



I am primarily a collector of tools related to knitting.

This picture is of my alphabetical reference collection of single point knitting needles. Circulars are filed separately.

I have over 1000 brand names and manufacturer names and about 900 physical specimens

All this information – and many of my presentations - are available to read or download from my website.

This photo was taken this year, but I continue to add specimens of knitting needles, packaging, and needle holders.

Handling Yarn – a Six-Year Journey

2013 – Skein winders

2014 - Winding Reels

2015 – Spool Knaves

2016 – Yarn Holders
Worn on the Person

2017 – Yarn Tubs and
Caskets

2018 – Yarn and
Thread Winders

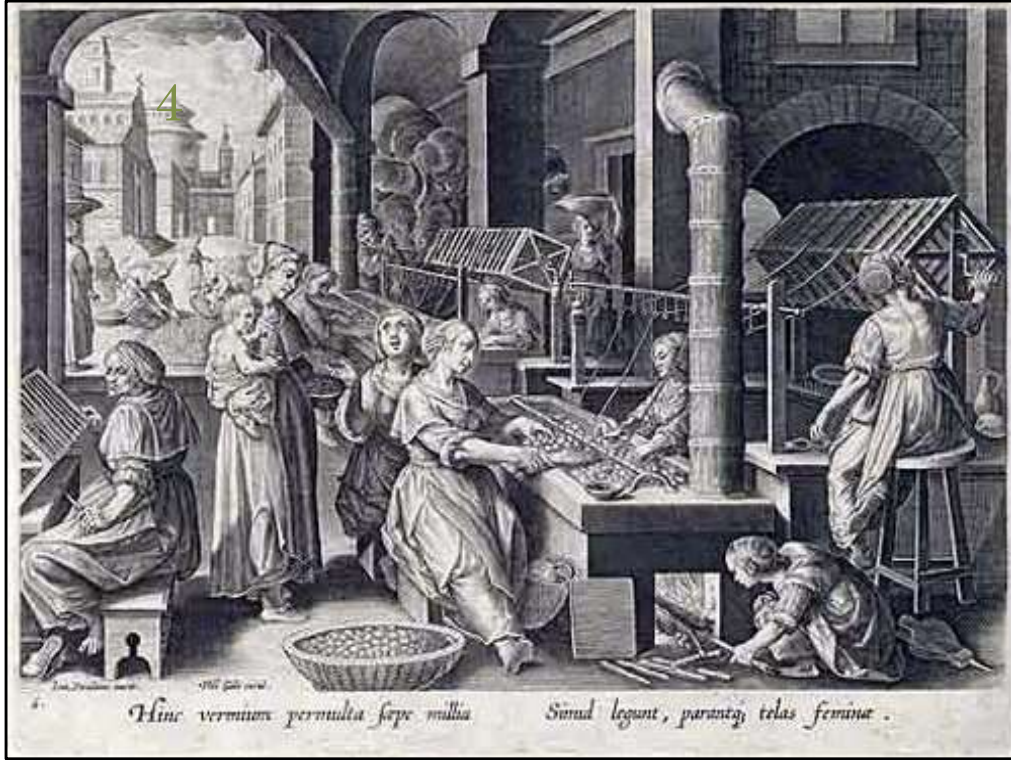


In 2013 I began trying to come to terms with my tools used to handle or store yarn. This became a six-year journey. Now I can look back with a much wider overview. Not a lot available in English about a lot of these tools which often produced at home or by individual craftsmen/women or by very small firms.

Now I have combined *Spool Knaves* and *Yarn Holders Worn on the Person* together. Actually they are in the same classification.

2015 – spool knaves – wasn't until the next year that I could articulate what distinguished a spool knave from other yarn holders worn on the person.

The “knave” is the rod or staff. So a spool knave has to have a rod or staff – although I have also seen a chain used for a horizontal spool knave.





A while ago, we had a talk on Tatting Shuttles, with a reference book that included these three pictures.

I read the book after the talk, and found these references to women carrying their yarn in such cloth bags to prevent it from unravelling

This lady, with her delicate lace and her fabulous dress – love the stomacher to flatter her breasts in the most fashionable style of the age – holds what appears to be a gold knotting shuttle in one hand, and has a embroidered bag to hold her thread or yarn on a ribbon over her arm.



