

# Billets & Blades

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
THE NORTH CAROLINA CUSTOM KNIFEMAKERS GUILD

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- The next North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild meeting date: July 15, 2017



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KNIFEMAKER ~ BARRY CLODFELTER

'ABS 2017 JS TEST KNIVES'

IMAGE ~ SHARPBYCOOP

## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION AND OUR GUILD

*Billets and Blades* is the official publication of the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild. It is compiled and published in four annual issues, with two additional special publication dates possible each year.

The North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild was formed to meet the needs of the growing body of custom knife makers in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this newsletter is to serve as a medium of exchange for the members of the NCKKG.

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### Advertising Policy:

The NCKKG accepts no paid advertising as a matter of policy. From time to time, advertisements may appear that are deemed by the officers to be in the best interest of the Guild. Space for advertisements is offered free to Guild members who wish to promote a service or offer specific items for sale. The officers and editor reserve the right to edit advertisements for brevity.

Members, please submit ads to the one of the board of directors listed on the following page.

## FROM THE EDITOR

If you are a new member, please make sure that we have your correct email and physical mailing addresses. You may send this information to us via email.

If you are currently receiving *Billets and Blades* but are no longer interested in receiving it please let us know.

If you know of someone who may be interested in becoming a member, please let a board member know and we'll be happy to mail a copy of the current newsletter to that person.

Existing members, please check the website to verify that we have your correct information. Especially your correct email address so you may be contacted should the need arise. We are always in need of pictures, articles and ideas on how to make the website and newsletter better. Please contact a board member with any suggestions.

In order to have a newsletter I need at least two articles to have enough content for a newsletter to be printed and shipped.. I decided to rerun an older article this month instead of not having a newsletter. I will not make this a habit. This is your Guild and we all need to pitch in and make this work. I need knife related articles to print and you will be paid \$25 each. Writing two articles a year will pay for your membership!

Stay sharp my friends!

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well it's been a long few months. I hope everyone is doing well.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Barry Clodfelter for passing his Journeyman Smith Test at the Blade show in Atlanta. When I saw him Friday morning he had a grin like a mule eating briars. Later I saw him and his wife and the grin had not gone away. I do not blame him, this is quite an accomplishment. So Barry Congratulations!!!!!!

I would like to thank all those who I met at the Blade Show for making it a great trip. Many members were there and the guild was represented well.

I haven't had much time to do the things I needed to do for the guild. I really wanted to get out and see at least one member a month at their shop. I hope to get back on schedule now that things have settled down. That means I'll be getting in contact with some of you soon and coming for a visit.

I spent a few weeks (3) in Texas on vacation and made it back just in time to head to Atlanta. The Trip was great. I also got to visit the Alamo where they had a special exhibit on Jim Bowie. They would not allow photo's to be taken inside. It was very interesting and I found out some new things about Bowie. But, that's a whole different story.

Barry still needs articles for the newsletter and people to give demos at upcoming meetings. As VP his job is heavy. As members it is our job to help him as much as possible. If you want the meetings to be interesting everyone must do their part. Everyone in this guild has a wealth of knowledge. It's time to share it.

On a side note. The collage is looking for people to teach classes on knife making related subjects. If anyone is interested talk to Joshua Floyd at the collage, he can fill you in on what is required and how it works.

Andy Sharpe  
President NCKG

### 2017 GUILD OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

#### President

Andy Sharpe  
Lexington, NC 27295  
336-853-6854  
sharpeknives@yahoo.com

#### Vice President

Barry Clodfelter  
Davidson, NC 28036  
704-791-6588  
longbowbarry@gmail.com

#### Secretary/Treasurer

Darrin Sirios  
Fay, NC 28304  
910-584-6928  
knives@TCTKnives.com

#### Director

Murphy Ragsdale  
Laurinburg, NC 28352  
910-276-6660  
mragdale77638@roadrunner.com

#### Director

Mark Hall  
Clayton, NC 27520  
919.810.8408  
markhallcustomknives@gmail.com

#### Editor & Webmaster

Barry Clodfelter

## Cutting Comp

By Lisa Johnson

One of the highlights of the April 15, 2017 NC Knifemakers Guild Meeting was the Cutting Competition. Participants constructed knives according to strict criteria and competed in a timed event that included six chopping stations to test the strength and sharpness of their knives. The competition was open to all guild members and Kyle Gahagan, Barry Clodfelter, David Diggs, Joel Sandifer, Rick Brixson and Tyrell Johnson accepted the challenge.



Pictured from left to right: Rick Brixson, Kyle Gahagan, Tyrell Johnson, Joel Sandifer, David Diggs, Barry Clodfelter

The competition knives could be no longer than 15.5" overall with a max blade length of 10". At least one visible pin passing through the handle and tang was required and the knife had to have a lanyard hole with wrist lanyard and be accompanied by a sheath or zippered pouch.



