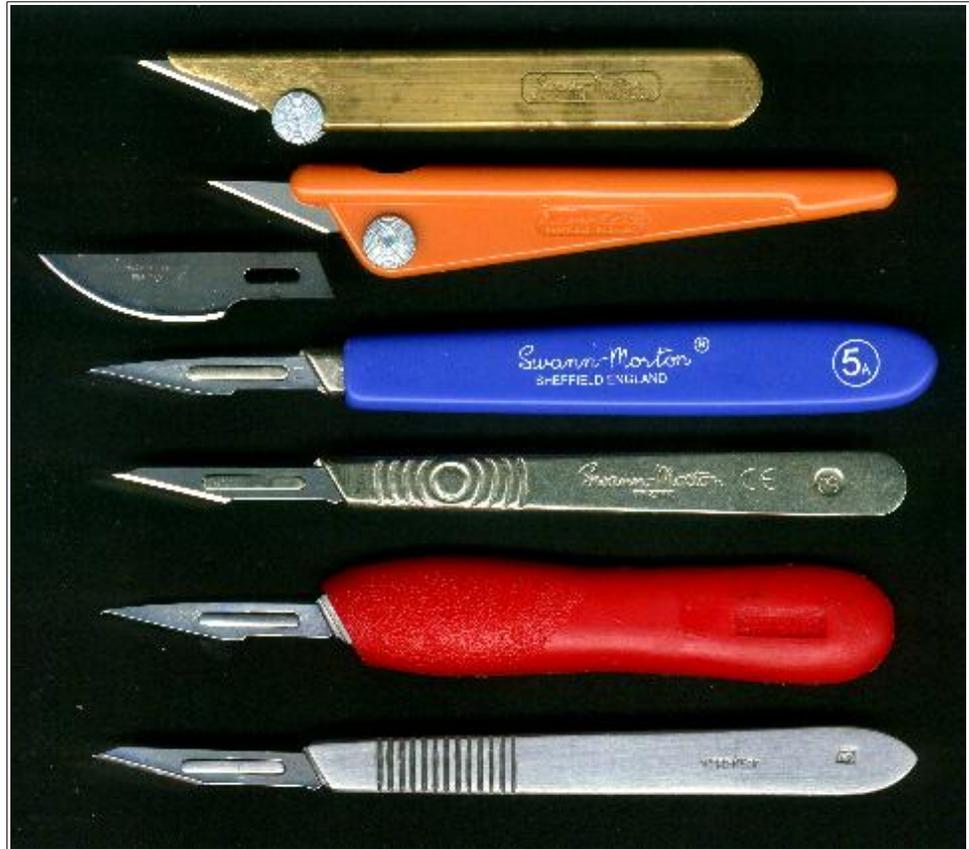


From SAMTalk - Scalpels and Craft Knives

On Oct 29 Graham Knight posted a message to the SAMTalk news group giving information on where the British Swann Morton scalpels might be purchased on line. I'd never thought of the use of scalpels in model airplane work, although I have been using a Swann Morton craft knife for years and have always liked it.

I came to the conclusion after some exchange of correspondence that in this respect I was very much a minority and that most veteran balsa hackers have been using them since birth. I thought that I'd get some.

For the benefit of others who have not been exposed to these cutting tools in a non medical sense I'm giving my experiences below in obtaining scalpels



and incidentally the Swann Morton Craft knives. I know that the information will be redundant to many, but offer it rather apologetically for the benefit of those who haven't used these very useful tools and who might be interested in trying them. A jpg file is attached to show the items I bought. All were obtained online, some a little indirectly when shipping charges appeared to be disproportionate.

TOP PICTURE.

This is the original Swann Morton knife. The handle is brass and clamps an SM craft blade with excellent support along the back of the blade. It's major use for me is in cutting hard materials like styrene or thin plywood where you need to put plenty of pressure as close as you can to the cutting point. Although this handle is still listed in the SM catalog, none of the online suppliers that I found had a stock. I think the price when I bought mine was about 3UKP (\$4.50)

SECOND FROM TOP- SWANN MORTON CRAFT TOOL.

The knife comes complete with two excellent .015" thick blades for 1. 25UKP (\$1.87). I think this a great buy. The handle gives good blade support, and the finger rest close to the business end of the handle allows plenty of pressure to be imposed. Although plastic, the handle is nicely made and grips the blade very well. I got mine from Jackson's Mail Order at <http://www.jacksons-mail-order.co.uk> Shipping charge from the UK to USA was 2UKP (\$3) and the package was received here 5 business days after ordering from the web page. Pretty good service.

