Budding and Grafting Knife. Black handle, with thick brass lining. Length (closed) 4".




7691 Budding Knife. Black handle with bolster, one budding blade, and fixed ivory end. Total length (closed) 5".




8002 Curtis Budding Knife. Nickel Silver handle, ivory end. Length (closed) 4".




8002H As 8002 but with horn end instead of ivory.



7973 Pruning Knife. Coco wood handle, with strong brass lining and rivet, designed for heavy use, with smooth and comfortable grip. Length (closed) 4".



7972 Pruning Knife. As 7973 but with a strong nickel silver bolster.



17051 The Amateur Gardeners Knife with both pruning and budding blades, imitation stag handle, iron bolsters. Length (closed) 3½".

WASHINGTON WORKS, WELLINGTON ST., SHEFFIELD 1, ENGLAND

Printed in England

APPENDIX 6: copy of part of a post from the now defunct "BritishBlades" website

Posted by "Wellington" who was a highly regarded expert on Sheffield knives and a frequent contributor to the website. The annotation in red is by the author.

*Most collectors are familiar with the cutlery made by George Wostenholm. The company was originally listed as "George Wolstenholme and Son", the name was shorted before about 1820. They acquired the I*XL trademark in 1826. Any knife bearing the I*XL trade mark must be assumed to have been made after 1826. Two early markings found on fixed blade/folding bowie knives are:*

- *_I*XL Geo. Wostenholm, Rockingham Works, Sheffield_ (prior to 1848)*
- *_I*XL Geo. Wostenholm, Washington Works, Sheffield_ (after 1848).*
- *_Geo. Wostenholm and Son Ltd_ (after 1875, when the firm was formed into a limited company)*

The following markings appear in the 1885 catalogue:

- *_George Wostenholms Celebrated I*XL Cutlery_ (No apparent evidence of this in the 1885 catalogue – Ed.)*
- *_I*XL George Wostenholm Celebrated_*
- *_George Wostenholm I*XL Cutlery_*
- *_I*XL George Wostenholm, Sheffield_*
- *_George Wostenholm, Sheffield_*

In 1890, the US McKinlay Tariff Act required all imported goods to be marked with their country of origin. Some Wostenholm knives were marked _Sheffield, England_ before 1890. Also, some Wostenholm made cutlery was marked _Sheffield_ (no England) after 1890, so knives made around this time are sometimes difficult to date.

Many of the 1885 markings were used up until WW2

- *_I*XL Wostenholm, Sheffield_ (this mark was in use during WW2)*
- *_I*XL George Wostenholm, Sheffield, England_ (after 1945 the most common mark used.)*
- *On some knives of this period the England is shortened to _Eng._. Also knives can be found stamped _I*XL George Wostenholm, England_*
- *On these post war knives its quite common to find I*XL stamped deeply on the blade face. Also (on carbon blades) the reverse tang is usually marked "OIL THE JOINTS".*

After about 1970 the quality of Wostenholm made knives falls. The post war tang stamps slowly disappears, to be replaced by ink etching.

APPENDIX 7: Explanation of the term “Little Mester”

1: Yorkshire Historical Dictionary

“little mester”

- 1) A spelling of ‘little master’ which reflects the dialect pronunciation. The term was used almost exclusively in the Sheffield district for the independent craftsmen in the cutlery trades.
- 2) The little mesters worked alone or employed a small number of workers and apprentices: many had their own workshop but others rented space in a bigger establishment. The term does not appear in early records and may date only from the late eighteenth century. It has largely fallen out of use since this practice peaked in Victorian times, but continues to be used in Yorkshire, if only nostalgically.