The competition knives as created by Barry Clodfelter, Kyle Gahagan; Tyrell Johnson; Rick Brixson; Joel Sandifer, and Andy Sharpe, respectively.

The chopping station included a 2 x 4 chop; drinking straw slice; wooden dowel chop; rope slice; soda can slice; and water bottle slice.



Chopping station

This event showcased the skills of our knifemakers and a great time was had by all. If you have never participated in a competition like this, I highly recommend it.

Congratulations to Kyle Gahagan for 'chopping' through the competition! His knife performed exceptionally well and his technique showed us all how a competition like this is done!



Kyle Gahagan, winner of the 2017 NC Knifemakers Guild Cutting Competition

## Fluted Handles

by John Hege

Rerun from Spring 2013

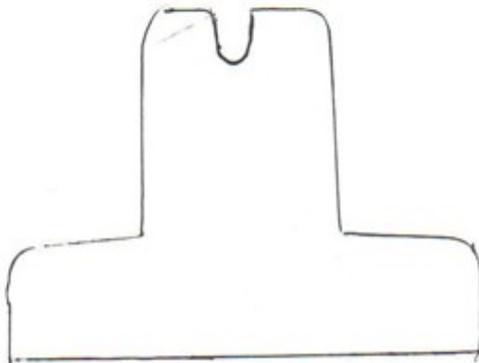
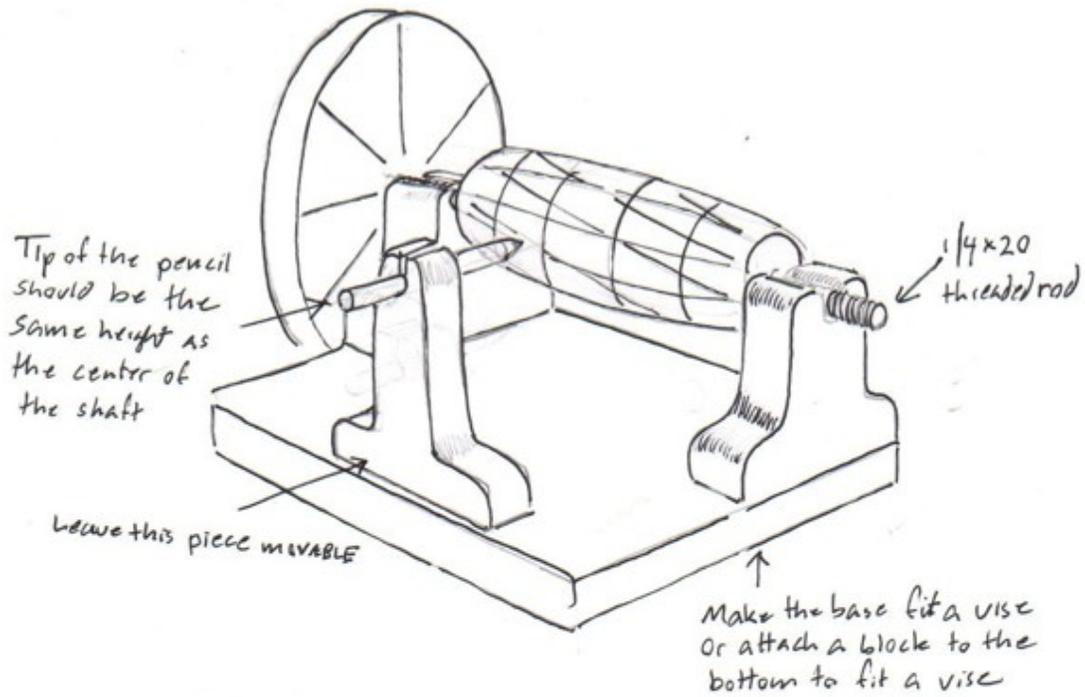
If you're into making "period" knives there's nothing that lends the old world look like a fluted handle. Whether it's a spiral flute or straight, it's an appropriate look for the old medieval style daggers and short swords as well as Persian and Mediterranean style weapons.

A fluted handle is beautiful, but also functional. Deep flutes with clean (but not sharp) edges cut into the handle provide an excellent gripping surface and a path for sweat to escape under the grip without making things slippery. Putting a spiral cut into the flutes can add an even greater dimension to the grip by giving the grip a kind of screw-like action that can seem to tighten as you twist your hand.

The ABS requires that the Quillon Dagger test knife have a spiral fluted handle with a twisted wire inlay. This is more than a beautiful handle, it's patterned after a medieval short sword that was meant for left or off handed use. The dagger was the defensive weapon used in combination with the offensive sword. The sword made the thrust, and the Quillon dagger was used to parry the opponents thrust. A weapon used this way is repeatedly struck with powerful blows intended to strike the dagger from the hand, so it's clear that it has to have a powerful gripping surface. OK, so nobody's defending themselves with swords these days, but the Quillon dagger, and any other edged weapons from medieval times are exceptionally beautiful knives and making a good fluted handle should be in any good knife makers toolbox.

