

Evidence of Use and Reuse of a Dog Collar from the Sloop of War HMS *Swift* (1770), Puerto Deseado (Argentina)

Nicolás C. Ciarlo, Horacio De Rosa, Dolores Elkin, and Phil Dunning

ABSTRACT

This paper describes and interprets a metal dog collar recovered from the HMS *Swift* shipwreck (1770), in Puerto Deseado (Santa Cruz province, Argentina), by the Underwater Archaeology Programme of the Argentinean National Institute of Anthropology. The original function, manufacturing process and subsequent modifications to the piece are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Shipwreck – Metallurgy – 18th century – Personal objects – Dog collar

Introduction

By the 1760s, in the context of the last stages and the aftermath of the Seven Years War, the Falklands/Malvinas archipelago in the South Atlantic ocean was the subject of sovereignty disputes between Spain, England and France. On different occasions the British Royal Navy would send vessels to Port Egmont, their base in the islands, with both defensive and exploration purposes.

HMS *Swift*, under the command of George Farmer, was one of the sloops of war playing such a role. In early March 1770, apparently following orders to conduct coastal explorations in the region before the winter set in, the sloop was struck by strong gales which pushed her towards the mainland of Patagonia, where HMS *Swift* ran aground and eventually sank in the Deseado estuary (Board of Admiralty 1770a; Gower 1803), currently Santa Cruz Province, Argentina.

Since 1997 the Underwater Archaeology Programme of the Argentinean National Institute of Anthropology has conducted archaeological research at the HMS *Swift* site under the direction of Dr. D. Elkin. During various field seasons a significant portion of the captain's and officers' quarters have been excavated, revealing a number of artifacts made of ceramic, metal, glass, wood, stone and bone; some of which reflect a considerably high social status (Elkin et al. 2007).

During the 2005–2006 field season an unusual metal artifact was discovered in an excavation unit adjacent to the captain's cabin, located on the main deck, in an area known as the coach. The artifact was later identified as a dog collar, similar to others attributed to the period (Butler 1983, Fennimore 1996, Noël Hume 1970, Shiffer et al. 1978). No dog—or any other animal—remains were found in contextual association with the collar. Although some mammal bones were found in other areas of the site, none of them appears to correspond to dog.

The Collar

The artifact under consideration is a curved metal strip with a lock system and five rectangular holes to allow for size adjustments (Figures 1 and 2). The exterior of the collar is plain, while the interior has an engraved inscription “I · CHILD IN NORTH STREET POPLAR MIDDLESEX” and a line of repeating floral motifs stamped along most of both edges. A series of small holes punched along the edges overlies the floral design. Macroscopic analysis of this artifact, in addition to historical information, led to the conclusion that the piece was a dog collar.

Morphological Characterization

Morphological characterization was carried out after the cleaning and stabilization of the artifact by the conservator of the Museo Municipal Mario Brozoski, in Puerto Deseado, where the HMS *Swift* collection is housed. The observation of manufacturing details by utilizing direct visual inspection and 2x and 4x stereoscopic magnifier, allowed the differentiation between two stages in the artifact's life history: original manufacturing and subsequent modifications.



Figure 1. Collar after cleaning (Photo by D. Vainstub, 2006).

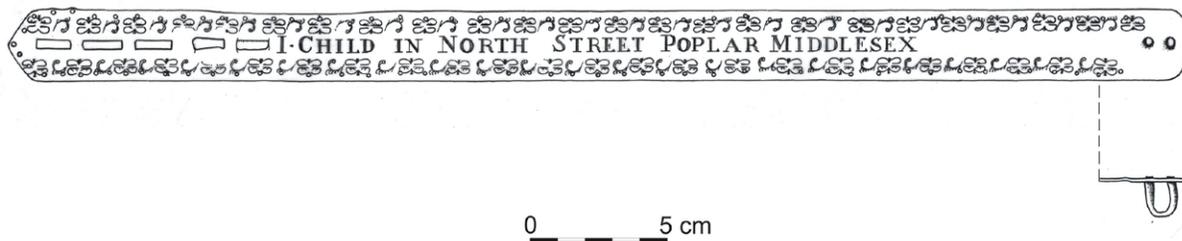


Figure 2. Internal view of the piece in extended position and detail of the lock system eye (Drawing by N. Ciarlo, 2008).