In the mid 18th century needlework was a drawing room activity, and women were looking for ways to carry their tools as they moved around – or they just wanted to keep their tools close while they worked.

This is obviously a less exalted style of dress, but nevertheless, the stitcher looks very prosperous with both an embroidered bag and a workbasket.



This woman, Lady Mulgrave, has a very large knotting shuttle in her right hand, plus a bag over her wrist to hold her yarn.

So, women had these bags; pockets were not yet a standard item incorporated in skirts, and so they began looking for other ways to hold and display their tools.

For this talk, I've categorised the wearable tools I have to hold yarn in four groups – this is sometimes a bit arbitrary, because some tools could perform more than one function. My categories are :

Chatelaines
Spool knaves
Bangles
and
Hooks

Chatelaines – a definition :

A short set of chains attached to a woman's belt, used for carrying keys or other items



But through association, any tool hanging from a chain, is called a chatelaine, especially a finger chatelaine, a wrist chatelaine or “a chatelaine pinned on the blouse”.

The following examples are specifically known as “knitters chatelaines”, holding knitting needles, and **OFTEN** a yarn hook.

Chains on chatelaines were not always that short, and most chatelaines were not specifically for holding needlework tools. See photos earlier on our Closed Facebook Page for a chatelaine photo shared by Kerry.

This talk will focus only on chatelaines for NWT.

If you want more examples, check out the book by our own Sydney NWT gurus, Cummins and Taunton's *Chatelaines : Utility to Glorious Extravagance*.

We have copy in our library in Victorian library, and I think Sydney group does too.



Left – CC 1798 Knitting needle tip guards as a gun with waisthook. German about 1850. Tested silver but unmarked. Bunch of grapes on the handle, forget-me-nots in a motif below the trigger arm and ivy leaves on the stock.

Right – C 1119 – no information. Most of these type of items were continental.



Wedding Boxes – a traditional wedding gift in Germanic culture in the mid-19th century – given as symbolic of the new wife’s domestic responsibilities.

Painted cover was possibly made by the renowned company Stobwasser , although no maker’s mark or label appears. Google says : The manufactory Stobwasser was established in 1740, trading in haberdashery. Trading of lacquered goods was introduced in 1757.

In 1760’s entire family Stobwasser moved to Brunswick with assistance from the local Duke, who wanted to promote manufacturing in his duchy. Made a range of small items and also furniture and things like the lacquering of the state coach. Company continued until about 1863.

The firm developed very advanced lacquering techniques and opened its own painting workshop in the late 1700’s. Bases for painting included wood and papier mache. Papier mache could also be pressed in moulds to form the edging on such objects.

Stobwasser became a generic name of such boxes and objects with a painted scene on the cover.

CC 2008 - Hand painted scene on the cover (according to Kay Sullivan), wooden body, and – possibly – a vulcanite or pressed horn decorative framework. Gutta percha, according to Sally Buttons

CC 2008 – “dispersal of the Hilda Fried collection, December, 2010, assembled mainly during the 1940’s – 1970’s. Hilda Fried continued collecting until her passing in 1984 at age 80. The fine array of sewing articles she assembled over four decades...”

This shot has a thimble and bodkin added by me.

Sally Buttons says, the tools in the tray have been machine stamped out – a cheaper method than cast silver. Shows the move toward cheaper production (in contrast to the hand-built boxes of the Palais Royale period).



CC 2918 – German-Austrian, around 1850. Have also seen these labelled as Italian, French, and Check – but my own experience is that they are all Germanic. I actually asked one of my Dutch sellers why he thought his box was Italian. He replied that he really didn't know.

Although I have selected this box to illustrate this talk, it is actually not in very good condition. As with earlier Palais Royale boxes in Paris, the recipient or the giver could choose which tools to put in the box, so there is a lot of variation. Not so many boxes have knitting tools – here we are looking at tools to hold yarn.

The scissors have had the handles repaired very badly AND the seam knife has had the tip broken off.

Note also the paper "hinge" on the box – another indication that this was an inexpensive item – more a traditional present than a mark of respect or affection. These hinges are, of course, very fragile and such boxes should always be handled with care.

