

An interesting 200+ year old corkscrew

by Wayne Meadows

(Well, okay, it has some other tools as well)



This c1800 Sheffield horseman's knife (any knife with a hoof pick is called a horseman's knife) is marked WORTLEY on both of the blades. Despite Sal's research we cannot ascertain which member of the Wortley family made it, but there are many possibilities. Thomas Wortley & Son, Sheffield. David Wortley (scissors manufacturer, 29 Gibraltar St.), and John Wortley & Son (merchants, factors and scissors manufacturers, 30 Trinity Street) in 1822, and John Wortley, scissor smith, in 1792.

This knife is mint in the box, very complex with more tools than the average user would need. It is also elaborately decorated with bias-cut horn scales, and the

silver side plate for the engraving of the owner's name is still blank. All this leads me to believe that this was made as an exhibition or show piece model by Wortley. How it could have survived this long in still unused condition, in its original case is hard to imagine. Despite consulting a few knife experts in the corkscrew collecting community, we were unable to figure out some of the tools. Then I bought Bernard Levine's knife book - he is purported to be the world's authority on knives. Still, after studying his book, some answers were not found. I sent pictures, a spreadsheet with my tool use ideas and \$10.00; three hours later I had many answers to my questions.



As a side note, Levine has a very interesting website (<http://knife-expert.com/appr-k.htm>) with interesting comments on detecting fake, fantasy, made up, etc. If you post the question and photo online, his evaluation is free. If you want a private evaluation, he charges \$5.00 to comment on a knife you are thinking of buying and \$10.00 to tell you what you have already bought! This is an interesting service that could well be welcome in the corkscrew world, maybe not so popular with the corkscrew fakers.

These are the tools, to the best of my knowledge so far:

1: Two lancets, protected by tortoise shell scales, used for phlebotomy, bleeding people. Also could be used for lancing boils, digging out splinters, etc.

2: Silver toothpick

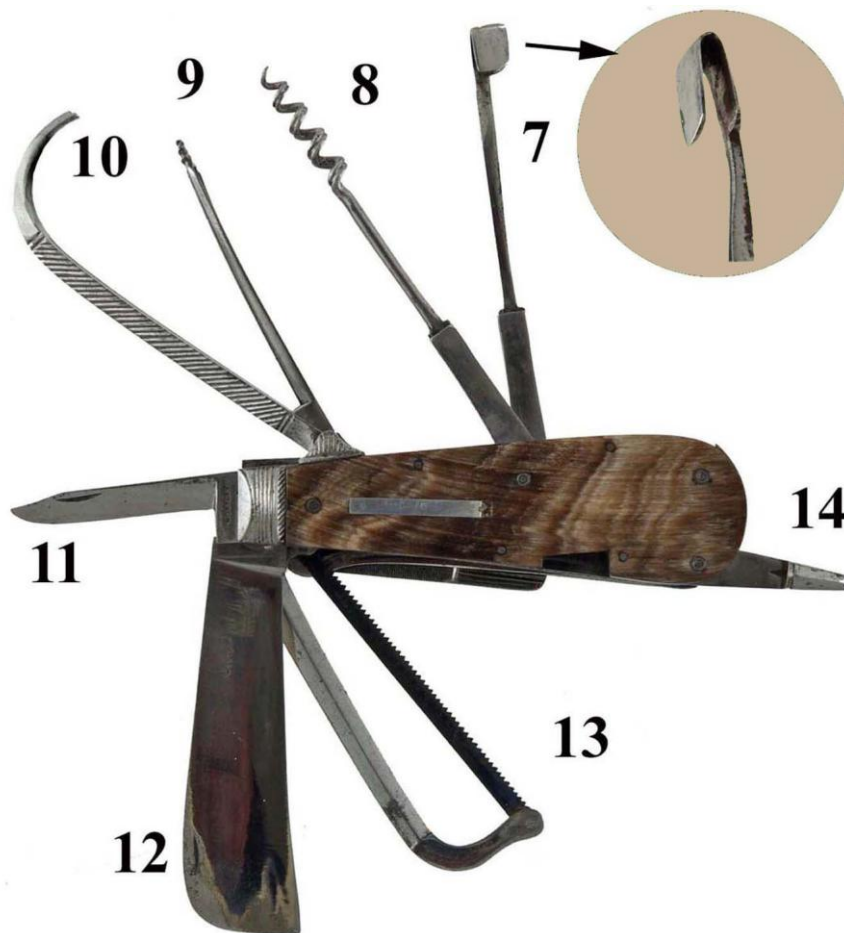
3: Silver ear scoop. In medieval times earwax was used to prepare pigments used by scribes to illuminate manuscripts. The 1832 edition of the *American Frugal Housewife* recommended earwax as a remedy for cracked lips. Earwax was used to stop the cut ends of threads or string from fraying.

4: Tweezers

5: Steel pricker with a sharp square cross section, possibly used as a pounce, for tracing using pinpricks, untying knots, and for making small holes generally.