2: Personal correspondence to the author from Jack Black

Hi Lawrie

Unless you've witnessed the vagaries of the Little Mester system in Sheffield. (and of course I've only witnessed the 'fag-end' of it), I think it's extremely hard to imagine how it worked, with thousands of independent cutlers, and tiny firms, working out of homes and workshops all over the city, with blackened windows, and no street sign. Even in my day, it was sometimes only possible to track these small makers down by word of mouth, and using your nose to sniff out the smell of industry. The larger firms rotated their outworkers regularly to keep costs down, so the cutlers were competing with each other for the lowest price (in the dying days of the industry, there was a lot of bickering among the Little Mesters, and them under-cutting each other, to try and get work). As larger firms contracted work to Little Mesters, if the job was too big, or they were busy, they might in turn sub-contact part of the job, or even all of it, to others.

Tang stamps wear faster than many people would imagine, and while the most prestigious firms would have replaced them regularly, even they might have struggled to supply up to date stamps to everyone involved in the labrythine chain of production. Depending on their position in that chain, the cutlers may have received ready-stamped blades, or been issued with a stamp, with these often being held onto for future use (most Little Mesters I've known had a good collection of stamps). From what I know of Sheffield cutlers, the smaller firms and Little Mesters, would have used their stamps well past the point where they cut crisply, and certainly wouldn't have changed them because there was a new monarch on the throne, for example (we see this even with Rodgers knives). How was the work given out? In some cases, the Little Mesters came to the big firms to ask for work, taking away a parcel of parts under the 'liver and draw' system (getting paid when the finished knives were delivered). In other cases, an apprentice or clerk might be sent out with a note from the gaffer, and maybe even a catalogue clipping (if the firm had a catalogue) or sample. In later times, there might be a telephone conversation, though not many Little Mesters had telephones in their workshops, even in recent times, and some not at home. Let us imagine though, that Mr Arkwright rings Mr Smith, and asks him if he can make him up 4 gross of Lambsfoot knives, 4 gross of Peach Pruners, and 4 gross of Sleeveboard Penknives, all 'Town Patterns', patterns Mr Smith, the cutler, is very familiar with, and knows how Mr Arkwright's company interprets them. There will be some haggling over price, which Mr Arkwright will probably cut subsequently. Among his collection of blanking out tools, Mr Smith has all the tools he needs for the job (see photo attached of tools from A.Wright/J.Howarth, who did a lot of contract work for other firms, many are over a hundred years old), and he also has a stamp relating to Mr Arkwright's firm. However, that stamp may be 10 years old, maybe more, and a little different to the stamp Mr Roberts, the cutler 3 doors down, who also does work for Mr Arkwright's firm, is using.

Often there would be leftover blades, sometimes a lot of them, if an order was cancelled, a firm went bust (which often happened overnight), or a cutler passed away. These would rarely be thrown away, though it sometimes happened (when Rodgers' cutlers moved to the Richards factory after the Imperial takeover, they threw all their parts in the River Sheaf), and would be made into knives at some point, either with the original stamp, or without it. For example, I bought a bunch of Saynor knives about 10 years ago, which had old Saynor blades, but had been made up relatively recently, and I remember a cutler I knew finding a box of Truelove Bowie blades in his workshop - in the early 1990's! Stan Shaw had a whole collection of old forged blades, which he re-used.

It's worth noting that sometimes firms loaned the blanking out and machine-grinding tools to Little Mesters they had sub-contracted to, but they weren't always returned. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the main work undertaken by a small Sheffield (father and son) firm, trading (dubiously) under the name Pat Mitchell, was producing Sgian Dubh blades (stamped 'hand-made', but actually machine-ground), which went to Scotland to be hafted and finished there. The tools they used had been loaned to them when they did a job for Eggington, but they flatly refused to return them. Ron Brookes, the old gaffer at Eggington spent more than a decade trying to get them back, without success - I saw him a few years back, and he's still fuming about it!

*All the best
Jack
7 Jun 2021,*

ENDNOTES

¹ "Explanation or Key to the Various Manufactories of Sheffield ..." part, published by Joseph Smith in 1816

² "Mappin Brothers Illustrated Catalogue" circa 1860

³ "Joseph Rodgers & Sons Cutlers" assume dated circa 1912. Catalog reprint by Adrian Van Dyk, undated.