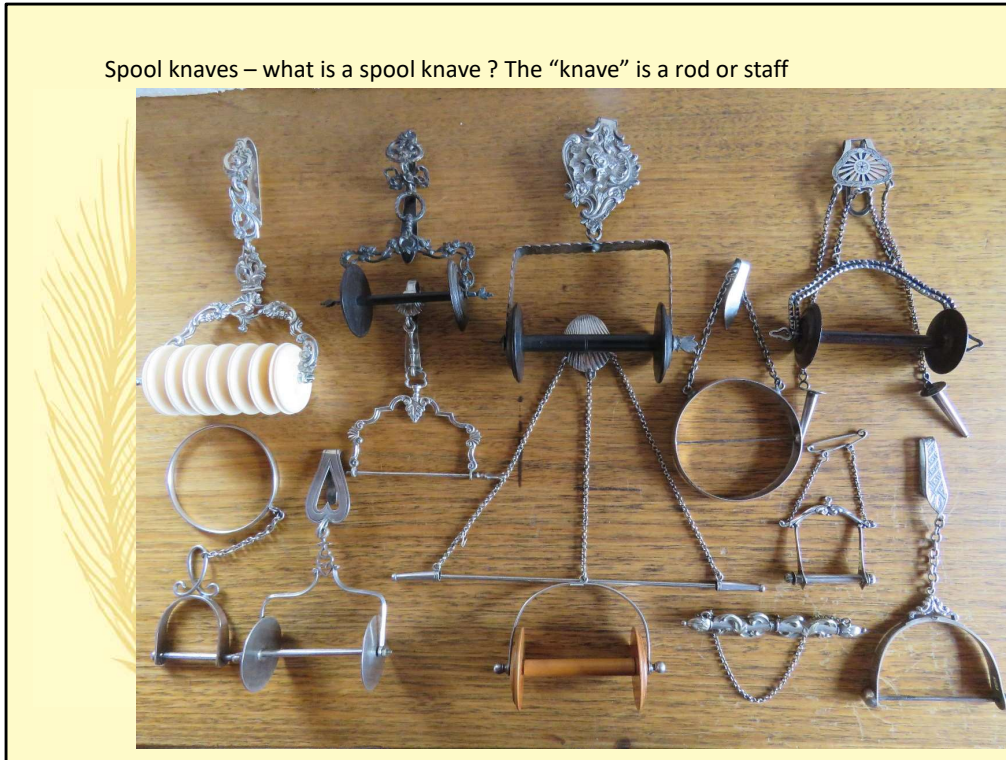
But the most unique thing in this box is the clamp - the only one I have ever seen.



CC 2918 – This is an shot of the outside of the box. I talked about the clamp and the square hole in the box with Carolyn Meacham. I’ve never seen another box with such a hole, and the clamp is fairly crude - hard to see it pressing against the polished surface of a drawing room table. Carolyn suggested this construction has been created to clamp the box hard against the table, so the box itself can be used to hold fabric against the table – as a “third hand”.

(Note – I didn’t buy the box from Carolyn)

Spool knives – what is a spool knife ? The “knaive” is a rod or staff



This is a selection of horizontal knives.

L to R, top to bottom

- CC 2941 – probably Dutch
- CC –
- CC 3236 - Dutch or German with wooden reel and very large waist plaque – much cheaper seeming item.
- CC 3527- said to be English and is inscribed 1762 with the name Hester Lynch Salusbury – contemporary of Samuel Johnson and the later owned by Gabriel Daniel Rossetti.

Middle Row

- Xx
- Xx
- CC 2490 - Hallmarked as Swedish, most similar in style to CC 3527
- CC 2112 - Scottish
- Doll's chatelaine

Bottom Row

- Heart-shaped waist clip
- CC 0086 – very unusual “pin-on” spool knife with the spool of yarn or thread held on the chain. An example of the idiosyncratic style of local jewellers or silversmiths
- XX



CC 0136 – Swedish sterling silver, dated 1876. Very heavy



CC 2941 – marks hard to decipher, but possibly old Dutch. Offered to me by a woman who heard me speak on luxury knitting tools at Dorset Thimble Society in 2013. I was back in UK 4 years later, and happily bought it at her price. I have had every silver expert I know look at it, including Sally Buttons. No one had real confidence in asserting a place of origin, but I am happy to accept as Dutch.



