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The Dangerous Book for Boys

Conn Iggulden
and Hal Iggulden

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Extract

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To all of those people who said 'You *have* to include…' until we had to avoid telling anyone else about the book for fear of the extra chapters. Particular thanks to Bernard Cornwell, whose advice helped us through a difficult time and Paul D'Urso, a good father and a good friend.

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‘Don’t worry about genius and don’t worry about not being clever. Trust rather to hard work, perseverance, and determination. The best motto for a long march is “Don’t grumble. Plug on.”

‘You hold your future in your own hands. Never waver in this belief. Don’t swagger. The boy who swaggers – like the man who swaggers – has little else that he can do. He is a cheap-Jack crying his own paltry wares. It is the empty tin that rattles most. Be honest. Be loyal. Be kind. Remember that the hardest thing to acquire is the faculty of being unselfish. As a quality it is one of the finest attributes of manliness.

‘Love the sea, the ringing beach and the open downs.

‘Keep clean, body and mind.’ –

– Sir Frederick Treves, Bart, KCVO, CB, Sergeant in Ordinary to HM the King, Surgeon in Ordinary to HRH Prince of Wales, written at 6 Wimpole Street, Cavendish Sqare, London, on 2 September 1903, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Boy’s Own Paper*

I DIDN'T HAVE THIS BOOK WHEN I WAS A BOY

In this age of video games and mobile phones, there must still be a place for knots, treehouses and stories of incredible courage. The one thing that we always say about childhood is that we seemed to have more time back then. This book will help you recapture those Sunday afternoons and long summers – because they're still long if you know how to look at them.

Boyhood is all about curiosity and men and boys can enjoy stories of Scott of the Antarctic and Joe Simpson in *Touching the Void* as much as they can raid a shed for the bits to make an electromagnet, or grow a crystal, build a go-cart and learn how to find north in the dark. You'll find famous battles in these pages, insects and dinosaurs – as well as essential Shakespeare quotes, how to cut flint heads for a bow and arrow and instructions on making the best paper aeroplane in the world.

How do latitude and longitude work? How do you make secret ink, or send the cipher that Julius Caesar used with his generals? You'll find the answers inside. It was written by two men who would have given away the cat to get this book when they were young. It wasn't a particularly nice cat. Why did we write it now? Because these things are important still and we wished we knew them better. There are few things as satisfying as tying a decent bowline knot when someone needs a loop, or simply knowing what happened at Waterloo and the Somme. The tales must be told and retold, or the memories slowly die.

The stories of courage can be read as simple adventures – or perhaps as inspiration, examples of extraordinary acts by ordinary people. Since writing them, it's been a great deal harder to hop about and curse when one of us stubs a toe. If you read Douglas Bader's chapter, you'll see why. They're not just cracking stories, they're part of a culture, a part we really don't want to see vanish.

Is it old fashioned? Well that depends. Men and boys today are the same as they always were, and interested in the same things. They may conquer different worlds when they grow up, but they'll still want these stories for themselves and for their sons. We hope in years to come, that this will be a book to dig out of the attic and give to a couple of kids staring at a pile of wood and wondering what to do with it.

When you're a man, you realise that everything changes, but when you're a boy, you know different. The camp you make today will be there forever. You want to learn coin-tricks and how to play poker because you never know when the skills will come in handy. You want to be self-sufficient and find your way by the stars. Perhaps for those who come after us, you want to reach them. Well, why not? Why *not*?

Conn Iggulden and Hal Iggulden

ESSENTIAL KIT

IT ISN'T THAT EASY these days to get hold of an old tobacco tin – but they are just the right size for this sort of collection. One of the authors once took a white mouse into school, though considering what happened when he sat on it, that is not to be recommended. We think pockets are for cramming full of useful things.

1. Swiss army knife.
Still the best small penknife. It can be carried in luggage on planes, though not in hand luggage. It is worth saving up for a high-end model, with as many blades and attachments as you can get. That said, there are good ones to be had for £20. They are useful for jobs requiring a screwdriver, removing splinters and opening bottles of beer and wine, though this may not be a prime consideration at this time.