⁴ "TL-29", also known as an "Electricians Knife". "The Electrician's knife is identified by the combination of a spear master blade with a locking screwdriver-wire-stripper blade. The design is based on [US ed.] military specification TL-29. These knives are often called "TL-29's" and the government issue examples usually have TL-29 marked on them. "TL" means "Tool for Linesmen".

SOURCE: Bernard Levine: "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values – 4th Edition" PAGE 194. See Endnote 14.

⁵ 'Little Mester' – See [Appendix 7](#) for explanation.

⁶ GARDEN TOOLS", Suzanne Slesin [et. al.] authors. Published by Abberville Publishing Group New York, 1996.

⁷ SWAGE (also swege) – a tapered false edge on the back edge (spine) of a blade, extending from the tip and either reducing in width from the mid-point for approximately 40 – 50% of the blade (a "run in" swage) or maintain an even width over the same distance (a 'cut in' swage).

⁸ SCRATTED - a pattern of incised lines (often checkered) applied to bone handles aimed at improving the grip. The practice died out as gnarly stag became the handle of choice as it provided a better grip. 'Scrapped' is simply a Yorkshire dialect word for 'scratched'. Also, occasionally the term "forbuck" was used which has the same meaning as scrapped.

⁹ TOUCH MARK: stamp often used by artists and blacksmiths etc. to add a small signature mark to their finished piece.

¹⁰ CAST STEEL: "An early method of turning iron into steel, invented in 1742 and last made in the 1960s, it involves melting iron in a sealed crucible with charcoal. Also called crucible steel".

SOURCE: <https://www.knifemagazine.com/glossary/#c>

¹¹ INTEGRAL LINERS AND BOLSTERS: where the liners and bolsters on each side of the knife are forged as one piece. This was the norm through to the mid/late 19th century, when separately forged liners and bolsters gradually became the norm. I am unclear as to why this change occurred throughout the industry but assume that it was for cost-saving reasons.

¹² SPLIT BACK SPRING: "has ONE hand forged solid spring that is literally split into two parts for about half of its length (from the two-blade end.) These date from the 19th century and are rare". SOURCE: "knife Glossary – Knife Magazine"

<https://www.knifemagazine.com/glossary/#s>

¹³ Tweedale Geoffrey "Tweedale's Directory of Cutlery Manufacturers 1740 – 2020" Published by Geoffrey Tweedale, First Edition 2010.

¹⁴ Bernard Levine: "Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values – 4th Edition" published by DBI BOOKS, a division of Krause Publications, Inc. 1997

¹⁵ "The Best of Knife World – Volume III", published by Knife World Publications, 1993.

¹⁶ "George Wostenholm & Son, Ltd. Washington Works, THE I*XL CUTLERY Sheffield England" dated C. 1885. Reproduction published by Beinfeld Publishing, Inc. North Hollywood, California, undated.

¹⁷ "George Wostenholm & Son, Ltd. Washington Works, Wellington Street SHEFFIELD, 1 – ENGLAND" published c.1962

¹⁸ "Joseph Rodgers & Sons Limited" assume dated circa 1912. Catalog reprint by Adrian Van Dyk, undated.

¹⁹ SWAGE: See definition at Endnote 7 above

²⁰ Bernard Levine: *Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values*, 4th Edition published by DBI books 1997.

²¹ CHOIL: "The choil is a small notch cut into a folding blade just ahead of the kick, where the shoulder meets the cutting edge. See the illustration of the parts of a blade." SOURCE: <https://www.knifemagazine.com/glossary/choil/>

²² SWAGE: See definition at Endnote 7 above

²³ Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values – see previous Endnote 13.

²⁴ Sheffield Exhibition Knives, edited by Bill Adams. First Edition 1999, published by Old World Publishing Ltd.

²⁵ "Mesters to Masters – A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire" edited by Clyde Binfield and David Hey, Oxford University Press 1997.