As with many techniques, a good account of making a twisted flute handle can be found in Joe Keeslar's excellent book *Handles and Guards* marketed by the ABS, but I'll add a few tips that I picked up around.

It's good to start with a nice round piece, or at least a symmetrical piece. I have cut them out by hand, but find it's far easier to work with a piece that was turned out on a wood lathe. If the piece is round and the hole is centered, everything falls into place easier. Drill the hole before turning the piece. That way the hole will be centered on the finished piece. Working the other way may result in an off-centered hole. Marking the piece for carving is the first real challenge. In Keeslar's book on page 93 is a neat little jig that makes referencing the marks easier. Here I have a drawing for a similar jig that I copied from Tommy McNabb. It takes about an hour to make and you'll be glad to have it.



Stack up 3 pieces of 3/4 wood and cut and drill them all at the same time. Glue 2 of them to the base, use the 3rd as a pencil holder.

Woodworker's Supply  
Graham NC

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riffler sets	-	fine	- 864 654	\$ 22.49
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round rasp	-	8"	864 465	23.89
		10"	864 479	23.89
				John Hoge

The biggest difference between my jig and Keeslar's is that I made the wheel much larger. That way the marking jig can also be used for carving. The jig can be mounted in a bench vise and the work piece mounted tightly on the shaft. When carving the flutes you can hold the wheel by hand and rotate it with the stroke of the blade or the cutter to follow the pattern.

Another neat way to mark a spiral flute is with rubber bands. Use washers with a ¼ inch center and the outside diameter a little bit larger than the piece. Divide the washer up in sections depending on the number of flutes planned and put small notches at the edges for the rubber bands to fit into. With a washer at either end of the piece, string the rubber bands through the notches to run the length of the handle. At this point you can twist the washers and stretch the bands into a spiral pattern to whatever degree you want. A thin coat of light colored spray paint will leave a nice pattern on the piece to work with.

If you plan to do a wire inlay, it's best to cut the grooves for the wire first along the lines marked. The first cut is done with a sharp knife, this is the easiest one to screw up. When the first cut is done, follow up with a hacksaw blade or similar tool. The blade should just drop in the slot and practically guide itself at this point. ABS likes for half the twisted wire to stick above the surface. Keep a sample strip of twisted wire to continue testing the depth of the groove. With the wire grooves cut, it's time to start the flutes. My favorite tools for this are rifflers and chain saw files. The rifflers are wood carving tools available at Woodworkers Supply part number 864661 is a nice six piece set for less than 25 dollars. I start the flutes the same way, with a knife, then a hacksaw blade, but don't cut all the way to the ends of the handle. Once the hacksaw blade cut is there, the rifflers just drop right into the groove. Cutting the flutes is not difficult, it's just a question of taking the time. It takes me about two hours to cut the flutes out on a whole handle if it I stay with it start to finish, but it's boring work, so I recommend going after it in several sittings. Finishing the handle is done with sandpaper rolled around pieces of wooden dowel.

Silver wire is the usual choice for the inlay, I get my round silver wire from an outfit called wire sculpture.com. But for first attempts I recommend buying nickel silver wire for a lower cost from the same source. Cut slots in the ends of the handles across the flats, effectively connecting the wire slots to each other, then drill 1/16 inch holes straight down into the handle in each of the grooves you just cut.

The ends of the wire will be wrapped around the end of the handle and pushed into these holes. Put a drop of super glue in there for insurance. The washers that make up the transition pieces on the knife handle should squeeze the wire ends down into the handle material to hold them in place.

There's nothing like doing the job to get the hang of it, so even if you don't have a knife in mind right away, get a piece of easy to work wood and give it a try. It took me three attempts to make an acceptable handle the first time, so use inexpensive materials for your first examples. Stay with it and don't get discouraged if the first few don't shape up right.

Examples of what can be done with this jig:



The **North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild** was founded in June of 1992. Our goals are to:

- Promote the craft of custom knife making
- Seek to constantly improve the craftsmanship of its members
- Provide an educational resource to anyone interested in the craft
- To encourage new makers and provide a forum for their training

Through public knife making and forging demonstrations by a group or individual members, we try to display the craft and to educate the public. It is our intent to raise the general awareness of custom made knives and the people who create them. That is why there is no cost to attend one of our meetings, and we welcome anyone with an interest in knife making.

Our quarterly meetings are organized around speakers and various demonstrations of activities important to our craft. These speakers and demonstrations are from our members or experts in the field who come as our guests. As a training resource, our Guild is prepared to present any aspect of our craft to organizations that feel it would be beneficial and informative.