LEFT AND BELOW - CC 0086 – combination spool knave and tip protectors. Pin onto clothing to use as a spool knave while working, then, when finished, unpin the tip protectors, insert the KN, and wind the chain around them to hold securely. Purchased from Carolyn Meacham in 2001. Both she and I have never seen another one like it.

RIGHT CC 2112- Scottish, hallmarked for George Edward & Son, Glasgow, 1873-4. In this case, the knave is removed by squeezing the ring at the top and bottom to create some ease so that the rod drops out. Typical Scottish “no nonsense” approach, none of the unnecessary decoration.

Bangles – just like modern jewellery – over the wrist. But there are two kinds of bangles – Rigid circle with a short chain – and a longer chain worn further near the elbow



A variety of bangles with yarn cages dependent – not all that aesthetic. Left to right :

CC 1593 – bought 2009 from Carol Bates (Past Caring) – continental silver or white metal

CC 686 - note the flat plate with four chains – looks rather slippery, but paintings show that it is worn well up the forearm where it is more stable.

CC 1420 – from the Ruth Mann collection, Dutch – Sally Buttons says “cheaply made” with some pieces pressed rather than cast.

CC 1870 – very modern, possibly art deco - quite ugly. I only bought it to complete my collection. Bought in 2010 from Virginia Neil.

CC 2481 - hollowed mahogany ball, with ivory girdle and silver bangle. I bought it from Bleasdales in 2012, then later, found it in a Bonham’s catalogue from 2003.

CC 2010 –



Kay Sullivan's book, showing how the bangle/over the wrist holder was worn.



LEFT – CC 3899 – seller says Dutch but could be Germanic. See CC 701 from Heike Belter – Heike says north German – really saying the same area. Bought CC 701 ten years ago – both items use same heart-shaped components and the central roundel.

RIGHT – CC 3904 – Sylvie Collette says Dutch.



Four American bangles with a rod to fit through a reel of yarn or silk– so bangle spool knaves - turn of the 20th century to 1920s

CC 1831 – Celluloid expandable bangle with celluloid rod capped by a enamelled sterling disk to hold the yarn spool on. Hallmarked for F. A. Hermann, which was founded in 1908 in Attleboro.

CC 1856 – Foster & Bailey yarn bangle with lavender and white stopper. Stopper marked STERLING and dog clip marked F&B. No mark on the bangle

CC 2009 – Rose enamelled spool knave and bangle from the Hilda Fried Collection. C&H Co impressed on clasp. Chaplin & Hollister established 1898. Traded until 1922. Bought 2010 from Jeffrey Evans

CC 2382 – Arts & Crafts bangle and spool knave – no marks. Purchased from Elizabeth Worcowski



LEFT CC 1169 – German second half 19th century, amethyst stones (one round and one oval) with a small hole in the top of one leaf, possibly for thread to pass through. Pressed. Maker's mark ISZ 12, so perhaps made in 1912? But, note the difference in the weight of this piece to the other two on this slide.

RIGHT - CC 2520 Norwegian knitters chatelaine or yarn hook by silversmith Michael Booker who worked from 1810 to 1851 in Oslo. Signed on the back of the waist clip. The front plaque is eglomise, back side of the glass being gilded or enamelled.

Possibly the chain and hook are not the originals



CC 2877 - Bleasdales catalogue says A rare 18th century French silver wool ball hook, the chatelaine style hook to a rectangular cut corner panel delightfully engraved with a child `writing` on a panel of a large classical vase ""Penrez a Moi"" (Hang on Me) above a small bracket supporting a swivelling hook,

“the back of the panel mounted with a tube, possibly to take a knitting needle, various marks, 10.5cm. About 1800.”

I spoke with the French auction house Delehar whose label is on the back. Their records did not identify this item or the dating for their auction. They agreed with the Bleasdales date, noting “ It’s simple elegance lends credence to the idea that it’s actually “Belgian”/Dutch with a then fashionable French (?) inscription. It is also of far better quality than most of its type. As for the marks described, unfortunately continental marks are a minefield. There are 11 different crowned Os The ‘axe’ mark is equally difficult but is probably a control/tax mark.”