6: Folding silver and mother-of-pearl fruit knife, hallmarked lion passant and bust of George III, (1760 - 1820); no letter date.

Tools 1 - 6 all fit inside the rear of the knife.



7: Double-jointed bird hook, used to reach into and pull out the internal organs from small game birds.

8: Double-jointed corkscrew. I can think of no reason as to why one would need a worm this long. Maybe Wortley did it just to show that he could.

9: Gimlet, used to bore holes.

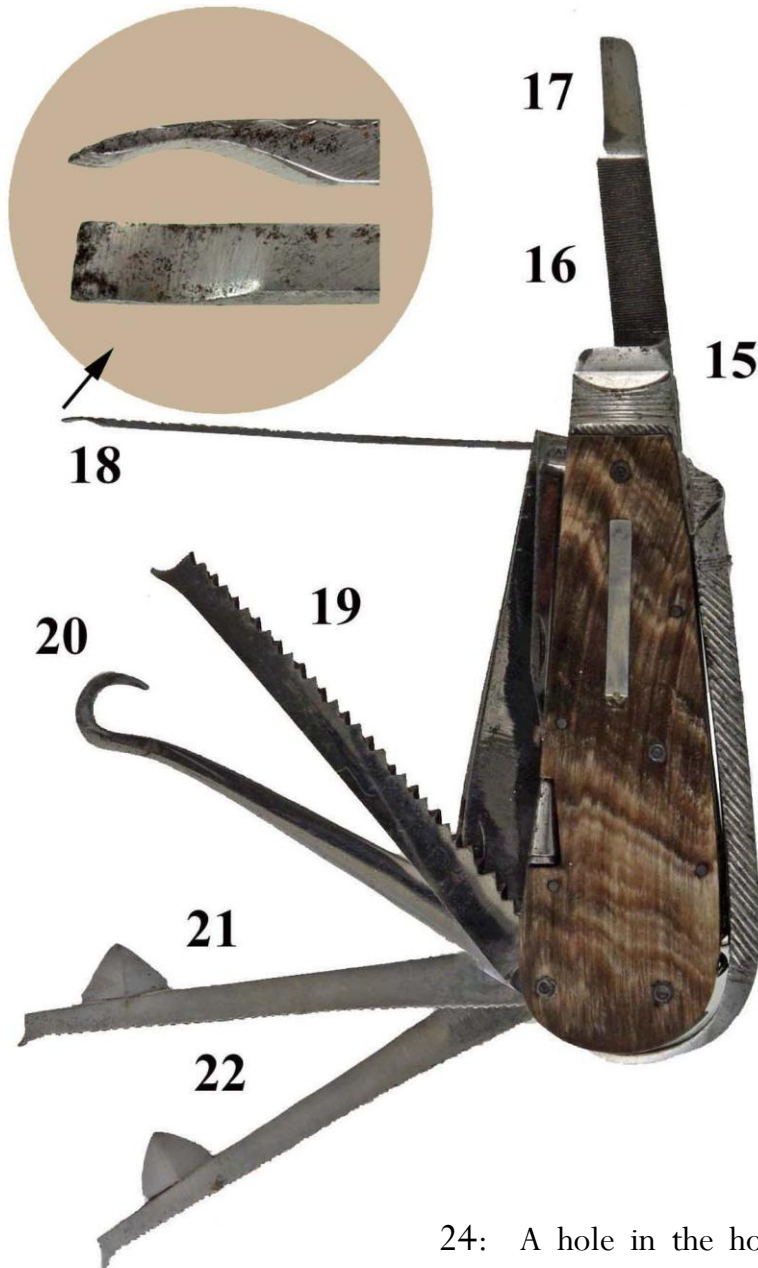
10: Hoof pick, used to remove stones from a horse's hoof.

11: Small knife blade marked WORTLEY on the tang, possibly for cutting quill pens. (The one-word trademark indicates that it

dates before the Sheffield trademarks reform of 1816. Before 1816 only the name one had registered with the guild could be used on merchandise. After 1816 one could be as discursive as one wished: name, address, town, logo, etc.)

12: Pruning(?) blade marked WORTLEY on the blade.

13: Cockspur saw, used for cutting the spurs off of gamecocks so that long razor-sharp steel "gaffs" could be lashed in place of the spurs.



14: Leather punch.

15: Screwdriver, called a "turnscrew" in those days.

16: File, for fingernails?

17: Very short blade knife, also for fingernails?

18: Ink eraser. Writing paper at this time was vellum, a translucent material produced from the skin of a young animal. Ink did not soak into it, thus one could make corrections by scraping the ink off.

19: Wood saw.

20: An early a button hook with a rectangular cross-section.

21: Fleam, used to bleed animals.

22: Fleam. A spare in case the first one became dull.

23: A pasteboard case covered with red morocco leather.



24: A hole in the hoof pick. I puzzled

over what purpose it could have for a long time. At last, I discovered that inserting tool #5 through the hole produced a VERY sturdy awl.

If you have any other thoughts on these tools, please let me know.