Leather holders can also be purchased and the best ones come with a few extras, like compass, matches, pencil, paper and plasters.

2. Compass.
These are satisfying to own. Small ones can be bought from any camping or outdoor shop and they last for ever. You really should know where north is, wherever you are.

3. Handkerchief.
There are many uses for a piece of cloth, from preventing smoke inhalation or helping with a nosebleed, to offering one to a girl when she cries. Big ones can even be made into slings. They're worth having.

4. Box of matches.
It goes without saying that you must be responsible. Matches kept in a dry tin or inside a plastic bag can be very useful on a cold night when you are forced to sleep in a field. Dipping the tips in wax makes them waterproof. Scrape the wax off with a fingernail when you want to light them.

5. A taw.
Your favourite big marble.

6. Needle and thread.
Again, there are a number of useful things you can do with these, from sewing up a wound on an unconscious dog to repairing a torn shirt. Make sure the thread is strong and then it can be used for fishing.

7. Pencil and paper.
If you see a crime and want to write down a car number or a description, you are going to need one. Alternatively, it works for shopping lists or practically anything.

8. Small torch.
There are ones available for keyrings that are small and light. If you are ever in darkness and trying to read a map, a torch of any kind will be useful.

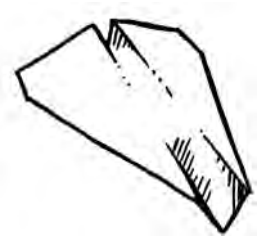
9. Magnifying glass.
For general interest. Can also be used to start a fire.

10. Plasters.
Just one or two, or better still, a piece from a cloth plaster roll that can be cut with penknife scissors. They probably won't be used, but you never know.

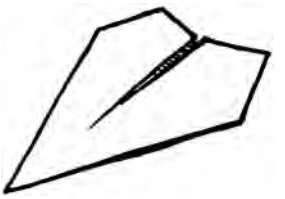
11. Fish-hooks.
If you have strong thread and a tiny hook, you only need a stick and a worm to have some chance of catching something. Put the hook tip into a piece of cork, or you'll snag yourself on it.

THE GREATEST PAPER PLANE IN THE WORLD

In the 1950s, a secondary school headmaster found a boy throwing paper planes from a high window. The head was considering punishments when he noticed the plane was still in the air, flying across the playground below. The boy escaped a detention, but he did have to pass on the design to the schoolmaster – who passed it on to his own children. You will find more complicated designs. You may be sold the idea that the best planes require scissors and lessons in origami. This is nonsense.



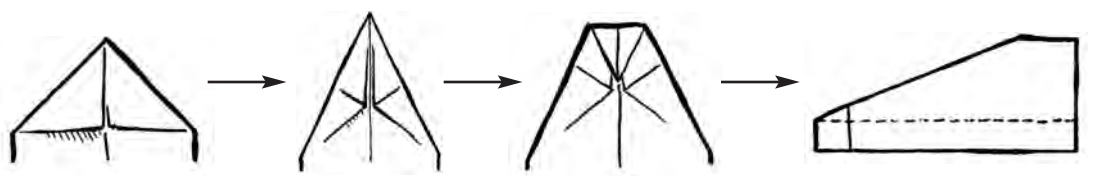




The plane on the right – the Harrier – is simple, fast and can be made from a sheet of A4. It is the best long-distance glider you'll ever see – and with a tweak or two, the best stunt plane. It has even won competitions. One was to clear the entire road from a hotel balcony next to Windsor Castle on New Year's Eve. Four other planes hit the tarmac – this one sailed clear across. The one on the left – the Bulldog Dart – is a simple dart, a warm-up plane, if you like. It's a competent glider.

The Bulldog Dart

1. Fold a sheet of A4 lengthways to get a centre line.
2. Fold two corners into the centre line, as in the picture.
3. Turn the paper over and fold those corners in half, as shown.
4. Fold the pointy nose back on itself to form the snub nose. You might try folding the nose underneath, but both ways work well.
5. Fold the whole plane lengthways, as shown.
6. Finally, fold the wings in half to complete the Bulldog Dart.



