

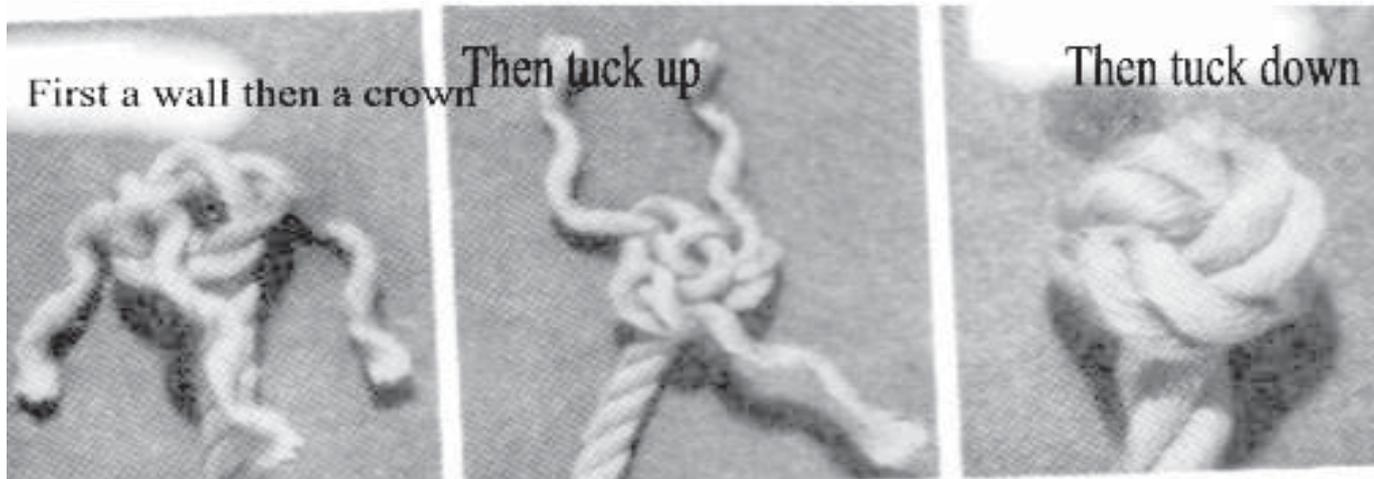
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CREW NEWSLETTER
OF THE BARQUE

JAMES CRAIG

May 2002



Knot of the month

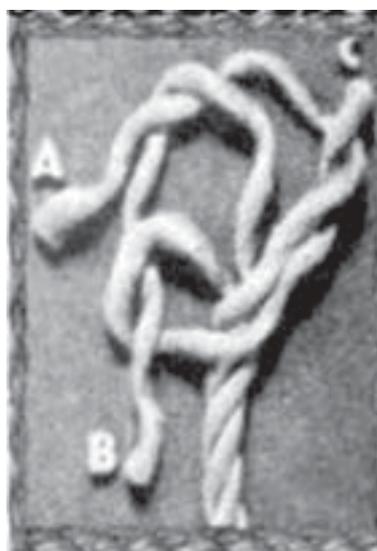
Wall Knot

Strands tuck up instead of down. This is the converse of the crown that you all learned during your basic course. The crown is used to start a back splice.

These two knots, used in various combinations are used in many knots

Manrope Knot

Manrope knots were formerly tied in the ends of elaborate manropes, which were often coach whipped, painted, fringed, tasseled, decorated with Turk's heads. They were hung from stanchions in the rails and provided a handhold for visitors coming onboard. They were normally tied in four-strand rope now impossible to get.



First a wall, then a crown;
Now tuck up, then tuck down.

Parts of the ship

Square sail

Head

Earring ring

Cringle

Leech

Clew

Foot

A course sail has a Clew spectacle, which has three thimbles, cast in a single mould so that three ropes can be hooked into it to lead in different directions. E.g. Tack; Sheet; Clew garnet.

James Craig Crew News

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All crew members and others associated with the James Craig are very welcome to submit material

The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily be the viewpoint of the Sydney Maritime Museum, or the crew of the James Craig or its officers.

What becomes of women who go to sea . . .

The Naval Chronicle 1807 (Contemporary record of the Royal Navy at War) ;

At the Public Office, Queens square, an old woman, generally known by the name of Tom Bowling, was lately brought before the magistrate, for sleeping all night in the street; was committed as a rogue and a vagabond, and passed to her parish.