The collar was made from a metal strip measuring 42.6 cm long, 2.5 cm wide (average), and 0.09 cm thick (average). One end was rounded at the corners, while the other one was cut into a triangular point (Figure 2). The following distinctive features are part of the original manufacturing process:

1) Size adjusting system and lock: Starting from the end with the triangular point, following the central longitudinal line of the strip, three consecutive rectangular holes were made which form the adjusting system. The

collar diameter, calculated in a closed position for the original three levels of regulation, ranges from approximately 12.8 cm to 11.7 cm. At the other end, a hasp was placed, which could be secured (once introduced in one of the three holes) probably by means of a small padlock.

2) Decorative motifs: One side was ornamented with a linear series of two alternate floral motifs. These floral motifs were made with a stamp along the upper and lower edge and cover almost the entire length of the piece.

3) Inscription: The phrase reproduced in the previous section was engraved along the length of the collar in a central position (Figure 2). The thickness of each of the letters is formed by several thin strokes, for which a pointed tool was used. The lettering was guided by a straight or curved pattern, according to the shape of the characters. The spatial symmetry of the inscription and of the decorative floral band was achieved with the aid of two pairs of longitudinal guiding lines (Figure 3).

Subsequent modifications to the collar lack the precision with which the details described above were made, and therefore they could be readily distinguished. Some remarkable modifications include two additional rectangular holes, following the three original holes that form part of the diameter adjustment system, and a series of small circular punched holes along the edges. The two additional adjustment holes reduced the smallest collar diameter from 11.7 cm to about 10.5 cm. The contrast between the workmanship involved in the original manufacture of the artifact and the subsequent modifications can be appreciated when comparing the first three rectangular holes with the two additional ones (Figure 4), regarding the mismatch

of the punched holes with the linear pattern that they were supposed to follow (Figure 5), and by the fact that some of the latter overlap the decorative floral motifs (Figure 6).

The final modification to the collar was turning it inside-out. This was mainly inferred by the location of the inscription, bearing in mind that it is on the inside, while it should have been on the outside (see below). Consequently, it was necessary to place the hasp on what was once the inside of the collar (Figure 7).

Some Considerations on Dog Collars

Dog collars were very popular throughout the 18th century and early 19th century and in those times "... specialists in collarmaking worked in all of England's major metropolitan centres" (*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 22 March 1762; in Fennimore 1996:363). The collars were used to chain dogs or restrain them when walking. Collars could also be regarded as a sign of prestige (Cox and Dannehl 2007). The use of collars was not always a personal choice, but could be related to numerous regulations regarding the restraining of dogs in the 18th century (Noël Hume 1970; Fennimore 1996).