THIRD FROM TOP- SWANN MORTON #5A ACRYLIC SCALPEL HANDLE

This handle is relatively expensive at 6.77UKP (\$10.15). All I can say is that it is a delight to use. It's very well made and finished and is VERY comfortable to use. I'd buy another in a heartbeat. the blades are held with negligible shake. I got mine from [Shesto website](#) together with some spare *11 SM blades at 0.60UKP(\$0.90) for a five pack. Shesto had a charge of 18UKP for shipment to the USA so I paid the VAT and had it shipped to and forwarded from relatives in the UK.

FOURTH FROM TOP- SWANN MORTON No.3 SCALPEL HANDLE

This handle is a little thicker than others and is made from a non magnetic nickel alloy. Very nice to use and very reasonably priced at 2. 38 to 2.75UKP (\$3.57 to \$4.12). Blades are held with negligible shake. I bought mine from [Shesto](#) as part of the order which included the 5a handle. Had I wanted the #3 handle and blades only, I would have got them from list member Mike Woodhouse, who tells me that shipping charges to the USA would be minimal for sclpels and blades. Mike also stocks a heavier SM handle and blades which I have not tried. [See Mike's Website](#).

FIFTH FROM TOP- MICROMARK #80421 SUPER GRIP HANDLE

As you might guess, this handle came from Micromark. Although the blades were held securely in the tool, I just didn't like the feel of the handle. It wasn't nearly as well finished as the SM no 5A handle and didn't feel comfortable in my hand. Others may have a different opinion. The price is \$3.95, shipping and handling from Micromark is \$5.00 for orders up to \$30.00. Havel blades can be bought at [Micromark](#) for \$2.75 for a 5 pack.

SIXTH FROM TOP- MICROMARK #50281 STAINLESS STEEL HANDLE

Another Micromark product, fabricated from a cutlery grade stainless as far as I could see. I liked the handle with one important exception, and that was that in my example there was noticable shake in the blade when clipped into the handle. Price is \$8.95 including six assorted blades, shipping as above. A WORD OR TWO ON BLADES. The SM blades for the Craft Tool, the SM blades for the scalpels, and the Havel blades supplied by Micromark are all 0.014" thick. The AmericanLine blades used for comparison (made by the American Safety Razor co.) for XActo knives are 0.020" thick. I looked at the edges of all these blades under a 30x pocket microscope and was unable

to find any difference in the quality of edge finish, all the blades seemed to be honed on one side only excepty the AmericanLine which were honed on two sides. Similarly, all the blades felt the same (extremely sharp!) in the ball of the thumb and shaving the thumbnail test. With the best will in the world, I couldn't find any difference. To forestall any questions, I didn't have any XActo blades for comparison. I also have no way of assessing the hardness (and the consequent life) of any of the blades. Blade cost doesn't seem to be a real big factor, though. I mentioned above the Havel's scalpel blades sold by Micromark. They didn't give the manufacturer but that's what mine were. See [Havel's Webpage](#). You can get 100 blades from them for \$20.50 plus \$5.00 shipping. The package includes a free scalpel handle. Don't have one so I can't comment on it. Well, I hope I haven't bored you with this recital. I have no connection with Swann Morton or any of the vendors, so if you detect any bias it's really because that's`the way I found it!

Best Regards Peter Money Parsippany, NJ.

Subject: Re: Scalpels and Craft Knives [SAMTalk]

Date: Fri, 08 Dec 2000 15:08:29 -0800Jim and Janet Moseley Email:
mailto:jjmoseley\$look.ca

Reply-To: SAMTalk@topica.com

To: SAMTalk@topica.com References: 1

Gee,I thought I was a minority of one, still using a brass Swann Morton that I bought around 1947, I think. They went out of production for quite a few years but SW found a batch in a storeroom, put 'em up to clear and they were snapped up so fast that they may well have restarted manufacture and distribution since. Did try the plastic handle (#2) but didn't like it when it suddenly snapped at the thumb depression. Nice to know blades are available, I buy boxes of them when occasionally back in the UK. Mind you I still cover with Humbrol tissue paste exclusively, choose Araldite epoxy, have banana oil and Tufcote proofer in stock and rejoice in my stocks of coloured Modelspan so guess I'm stuck in a timewarp.. Jim M

Subject: Re : scalpels [SAMTalk]

Date: Fri, 08 Dec 2000 15:17:15 -0800

From: Graham Knight graham\$studioseven.freemove.co

Reply-To: SAMTalk@topica.com

To: SAMTalk@topica.com

Glad you got your Swann Morton scalpels sorted OK Peter, if anyone else wants to order from Shesto, but wants to avoid their ridiculous shipping charges, I would be happy to forward orders to the US or anywhere else at cost. I have to say I find Shestos attitude to overseas customers a little embarrassing, having recommended them to everyone! What is the point of offering VAT free prices and then loading on a huge charge for shipping?

Actual cost of shipping a couple of handles and blades to the US would be no more than a couple of Pounds, so they are charging a £16 handling fee!

Graham in London, England. SAM35&1066, MECA,
Raynes Park MAC Secretary