She served as a boatswain's mate on board a man of war for upwards to 20 years, and has a pension from the Chatham Chest#, *

When waken at midnight by the watchman in the street, covered in snow she cried, "Where the devil would you have me sleep?" She generally slept in

this way, and dresses like a man; and is so hardy at a very advanced age, that she never catches cold.

#Chatham Chest. It paid compensation for wounds and injuries sustained in action or on duty, and pensions for permanent disablement to warrant officers, ratings and dockyard workers. It also paid pensions to the widows of those killed in action.

It was administered by officers stationed at Chatham under the control of the Navy Board. In 1713 a disablement flat rate of 5d (old pence) a day was given and some 150 years later, in the Crimean War, this became 8d a day for partial and 2 shillings a day for total disablement.



Hurricane

The hurricane, which struck Pamir 11 PM on 19 February 1944 homebound on voyage five from Frisco was nearly the end of her and the young lightweight crew who enthusiastically served her.

This was the same hurricane which played havoc with the American-Japanese invasion fleet and was the vivid background to the notorious Capt. Quegg in Herman Woulk's famous novel "The "Cain Mutiny" Five ships were sunk and many damaged as it rampaged thousands of miles down the central Pacific. Pamir received the tail end sting south of the Tonga group.

On the three whistle "All hands on deck, get the rig off her", Ponti Jones was given the bellowed order from Billy Boy Galloway, take Rate and Price, get the bloody mizzen royal and t'gallants in quick. On the double – go!" He wasn't very pleased with the situation and from

the urgency of his voice someone had stuffed up!

Main-topman Os got a similar order and was given Hunt and Munson, all part of Billy Boy's port watch – and off they all scurried like monkeys up a tree. The 8-12 starboard watch was already up on the fore, working like Trojans. It had been port watch's below and all were annoyed why sail had not come off hours before. Everyone knew hurricane reports had been received for the area a few hundred miles to the north!

The arse was dropping out the glass fast and the wind already muttering uneasily as both watches went about getting sail off her in double-quick time.

The royals were quickly secured and gave no trouble. Shinning down the upper gallants, (she carried lower and upper t'gallants) they waited for the deck wallahs to ease sheets and bunt up. With sails cracking and thrashing they stuck

in to task with gusto. Regardless of the aching arms or busted fingers, they somehow managed to subdue them. It was one helluva fight, then to the lower gallant to tackle the next demon bitch.

The wind was now gale force. With the weather side in they wrested their way along the yard to get the rest of the thrashing sail into gaskets. This they managed with great difficulty and they were fast running out of steam.

For'ard through the driving the main on the main could be seen Os and his boys in a similar predicament. Wind was screaming, sails were flogging beyond control. Nothing they could do would hold them – after a few mighty cracks sails thrashed themselves in to pieces of boltropes and were gone!

From an ominous half buried moon everything took on a frightening eerie gloom. Racing black clouds gathered tremendous speed close overhead.

Across the port quarter a formidable dirty gray-black wall was fast bearing down to pounce and the Pamir was going like a bolting racehorse to dodge it!

Suddenly it struck with a vengeance – a hurricane force of enormous ferocity. All they could do was hang on for their lives. The half furled t'gallant went like a bang from a cannon, disappearing clean off the yard, as if by magic.

The mast shuddering and whipping and the yards corkscrewing in their braces. Pamir was flattened out! They yard they clung to seemed nearly vertical as the clawed their way back into the mast.

Far below, away right angled to the port, her hull staggered in a foaming mass of phosphorescent white water. Fighting for her life she tried desperately to shake off the enormous pressure which burdened her.

After the first onslaught, with more men to the wheel held hard down to starboard she came off a bit and picked herself up, giving Ponti time to lash the two boys and himself between the futtock shrouds and the lower gallant parrel. With hands pressed hard against the mast and feet braced, they clung to each other and to whatever else they could like limpets! Luckily, the two gaskets were handy within reach on the jackstay, which saved them from certain death.

Bodies and limbs went into rigger mortis with fear and fatigue. This was it, goners! Wind flown thoughts screamed through heads – everything and everyone was in deep trouble! Fifty heavyweight Finns would not have beaten this wind – unless sail was got in hours before and double lashed.