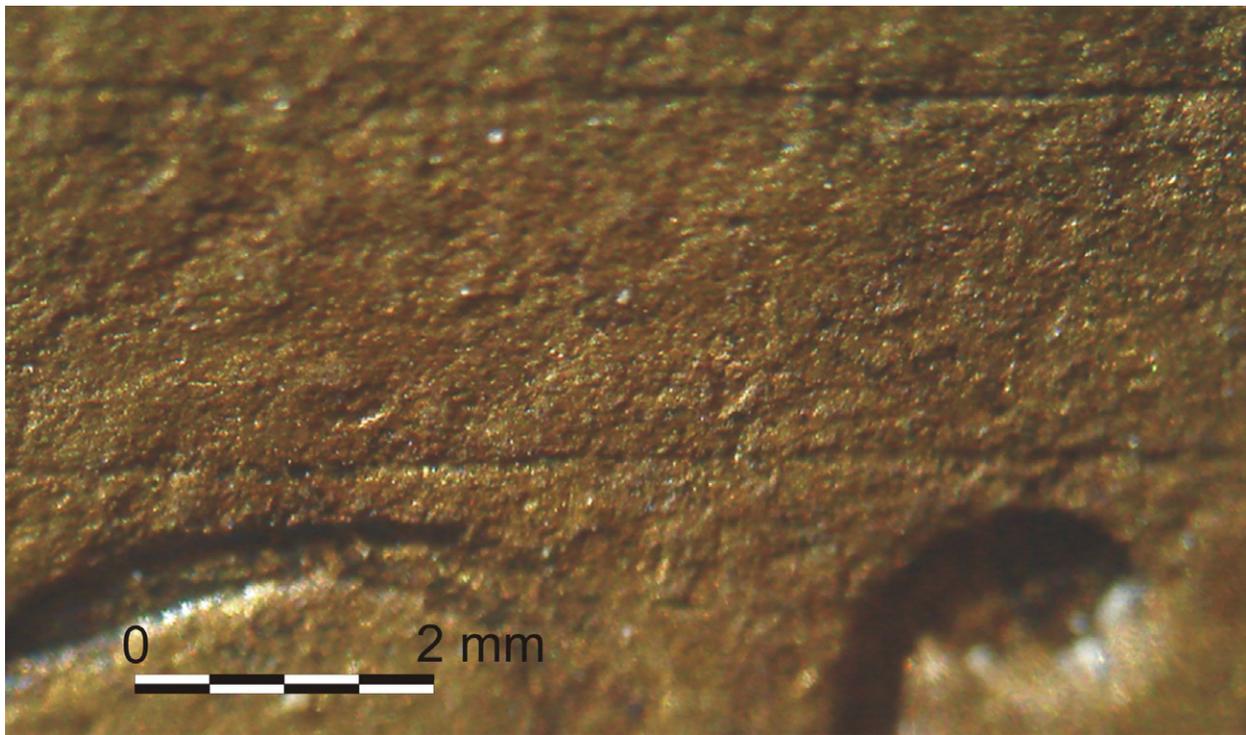


Figure 3. One of the pairs of guiding lines used for the engraved inscription and the floral motifs (Photo by N. Ciarlo, 2008).

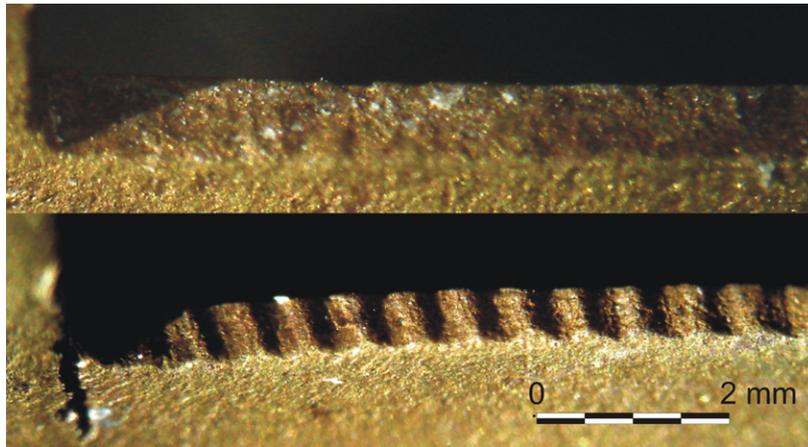


Figure 4. Detail of two of the rectangular holes which regulate the collar's diameter. Note the difference of skill between one of the first three holes (above) and other from the second two (below) (Photo by N. Ciarlo, 2008).



Figure 5. Asymmetrical series of holes along the edges (Photo by N. Ciarlo, 2008).



Figure 6. The decorative floral motif, pierced by one of the stitching holes (Photo by N. Ciarlo, 2008).

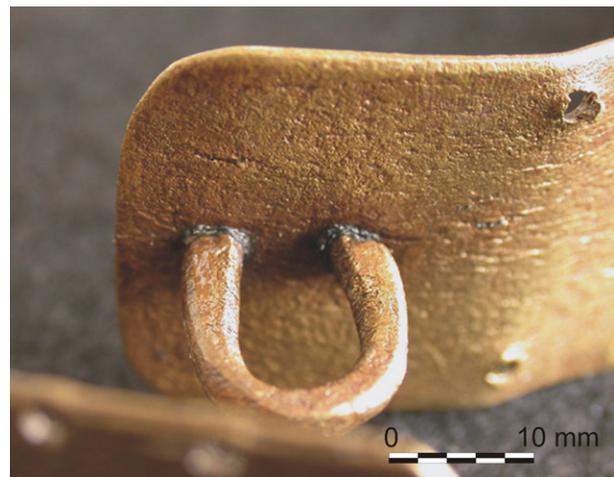


Figure 7. Detail of the collar's hasp, which is a component of the diameter regulation system and locking mechanism (Photo by D. Vainstub, 2006).