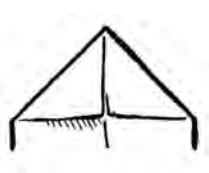
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Good – now you know a design that really works. You may have noticed the insect-like plane in the middle of the first picture. It does have complicated 'floats' and inverse folds. However, it just doesn't fly very well and neither do most of the overcomplicated designs. We think that matters. Yes, it looks like a locust, but if it nose-dives, what exactly is the point?

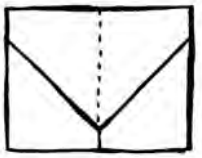
Here, then, is the gold standard. It flies.

The Harrier

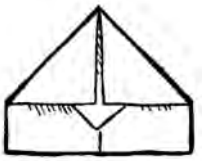
1. Begin in the same way as the Bulldog Dart. Fold in half lengthways to find your centre line and then fold two corners into that line, as shown.
2. Fold that top triangle down, as you see in the picture. It should look like an envelope.
3. Fold in the second set of corners. You should be able to leave a triangular point sticking out.
4. Fold the triangle over the corners to hold them down.
5. Fold in half along the spine, leaving the triangle on the outside, as shown.
6. Finally, fold the wings back on themselves, finding your halfway line carefully. The more care you take to be accurate with these folds, the better the plane will fly.



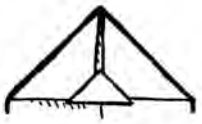
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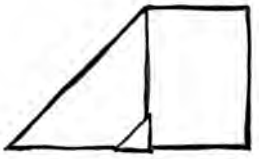
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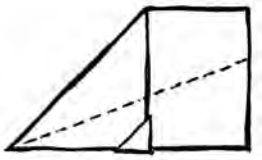
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This plane does well at slower launch speeds. It can stall at high speed, but if you lift one of the flaps slightly at the back, it will swoop and return to your hand or fly in a great spiral. Fiddle with your plane until you are happy with it. Each one will be slightly different and have a character of its own.

THE FIVE KNOTS EVERY BOY SHOULD KNOW

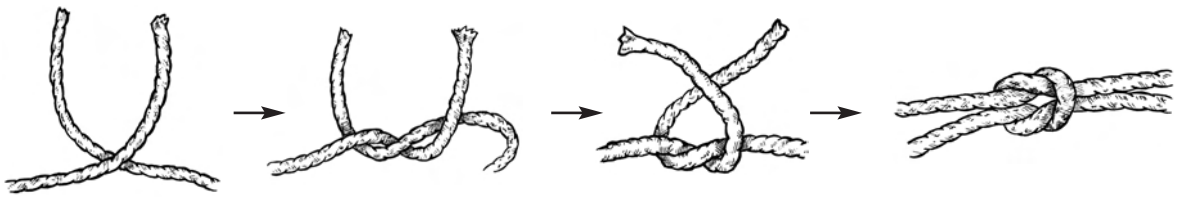
Being able to tie knots in rope is extremely useful. It is amazing how many people only know a reef and a granny knot. Rather than naming hundreds, we've narrowed it down to six extremely useful examples.

However, they take endless practice. I learned a bowline on a sailing ship in the Pacific. For three weeks, I used an old bit of rope on every watch, night and day. On my return to England, I attempted to demonstrate the knot – and found it had vanished from memory. To be fair, it didn't take long to recall, but knots should be practised every now and then, so they will be there when you need them. There are hundreds of good books available, including expert levels of splicing and decorative knots. These are the standard basics – useful to all.