Wind, rain and spume stung bare skin. Clouds ballooned and flimsy tropic shirts and shorts were ripped off their bodies. Breathing was even difficult, air had to be sucked into the chest. The whole ship was being shaken to death without mercy. Ears ached and finally went numb. All hell had broken loose.

The three of them prayed to God the mast stayed up and their body lashing held.

What shook the most, the 170-foot mast or three pair of legs it is hard to say. At that particular moment there was not a pair of legs in the whole ship that was not shaking' for one reason or another.

The sedate orderly world of this sailing ship turned into a nightmare. Pamir's immortality, and our own, was on knife-edge. She was sailing under!





All around sails blew out with thunderous thrashing anger; even those furled and lashed up on the yards were ripped off her.

On deck everything was let fly to ease the overwhelming pressure and save the ship. Heavy wire sheets and chains were standing straight out thrashing and sparking with vicious fury. A main topmast backstay parted, the masts had reached her limit of stress. Christ! Hang on boys, hang on!

With everything gone the ship eased somewhat from being totally overpowered, Ponti sensed her coming off the wind a point or two. Yes. By Jesus, she was lifting herself up! In the lull, looking down to leeward, here was someone trying to make his way up the inside of the mizzen shrouds. It was obvious if they were ever going to get down, it was now or never! It would be a close call and a nightmare descent every foot of the way.

Using sign language, Ponti indicated what he wanted to boys to do. Easing himself over and under the crosstrees he used the terrific wind pressure to advantage against the inside of the starboard t' gallants shrouds and persuaded the two boy to follow. Inches at a time, rung by rung, they clawed their way down to the mizzen table.

On realizing the wind could only flatten them against the rough tarred ropes and grace their skin, they found renewed confidence. With fear temporarily under control strength returned. Enabling them to safely make the mizzen topmast table exhausted!

The lee starboard main deck was continually under huge smothering seas and at times buried the hatch across the whole waist section of the ship.

It was useless trying to reach the deck on the inside of the rigging. So again it was over and under the mast table and futtock shrouds where, partly sheltered behind the fattest bottom half of the mast, they shun down a maze of tangled ropes and blocks and landed safely inside the midship fiferail which gave some protection from the worst of the breakers that crashed over the bulwarks on every great lurch.

This accomplished, they helped each other along the weather side, dodging from point to point when she had arse under an enormous sea that picked them up holus-bolus and washed them around no. 4 hatch past the poop entrance.

There they were grabbed by Bosun's Mate Urquhart, Sailmaker Pederson and the carpenter who hauled them into the shelter of the poop like drowned rats.



Having urged the crew to consider themselves “on stage” while passengers are aboard, first mate Russell demonstrates an operatic aria. Captain Ken and the chorus line wait for their cue.



Four or five others were also sheltering, including Os and his boys who had survived the same predicament getting down from the main in the god sent lull a short time before.

Blue Jenkins the AB who attempted the dangerous climb up the to wave the men down peered anxiously into the compass by the aft wheel, letting everyone know whether she was holding a course or not. Under the poop out of storm was like being heaven but it was still a case of hang on for dear life.

Pamir seemed to stand on her nose, then with a tremendous lurch the heavy thirty-man life raft was torn off the jibber shrouds and with a God almighty crash landed on the poop above their heads and washed over the side without trace.

The rafts were built of heavy wooden scantling; about 12 ft square and encased about two dozen 44-gallon empty oil drums for flotation!

With another lull Third Mate Renner staggered in through the door, another exhausted drowned rat, wanting the jigger stay'sle down, the last sailing holding. “It's pushing her arse down and head to wind. The old man wants it off” he said!

Out they trooped into the black howling night. Renner eased off the lanyard himself and the rest took the downhaul With a crack like a 4.7 she disintegrated and was gone to join the others –somewhere SE of Rarotonga. Most of those aft then worked their way along to the amidships island to take shelter in the lee of the chart house and be handy for orders which had to be yelled into the ear of the hurricane.

The Mate Ace Liewendahl took Os, Ponti and a few others down below to the accommodation to tighten up the steel storm doors, ports and secure anything slopping around in water entering by the goosenecks and ventilators when the starboard amidships section rail was under water. Unbelievable!

With just the dim emergency battery lights on it was a fetid gloom with water seeping everywhere. The air dank and humid. All the starboard lower bunks and gear were soaking wet. Everything loose was rolling and sliding to every lurch. After the deafening nose on deck, down below was like a wet vibrating tomb.