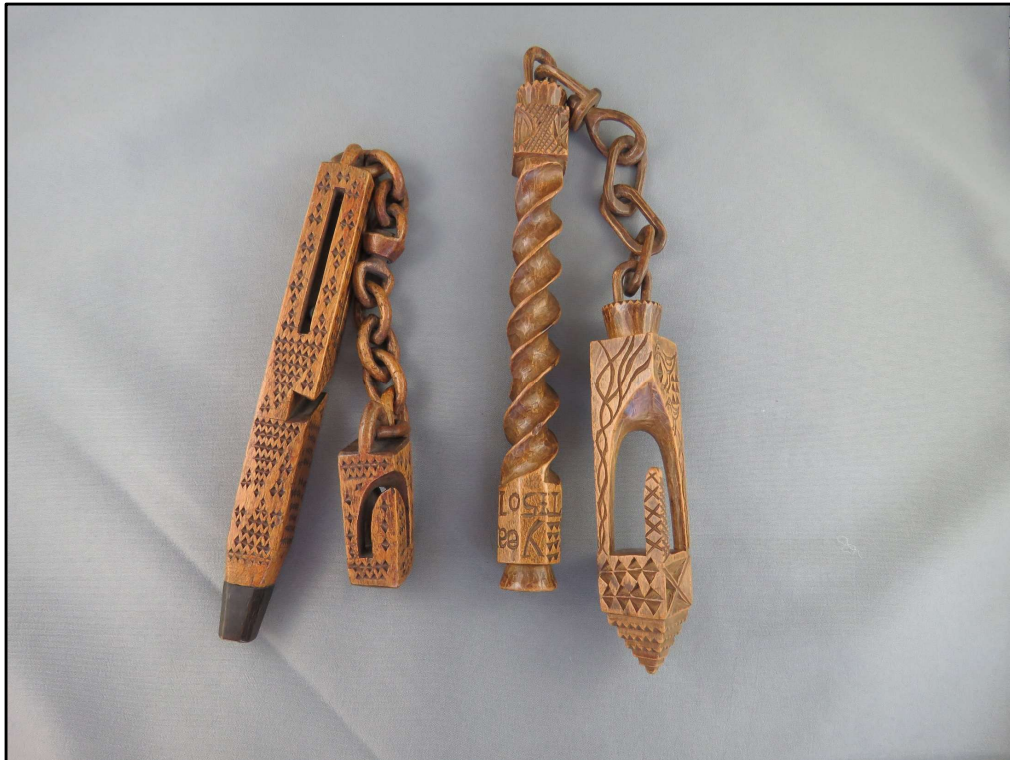


CC 2198 – bought 2011 September from Carolyn Meacham who found it in UK and bought it with me in mind ! Feels it is German or Austrian – I agree, due to poor casting of the bird and very heavy KS. Chains seem to be original.

Gay Lines suggests the chain arrangement is to slide the waistband or belt through.

Shown in LH photo lying flat, camera shooting from bottom up, so as to show the KS hole to hold the needle

No silver marks but CM feels it is solid silver. I think it is very heavy so either solid silver or another metal like brass.



Left , CC 368 – Welsh knitting stick – hole for the knitting needle is at the bottom of the long shaft. The clew-holder is at the end of a self-attached chain

Right, CC 2624 – Spiral carved shaft with clew-holder at the end of a self-attached chain. The carving around the hole for the knitting needle – facing downwards here – reads MT 15 years old. The carving around the clew holder reads “In this present year 1810” – absolutely virtuso carving, and possibly created by a member of the famous Tarn family of wood carvers and knitting stick makers. I discussed this idea with Ian McFeeters, April, 2016 “Your other picture certainly looks like a Tarn sheath. It is even earlier than the 1840 one in the York collection, so is certainly too early for Timothy. So whether it is by Thomas or some other family member it is impossible to say. It is certainly a very interesting addition to your collection!!”