Collar sizes ranged from those for a lap dog to a bulldog (Schiffer et al. 1978:373). Most could be adjusted for size, and could accommodate a small padlock (Schiffer et al. 1978; Butler 1983; Gentle and Field 1994; Fennimore 1996; Fulcher 2007). Some collars were made of a brass alloy—mainly formed by copper and zinc, with other trace elements—as can be seen in inventories of 1760 reprinted in *Brass Dog Collars and Locks* (Cox and Dannehl 2007). Many collars were lined with leather to protect the animal’s neck from chafing (Noël Hume 1970; Butler 1983; Gentle and Feild 1994), and often had an inscription on the outer side with the owner’s name, a date and/or a place (Noël Hume 1970; Schiffer et al. 1978; Gentle and Feild 1994; Fulcher 2007). Some collars had a ring placed opposite the lock (Butler 1983; Gentle and Feild 1994) which could be used to attach a chain for holding the animal.

Mascots and Pets on Board British Navy Ships

As stated by Rodger (1996), different types of animals were found aboard the ships of the British Navy during the 18th century. Some animals were used for fresh meat (e.g., cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats), others were “stowaways” (e.g., rats and scorpions), and some were carried as pets or mascots, dogs being the most common. A pet was owned by an individual, and kept for companionship and amusement. A mascot was typically attached to a group, such as an army regiment or a ship’s crew. Mascots were thought to bring

good luck for the group, and could have practical uses as well, such as rat-catching aboard ship. Thomas Rowlandson depicted the crew of the naval vessel *Hector* in 1782, among which the presence of two dogs can be appreciated, one of them playing with a sailor (Figure 8). In this picture the ship is anchored in harbor, so there is no indication of whether the mascots were carried on the voyage or not. There are also some references to the adoption of mascots during some voyages (Byron [1768] 1996; De Bougainville [1771] 1994).

Archaeological evidence for the presence of mascots or pets on ships of the 18th century or earlier periods is scarce. One example is a dog skull found in the English vessel *Mary Rose* (1545) whose study indicated that it could be a medium to small size animal. According to the author of the study its role on the ship is not clear, but she believes it either could have been a mascot or helped control the rat population on board (Clutton-Brock 2005). Another zooarchaeological report related to this topic mentions a monkey, a *Macaca sylvanus*, interpreted as an *animal de compagnie* (pet), found in one of the late-17th early-18th century shipwrecks of La Natiere (Migaud and Perez 2000:73).

Discussion

Until now, publications referring to pet-related artifacts found on shipwrecks (particularly 18th century English warship sites) have not been found. On the basis of histori-

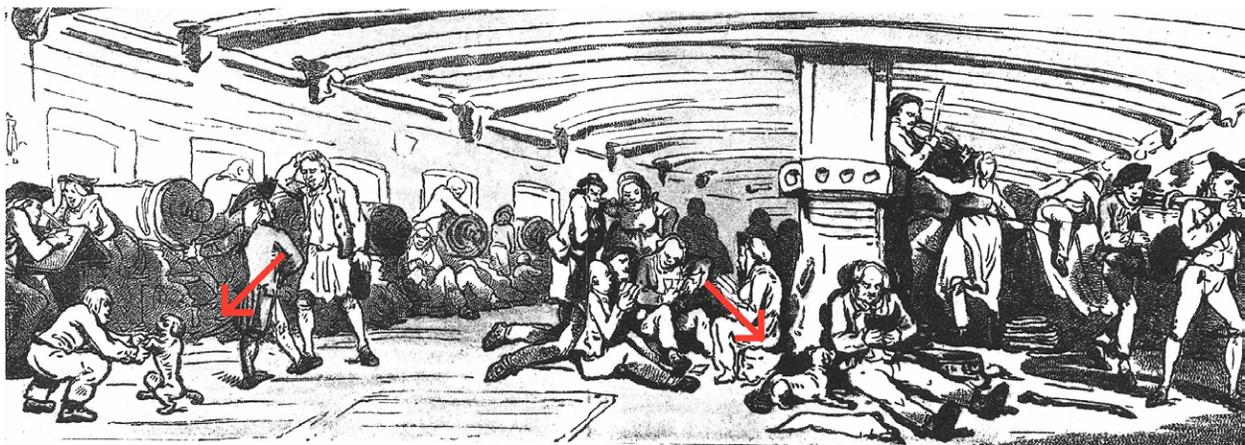


Figure 8. Painting of the lower deck of the *Hector* made by Thomas Rowlandson in 1891 (National Maritime Museum Catalog PW4958. <www.nmmprints.com/image/450166/thomas-rowlandson-middle-deck-of-the-man-of-war-hector>. Accessed 15 September 2011).

cal information and the analysis of the collar, however, it is possible to address some techniques used in the manufacture of the piece, and others related to the history of its use.

