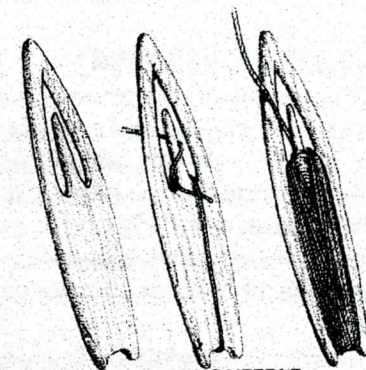


ADAPTATION OF NETTING NEEDLE



TRADITIONAL NETTING NEEDLE

## The netting needle

By Ted Walsh

Anyone who has a traditionally rigged boat knows the importance of marline. Once as ubiquitous as the various forms of electrical and waterproof tape that have largely replaced it, it is versatile, simple, and functional in the extreme. It also has the ability to tie itself into elaborate knots and turn into an unruly mess at the bottom of your rigging bag. Still, marline that has been tamed and disciplined can be a delight to work with.

I have made and have used, serving boards and serving mallets of various sizes, and when it comes to setting up new rigging or replacing long sections of service, these are invaluable tools. I have found, however, that for most instances when small basic repairs to the service of our rig need to be made, the tool I reach for is a much simpler one: the netting needle.

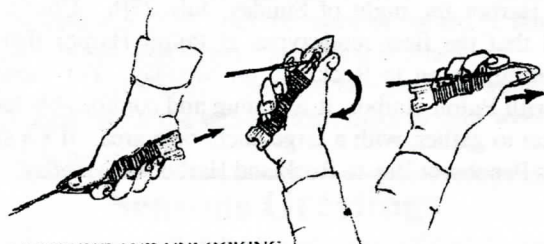
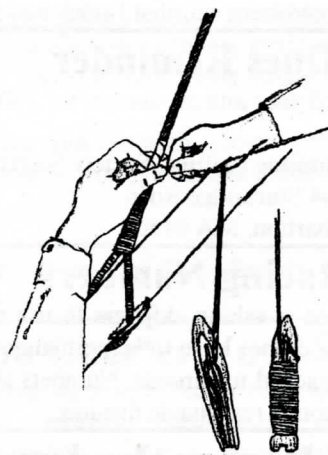
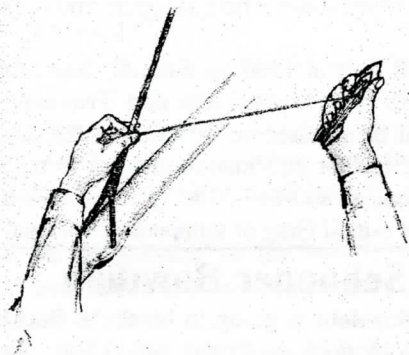
This quarter inch thick piece of oak or ash, wrapped with marline, provides excellent leverage for serving shrouds or applying seizings to lanyards or becketts. It is small enough to fit into tight spaces where no serving board will go and takes up almost no room in a rigging bag.

The key to using this tool is the ability to lock and unlock the marline with one hand. This leaves the other hand free to hold the service in place and keep the tension. Once the marline is locked into the needle, you can drop the needle and the marline will not un-spool, allowing you to use both hands for what you are working on. The netting needle also provides leverage and a grip to pull tension on the marline.

There are two versions of netting needle that live in my shop and rigging bag. One is the traditional netting needle that I was introduced to by weir fisherman. The other is an adaptation (I can't remember where I found this version). In the adapted version the line is wrapped around the shank of the tool rather than lengthwise as in the more traditional netting needle. It has a tongue like a spring which pinches the marline and locks it in place. While not as suitable for the actual process of making nets it is singularly well adapted to making repairs to service, making seizings, and even fancy work like that of French hitching or coach-whipping.

While still available where commercial fishing supplies are sold, I would encourage you to make your own out of what you have lying around. Make one that fits comfortably in your hand, and experiment.

Perhaps I am just an animist, but all the marline that I get, tarred or un-tarred, spool or ball, is alive and just dormant. It is waiting to cause mischief, to leap up and roll away at an improbable speed, and usually to an improbable distance at the one moment I desperately need both my hands and all my concentration for what I am working on. It is kept in a box with a lid so it can not escape and wander, and is only let out when it is wound onto, and restrained by a netting needle.



LOCKING AND UNLOCKING  
ADAPTED NETTING NEEDLE