Life jackets were brought up to the chart room, and then it was out on the deck again with backs against the chart house hanging on to each other and whatever else they could in the howling



bedlam.

The Master, Royale Champion, had jammed himself between the weather main back stays and the bulwarks where he hung on stiff and erect, his old felt hat jammed over his ears and lashed with a couple of rope yarns. His canvas shelter cloth had long since blown away. There was nothing else anyone could do – it was up to Pamir to fight her way out for all of us! This she did with every ounce of her indomitable strength.

At times, unbelievable vicious squalls nearly overwhelmed her. She was repeatedly driven under to within feet of the chart room door where most of the crew lay on deck hanging on to lifelines they had managed to rig.

The starboard foc'sle headlight was often pressed under casting an unreal spooky green light under the foaming scene for'ard.

Sheets had been let fly to get her up and give her a chance. She took the challenge like the fantastic old girl she was and hung in on a knife-edge and refused to be beaten.

Fighting back magnificently under ragged bare yards she somehow tore her way through the sea.

Some reckoned she did 17 to 18 knots that night – whether she wanted to or not.

With the best helmsmen on the wheel they skillfully helped the ship pick herself up time and time again. Pamir recovered where a less ship or steamboat probably would have gone under to Davey Jones.

Out of the heavens the elements had descended and staggered through this maelstrom, possessed by the berserk sea devil himself.

Exhausted, battered and bruised, the dear old girl tattered and torn and her decks a shambles, the hurricane finally left the scene at dawn, as sneakily as it had come. It marauded helter-skelter across the ocean to tear some other poor buggers to pieces!

As everyone crawled exhausted out wherever they had found shelter to greet and thank God for the greatest dawn of their lives, Pamir celebrated by rolling her guts out in a strangely silent tropical calm. Only the broken gear banging against mast and yards, ringing in her victory dance, brought us back with a rush to the magnitude of her experience, and survival!

A head count showed no loss of shipmates. Billy Boy soon had the iodine and band-aids going. Redband got the galley stove working for a cupper and the





Old man “spliced the main brace” with a large tot of run –which soon took the edge of cuts and bruises. In no time, it was business as usual for everyone worked in a state of shock and disbelief.

When the Finish Chief Mate Liewendahl was asked what he thought about that lot” (he had served all his in career in four of Erickson’s windjammers, including the famous Mushily), he replied he’d seen bigger seas, but never wind like that!

All could see what was ahead, work! Work! And more work! Clean up, get her going again, shipshape and Kiwi fashion! Into it! All hands, worked their guts out, day and night. Every spare minute an enlarged team was repairing and sewing new sails, led by the old Man and those “masters of the needle”. Sailmakers Paul Pederson and Dropper Duns ford!

By next day Pamir was on course and under way – in three days she was happily bowling along for Wellington and arrived 54 memorable days out from Frisco! All hands, bar a few, went back for the next voyage to Vancouver.

As Billy Boy Galloway put it to his watch with a grin, “How about doing another trip lads and maybe some day you’ll learn to be proper sailormen!”

Hurricane or not, voyage 5 was one out of Neptune’s box. Enough for a lifetime and never to be forgotten! Fourteen able seamen, buckos, and boys went on to become six ships masters, four harbormasters and pilots, a shipping company executive director and one salvage expert. On the other side of the coin many members of voyage 5 crew went on in life allowing alcohol to badly affect them and their families and sadly some of Pamir’s young Vikings died before their late thirties.

On the question of cadet ships Pamir produced excellent seamen, just as she was, husband were something else! On that note Ponti Jones in retirement rests his case!

Short history of the Pamir

Pamir was a big handsome four masted barque built for the German Laeisz Flying P line by Blohm and Voss, Hamburg in 1905. She was purpose built and designed for the Chilean, Cape Horn nitrate trade. Twice rounding Cape Horn on one return voyage is the most demanding seafaring requirement for any shipowner’s profit God ever gave





wrath to!

Shipowners have never been known for their generosity or good nature but the Leis Flying P Line was better than most!

Pamir was 2799 gross tons: 316 ft in length and a beam of 46 ft. She could carry 62,000 bags of grain or 4,300 tons of guano on a draft of 23 ft 6 inches. Her masts towered 170 ft above the deck and her yards carried close for 40,000 square. ft of canvas.