When originally manufactured, the collar would have been entirely made of brass. Macroscopic characteristics detected by visual inspection correspond to an artifact made of copper alloy. To date, however, no specific chemical analyses have been conducted to determine the alloy composition. The presence of some reddish corroded areas in the surface of the collar (see Figure 5), revealed that a characteristic form of corrosion of brass, called dezincification, has taken place. This is a common form of dealloying, which is a selective removal of zinc from the copper alloy. This process leaves a relatively porous and weak layer of copper and copper oxide (ASM International Handbook Committee 1992), as can be appreciate in the surface of the collar.

The collar was decorated on its visible side with a stamped band along the edges and an engraved inscription in the center. The latter has two components:

- 1) "I · CHILD," referring to the animal's owner, I being the initial and Child the surname, and
- 2) "IN NORTH STREET POPLAR MIDDLESEX", which would indicate the place of residence of the person and therefore of his or her pet.

Evidence of subsequent modifications to the collar include placing the decoration and legend inside the collar, incorporating two additional rectangular holes, and adding a series of small punched round holes along the edges. The latter were likely used to stitch the leather inner lining into the collar. Although the collar was found associated with several leather fragments, all of these were found to be part of another artifact. As stated above, the secondary modifications are quite crude when compared with the remarkable quality of the collar's original manufacture.

Moving the inscription to the inside of the collar, which at the time of final use would have been hidden by the leather lining, suggests that the collar changed hands, and the new owner was probably responsible for the modifications. It is worth remarking that the *Swift's* logbook does not include any person under the surname "Childe" (Board of Admiralty 1770b), which would be that of the original owner of the collar. Additionally, the introduction of two new holes for regulating the collar's size indicates the col-

lar would have been used on a smaller animal, although the difference in diameter is small.

Like many other collars with engraved legends, this one does not show evidence of a ring to attach the chain. This suggests that not all the collars were used to chain the animals, but was more closely related to the identifying the pets in case they were lost. Also, as stated before, the collars could be a sign of the owner's prestige: "They are not just a means of attaching a dog to a lead . . . collars have been used to display wealth, power and status . . ." (Fulcher 2007:50). Lord Horatio Nelson, for example, had a dog which wore a silver collar—very similar in shape to the one found in the HMS *Swift*—with the copperplate inscription "Right Honble Lord Nelson – NILEUS" (Prentice 2005:126).

In the case of the collar studied here, if it was reused for the original purpose, the new owner did not engrave his or the animal's name or address on the outer part of the piece. This would be logical if there was an intention to carry a dog on board ship, given that there was no need to put an address on its collar, nor the name of the owner given the particular context of a mascot on a ship. On the other hand, in spite of the possibility that the collar could have had another use aboard HMS *Swift*, it is difficult to shed light on the matter at this stage.

To date, there is neither archaeological nor documentary evidence which supports the presence of pets or mascots on board the vessel. Nonetheless the collar relates to some of the research lines addressed within the *Swift* project, regarding: social hierarchies within the crew; technical characteristics of the artefacts; and several aspects of life aboard as reflected in the material culture (Elkin et al. 2007). Additionally, this type of artifact, as a personal belonging, is also related to certain individual practices such as decisions regarding which items to carry aboard during long voyages.

Conclusions

From this study it is possible to conclude that the artifact found in the officers' quarters of HMS *Swift* was originally intended for use as a collar for a dog or another animal of similar size, probably owned as a pet. Additionally, on the basis of the morphological characteristics which were documented above, it is possible to differentiate the origi-

nal manufacture from subsequent modifications associated with reutilization of the artifact. This fact would have probably been associated with a change of owner and pet, either at the same instance or not. Although it is not possible to confirm the final role of this metal ring on board HMS *Swift*, its use as a dog collar cannot be ruled out.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Nic Fulcher, from the Dog Collar Museum of the Leeds Castle, for his comments on the piece and the recommended additional bibliography on the topic. To the Argentinean Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Puerto Deseado, main sponsors of the field season in which this artifact was discovered. Thanks also to the reviewers of the manuscript and Thad Van Bueren, SHA Technical Briefs Editor, whose valuable comments and suggestions have improved the article.