1. The Reef Knot

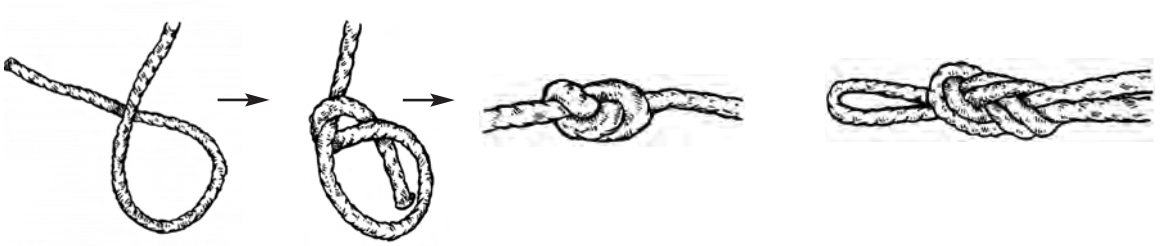
This knot is used to reef sails – that is, to reduce the amount of sail area when the wind is getting stronger. If you look at a dinghy sail, you'll notice cords hanging from the material. As the sail is folded on the boom, the cords are tied together using reef knots. It is symmetrical and pleasing to the eye.

The rule to remember is: left over right, right over left.



2. The Figure of Eight

This is a 'stopper' – it goes at the end of a rope and prevents the rope passing through a hole. A double figure of eight is sometimes used to give the rope end weight for throwing. It's called a figure of eight because it looks like the number eight.

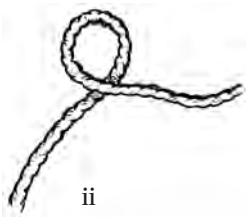


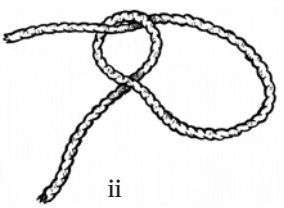
3. The Bowline (pronounced bow-lin)

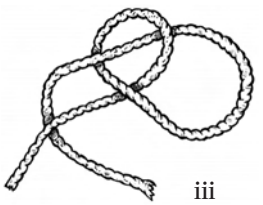
This is a fantastically useful, solid knot. It is used whenever a loop on the end of a rope is needed – for a post, a ring, or anything else really.

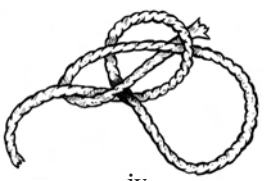
i. Make a loop towards yourself, leaving enough free at the end to go around your post, tree or similar object
ii. Now – imagine the loop is a rabbit hole and the tip is the rabbit. The other end of the rope is the tree. Feed the tip up through the hole – the rabbit coming up.
iii Pass the rabbit round the back of the tree.
iv Pass the rabbit back down the hole – back into the original loop.
v. Pull tight carefully.

NOTE: You can make a simple lasso by making a bowline and passing the other end of the rope through the loop.

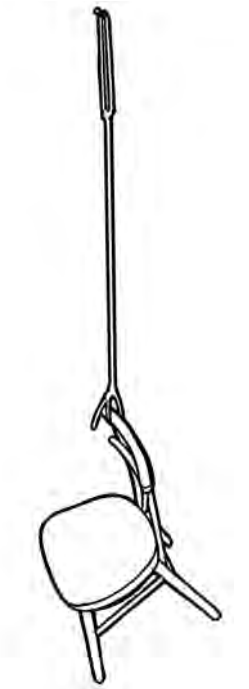

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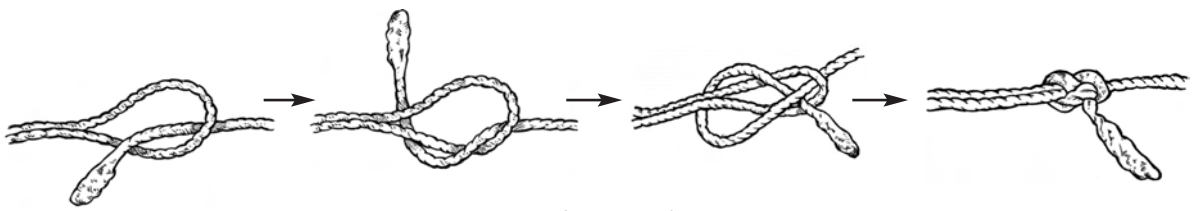

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4. Sheet Bend

This is a useful knot for joining two ropes together. Reef knots fail completely when joining ropes of different diameters – but a sheet bend works very well.



A Sheet Bend