With the right wind and crew she could tramp along at 12 knots comfortably. She proved a good sea-boat but under extreme conditions could be a bit of a handful.

Pamir was then sold to Erikson, the last of the commercial sailing ship operators and with others square-riggers entered into the Australian grain trade in 1932.

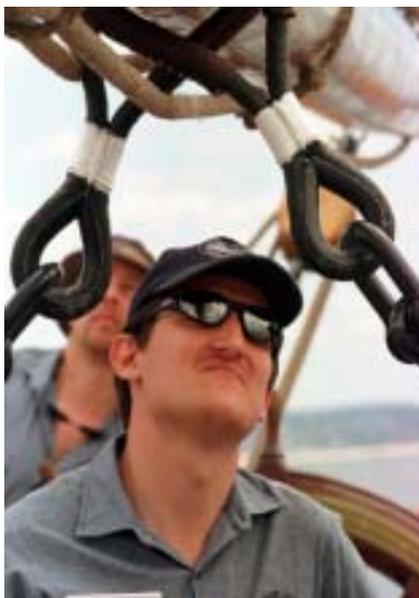
She then found work in the seagull (bird shit) trade; in 1937 she made her first voyage to New Zealand from the Seychelles Islands with 4,246 tons for Auckland. After furthering tramping the world and doing another guano voyage to New Plymouth, Pamir eventually wandered into Wellington in July 1941, with another 4,300 tons of cargo and was snatched as a "prize of war" by New / Zealand Government.

She got off to a good start with Capt. Stanch in command using the invaluable experience of the nucleus of Finns from the old crowd. Pamir made 10 excellent voyages to Frisco, Vancouver, Sydney and the United Kingdom under the New Zealand flag in 1949 she was handed back to the Finns.

Eriksson's had no further use for her but Pamir was eventually saved from the ship breakers, together with the *Passat* by an ex square rig ship owner from Lubeck and converted into a cargo carrying grain ship with a crew of 86. A diesel engine was installed with Pamir probably thought the equivalent of a "double bypass and prostrate operation" both at the same time! They wounded her soul – and she never healed.

On 21 September 1957 on her 52nd year Pamir fought her last fight with the cruel sea. Caught by Hurricane Carrier with her pants down, in a 140-knot wind and 70 ft seas, with her cargo of barley shifting she gave up and was overwhelmed. Eighty mainly inexperienced men boys lost their lives.

The Pamir crew of 1944 voyage 5 knows exactly what it felt like because



in similar circumstances, but for a lot of luck and seamanship, they could have gone too! On voyage 1 Pamir carried the last commercial cargo by square-rigged ship around the Cape Horn.

Pamir's grave is in the Atlantic Ocean 600 miles sw of the Azores in 500 fathoms of water. God bless Pamir's gallant soul and all who experienced her power and grace yes, even those rubber necks who made judgments about those who kept her sailing! God bless them too!

Peter D

(My neighbor served on the Pamir in 1944/45)

Source Pamir Association Wellington New Zealand

Trivia

In 1939 on board the barque *Moshulu*, 31 sails registered 3200 tons, a crew of 23. During one 24-hour period, in the South Atlantic, her port and starboard watches, eight men per watch, had 112 sail changes with twenty-eight sails. The heaviest of which weighed one and half tons.

Website for books and knots.

<http://www.angelfire.com/ak/skateworld/index.html>



Finally - some photos

I promise they are better focused than they look here - resolution on this PDF has been reduced in an effort to avoid choking anyone's email.

For those who would like bigger, sharper photos, I will shortly provide free CDs of these and other shots in much greater resolution (300dpi), size (varies, but up to 20x30cm) and file size (don't ask).

You should be able to open the JPEG files on the CD through your web browser, save them to your computer, email them (if you reduce the file size), and print them out.

If you want prints of photographic quality and permanence, I recommend that you take the CD to Fuji digital photo labs, whose new machines provide very good quality at fairly reasonable prices.

I can help with providing files of different sizes, if you wish.

If you have seen me taking your photo but it does not appear here, do not take this personally.

I aim to document the spirit and character of the ship and its crew through unposed shots that may happen to be "of" an individual or group but show them as part of the activity onboard.

This means there is a high cull rate of shots that are just not so great or are technically unacceptable (yes, I fluff my share of shots, despite the fancy gear).

I hope to eventually get shots of all regular crew, but the first criteria is to show you as a part of the working of the ship. Cheers JS