ALL ENGLISH

Top, CC 141 - brass yarn hook with heart finial. 1909 *Connoisseur* says in an article on knitting implements used by stocking knitters of the English/Scottish borders : “the ball of yarn or ‘clue’ was in some instances placed on a metal hook on the right side of the knitter...these ‘clue holders’ were made in various shapes and sizes of brass and iron..” Have had it suggested to me that this implement was also used to hold together the strings of a butcher’s apron.

Middle, CC 2709 18th century yarn hook made of horn, the lantern carved A.L.L. with dot and cross decoration. Can be threaded through apron strings, or a suspension piece might be missing from the top.

Bottom, CC 2183 “antique carved horn hook wool holder chatelaine. Made from carved horn with initials on one side H and T, and on the other xxxx.

Hand-made nail or wire bent into the hook.

These hooks could be used threaded through a belt with the ball of yarn on the hook to enable free flow of the thread whilst the wearer moved around. Hole at the top means the device could have been used as a KS.



“Gilli Hook - Danish

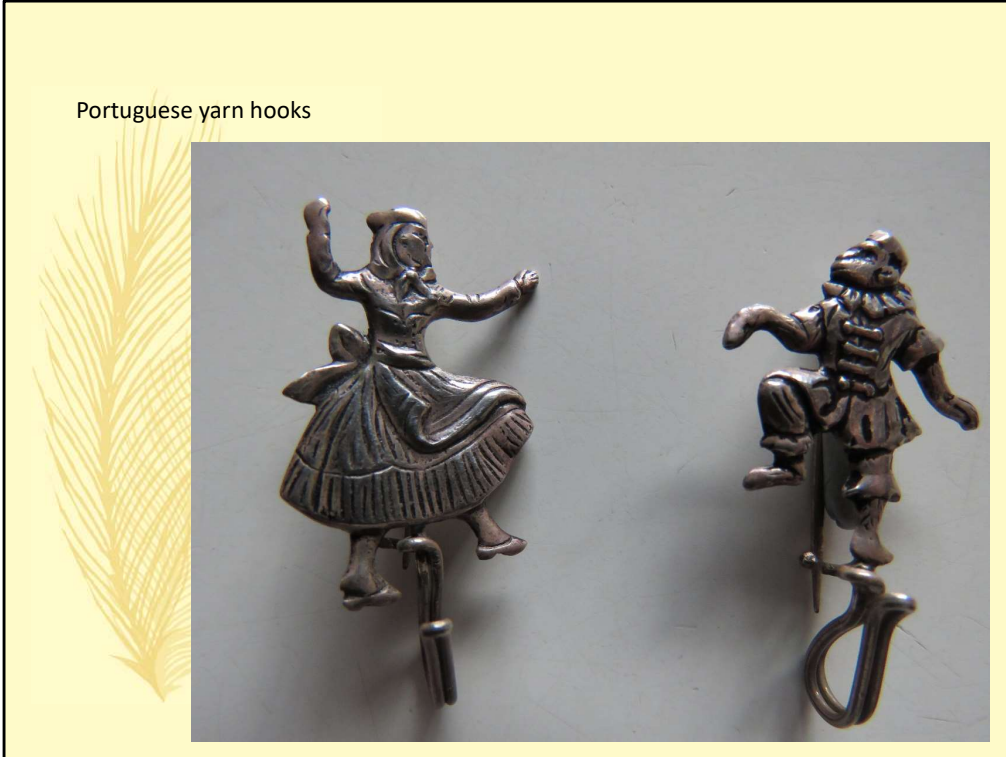
CC 3841 - DANISH

The Herning Museum published this photo with this reproduction, called a gilli hook.

“A gilli hook to attach to the chest just below the left shoulder, with the ball of yarn so fastened, the knitter can walk around and knit freely.

The original is held at the museum.

Portuguese yarn hooks



LEFT - CC 1812 and RIGHT CC 1807 - part of traditional knitting kit in Portugal

Described by the seller in 2010 as “vintage with the famous Portuguese mark of the “eagle”.

The dancer is in a traditional Portuguese costume and the monkey is wearing a performance costume.

Lots of contemporary examples on sites like Etsy.



Greek woman controlling her yarn tension by means of a hook fastened at her neck – photo shown in Richard Rutt *History of Hand Knitting*