



*gr8 knots*

*Works of art in rope and cord*

# Decorative Knot Tying - Workshops and Talks



# Knotting ventured, knotting gained ...

My name is Phil Cook, and I have been tying decorative knots for over 25 years.

Decorative knot tying is very relaxing and therapeutic (ask my wife, who loves to see me tying knots because it is guaranteed to put me in a good mood!)

Age is no barrier (I have even taught an 86 year old blind war veteran some decorative knots). With younger learners, however, do read the section “A few words of warning”.

Whilst there are numerous experts in the fields of sailing, climbing, crime (yes, forensic science includes knots), magic and many other aspects of knot tying, my talks and workshops deal primarily with decorative knots, some of which do actually have practical uses!

Long gone are the days when sailors in particular spent their leisure time tying works of art in rope and cord, so help me keep this fascinating craft alive.

Talks can last anything from ten minutes to an hour.

Workshops run from a couple of hours to a couple of days, although longer ones can easily be arranged.

This brochure outlines typical workshops and their suggested durations, which are invariably flexible to suit those attending.

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## A few words of warning ...

Not all rope and cord is kind to the skin, especially when using fingers to tighten a knot. Courses normally use “colourline” braided cord or paracord, which are both quite smooth, but at times we might experiment with other types of rope or cord. Sisal in particular can be quite “prickly”!

These courses invariably involve cutting (or trimming) and burning ends using a lighter. Knives and flames can be dangerous, so care is essential - I will happily burn or cut cords for those not comfortable doing so themselves. Younger attendees will require supervision when using tools.

Small pliers or fids are often used to thread rope or cord - again, care is needed.

# Talks

A lunchtime talk of 10 - 15 minutes might provide some light relief?

Normally, talks last from 30 minutes to an hour, and I often start things off with a magic trick!

The subject is decorative knotting, but I cannot totally ignore practical knots like the hangman's knot and the infamous "Cat o' nine tails", physical examples of which will be shown!

I often ask for a volunteer to help demonstrate a SAFE use of the hangman's knot.

I also feel obliged to mention the history of ropes and knots, and there are anecdotes and a romantic poem to wrap things up.

# Solomon bars and Dragonflies



A perennial favourite - the dragonfly!

A dragonfly can be tied in just a few minutes, and can be used as a wall decoration or even a brooch.

Simply by omitting the “wings” we have a solomon bar, which is often used as a bracelet. The bracelet shown here uses bayonet clips for fastening, but there is an alternative that requires no clips at all.



Have you ever had problems grabbing hold of that zip-pull on a cold winter's day?

Here's a simple zip-pull which should make life easier! This example has a diamond knot included, but it's not essential.

## Workshop duration

Most workshops start with a dragonfly because it is so quick and easy to tie, and this always helps boost confidence!

On its own, a couple of hours is more than sufficient for this workshop.

# Dog leads



An eye splice at each end of this piece of rope produces a practical dog lead.

We'll start off by looking at back splicing before moving on to eye splices.

We can hide the ends of the splices on our dog leads by tying turk's heads around them.



## **Workshop duration**

A couple of hours is more than sufficient to master the splicing required. If we want to include turk's heads then it will take longer (see the pages on Turk's heads).

# French Hitching



French hitching produces a very pleasing covering for cylindrical objects such as posts, broom handles, tools etc.

The ends of the hitching can be hidden with simple turk's heads.

## **Workshop duration**

Half a day is sufficient to learn some French hitching. If we want to include turk's heads then it will take longer (see the pages on Turk's heads), but simple turk's heads will suffice, and we can cover those in an hour or so.

# Turk's Heads

Endless possibilities and variations!

Even simple turk's heads are attractive as decorations. Here are two examples of a "5 bight, three lead" turk's head -



These knots are identical! The one on the right has simply been flattened. So, here we have a napkin ring and a coaster made from the same knot.



Some more turk's heads, these tied around a broom handle.

Turk's heads are also very useful for hiding the ends of other decorative knots. For example, here is one hiding the end of some french hitching on a pencil. French hitching is covered in another one of our workshops, but could easily be covered here if required.



## **Workshop duration**

Because of the infinite number of turk's head variations, courses can be designed to run from a couple of hours to a couple of days. For the longer courses, we look at using turk's heads in combination with other knots, such as French hitching or "crowning" (another method of covering a cylindrical object).

Shorter workshops will certainly cover the "5 bight, three lead" turk's head shown on the previous page, but longer workshops ... the sky's the limit!

# Monkey's Fists



The monkey's fist is another popular decorative knot. Tied in "big stuff", with a heavy weight inside, it makes a nice door stop.

However, this workshop looks at smaller monkey's fists, suitable for using as key fobs or zip pulls.

Two variations can be considered - the first one is shown above, and it is relatively easy to track the path that the cord takes around the "core" (usually a wooden ball, but we can use a "widget" from a can of Guinness!)

The second variation can be seen on the right here, where these monkey's fists have the loop coming from the side - tracking the cord path, especially when tightening up, can be quite tricky!



## **Workshop duration**

Half a day at least, because the tightening of these knots requires patience. Rush it and you'll regret it!

# Light Pulls and Bell Ropes



These light pulls or bell ropes each consist of four knots, which you will learn in this workshop. The items shown here are approximately 6 inches long, but the length depends on the thickness of the cord used.

The knots learned here can also be used to make key fobs.



There is even a DVD provided with the workshop so that you won't forget how to tie the required knots.

## **Workshop duration**

A full day is required at least.

## Other Ideas?

Not all products lend themselves to workshops, usually because of the time involved tightening things up, rather than actually learning something new.

However, please browse the gr8-knots web site, and if something appeals to you then I can design a workshop for you.

<http://www.gr8-knots.com>

# Prices

Prices quoted are correct as at April 2015, but are subject to change - please check.

## **Travelling expenses**

Travelling expenses may be waived for longer workshops or talks, otherwise charged at 40 pence per mile for distances greater than 20 miles from RG41 5AT (Berkshire).

## **Accommodation and subsistence expenses**

Normally only applicable to workshops longer than one day - £50 per night, unless provided by the customer.

## **Venues**

Charged at cost, although many organisations often provide the venue themselves anyway.

## **Talks**

15 minutes at lunchtime, or perhaps an evening talk?

Short talks (typically lunchtime) are normally only given within a 20 mile radius of RG41 5AT (Winnersh, Berkshire). No charge, but a donation to Alzheimer's UK would be appreciated.

I always bring some display items.

Talks of 30 minutes or longer cost £50. I often finish off with a short workshop if time permits.

## **Workshops**

£20 per hour, shared amongst attendees, plus cost of venue if applicable. Some workshops may be subject to a maximum number of 6 attendees, depending on the amount of individual attention likely to be required (for example, monkey's fists and bell ropes) - please ask.

A small contribution sometimes charged for materials, and tools are made available for the duration of the workshop.

# Contact Information

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