References

Board of Admiralty

1770a Court martial to the HMS *Swift* crew, 29 September 1770. Admiralty Record 1/5304. Public Record Office, London, UK.

1770b HMS *Swift* Logbook. Admiralty Record 33/688. Public Record Office, London, UK.

ASM International Handbook Committee

1992 Corrosion. *ASM Handbook*, vol. 13. ASM International, Materials Park, OH.

Butler, Joseph. T.

1983 *Sleepy Hollow Restorations. A Cross-Section of the Collection*. Sleepy Hollow Press, New York, NY.

Byron, John

[1768] 1996 *Byron's Narrative*. José Valenzuela, translator. Serie Verde, Ediciones del Sol, Buenos Aires.

Clutton-Brock, Juliet

2005 Domestic dog. In *Before the Mast. Life and Death Aboard the Mary Rose*, Julie Gardiner and Michael J. Al-

len, editors, Vol. 4, pp. 614–615. The Mary Rose Trust, England.

Cox, Nancy, and Karin Dannehl

2007 Dog - Dogwood. *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1820*. British History Online, University of London & History of Parliament Trust, UK. <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=58742>>. Accessed 10 March 2011.

De Bougainville, Louis A.

1994 *Viaje alrededor del Mundo en the Fragata Real Boudeuse y el Étoile* (Travel around the World in the Frigates Real Boudeuse and Étoile [1766-1769]). Néstor Barron and Miranda Barron, translators. Ediciones Continente, Buenos Aires.

Elkin, Dolores, Amaru Argüeso, Mónica Grosso, Cristian Murray, Damián Vainstrib, Ricardo Bastida, and Virginia Dellino

2007 Archaeological research on HMS *Swift*: A British Sloop-of-War lost off Patagonia, Southern Argentina, in 1770. *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 36(1):32–58.

Fennimore, Donald L.

1996 *Metalwork in Early America. Copper and its Alloys from the Winterthur Collection*. Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum. Balding & Mansell, UK.

Fulcher, Nic

2007 To Put on the Dog. In *The Dog Sale*, pp. 50–51. Auction catalog for Winter, Bonham's, London, UK. <www.bonhams.com/Issue13.50.pdf>. Accessed 10 March 2010.

Gentle, Belinda, and Rachael Field

1994 *Domestic Metalwork 1640-1820*. Antique Collectors' Club, UK.

Gower, Erasmus

1803 *An Account of the Loss of His Majesty's Sloop 'Swift', in Port Desire, on the Coast of Patagonia, on the 13th of March, 1770; and of the other Events Which Succeeded, in a Letter to a Friend*. Winchester and Son, London, UK.

Lloyd, Christopher

1968 *The British Seamen, 1200–1860*. Collins, London, UK.

Migaud, Philippe, and Magali Perez

2000 Annexe 2, Etude Zooarchéologique (Appendix 2, Study Zooarchaeological). In *Un Corsaire sous la Mer: L'Épave de la Natière, Archéologie Sous-marine à Saint-Malo* (A Privateer under the Sea: The Wreck of Natière, Underwater Archeology in Saint-Malo), Michel L'Hour and Elizabeth Veyrat, editors, pp. 72–73. Edition Adramar, Paris, France.

Noël Hume, Ivor

1970 *James Geddy and Sons Colonial Craftsmen*. Colonial Williamsburg Archaeological Series 5, Virginia, VA.

Prentice, Rina

2005 *The Authentic Nelson*. National Maritime Museum Publications, London, UK.

Rodger, Nicholas A. M.

1996 *The Wooden World. An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*. W. W. Norton & Company, London, England.

Schiffer, Peter, Nancy Schiffer, and Herbert Schiffer

1978 *The Brass Book. American, English and European Fifteenth Century through 1850*. Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA.

Nicolás C. Ciarlo

Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) and Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano (INAPL).
3 de febrero 1378 (1426)
Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Horacio De Rosa

Laboratorio de Materiales, Departamento de Ingeniería Mecánica, Facultad de Ingeniería, Universidad de Buenos Aires (FI-UBA).
Paseo Colón 850 (1063).
Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dolores Elkin

Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) and Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano (INAPL).
3 de febrero 1378 (1426).
Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Phil Dunning

Parks Canada
1800 Walkley Road.
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0M5