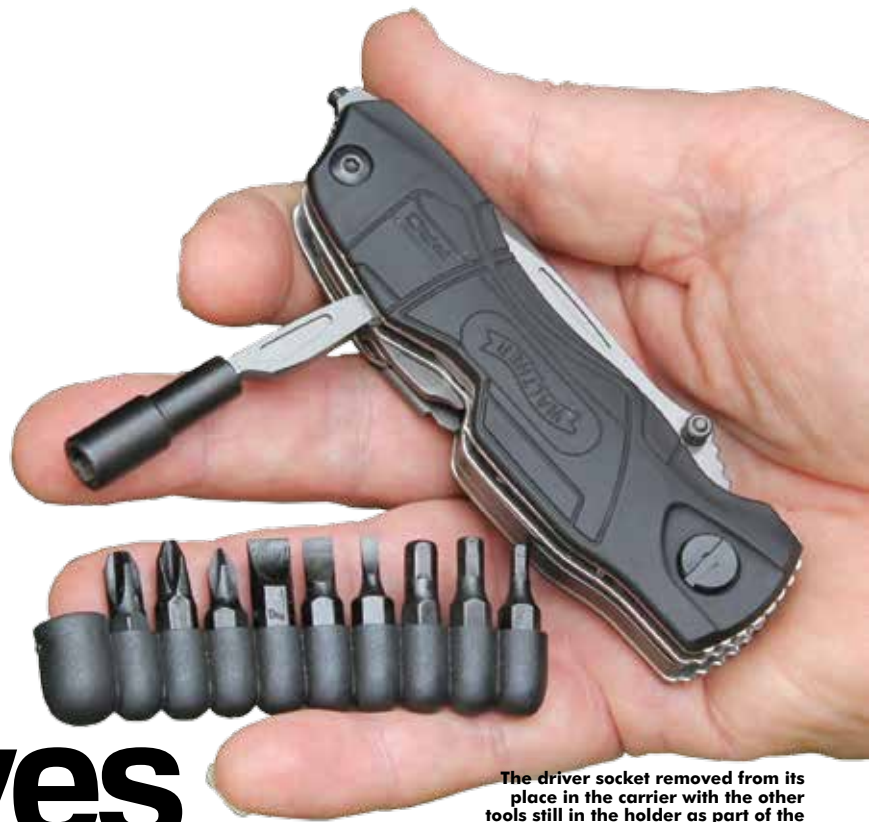


Walther Pro knives

by Peter Bindon



The driver socket removed from its place in the carrier with the other tools still in the holder as part of the Walther Pro Multi Tac set-up.

Walther is a renowned premium firearms manufacturer, but is perhaps less well-known for bladeware. Frontier Arms is the proud Australian importer and distributor of Walther knives, three of which are reviewed here: the Walther Pro Survival Folder, Rescue Knife and Multi Tac.

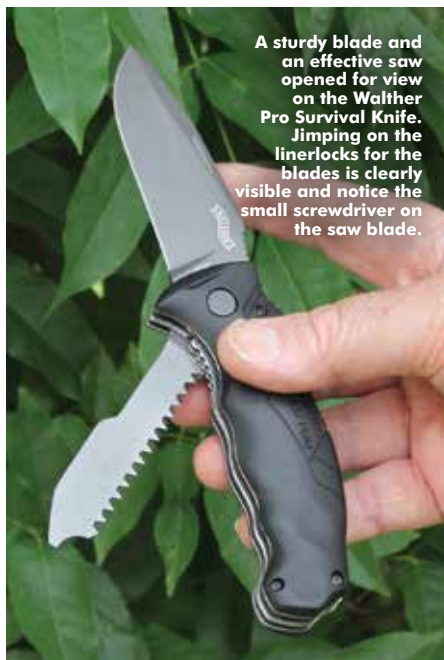
Each of these folding knives is beautifully

presented in a gunmetal-grey tin in which, beneath its press-on lid, the knife in a fitted nylon sheath nestles in a cut-out grey foam form. The tin is held closed with a slide-on cardboard sleeve, making the whole package very presentable. Its convenience as an impressive gift was probably part of the manufacturer's plan in designing this packaging system.

is favoured for high-performance knives, providing a useful combination of corrosion resistance and the ability to keep an edge, while still being relatively easy to resharpen. A short run of jimping on the back of the blade adjacent to the handle does not seem absolutely necessary on a knife of this size. It does not detract from the general usefulness of the blade because it does not hinder any change in hand grip required for a particular task. A deep nail notch provides for easy blade opening, although with practice it is a simple matter to open the blade with the thumb of one hand. The 5mm-diameter pivot pin is a screw-post that gives adequate strength to

Survival Folder

The Walther Pro Survival Folder's 85mm-long spear-point blade is made on 3mm-thick 12C27 Swedish Sandvik steel with titanium grey coating. This steel, originally developed for ice-skate blades



A sturdy blade and an effective saw opened for view on the Walther Pro Survival Knife. Jimping on the linerlocks for the blades is clearly visible and notice the small screwdriver on the saw blade.



The spine removed from the Walther Pro Survival Knife showing the back of the saw in position to strike sparks from the Ferrocerium rod.



Opening and detaching the spine of the Walther Pro Survival Knife reveals the Ferrocerium sparking rod and the opposing diamond-impregnated sharpener safely held in an ingenious holder.

what is the weakest point of a folding knife and it should cope with any reasonable task to which the knife may be applied. The heads of the screw-post are unobtrusive, being seated in recesses in the handle.

The Survival Folder's blade is held in the open position using a linerlock standing slightly proud of the ergonomically shaped handle. Interestingly, the portion of the lock against which the thumb presses to release the blade has a short run of jimping, as does the linerlock of the adjacent saw. This feature helps with the correct positioning of the thumb when closing the blade, particularly in low light conditions. The handle material of this knife is synthetic (G10) with a rubberised coating that provides a secure grip even with wet and slippery hands, and the ergonomic shape of the handle is not so extreme as to prevent the user from holding this knife in a variety of ways to accomplish bushcraft activities. Typical overall well-machined German precision and the sideways pressure of the linerlock keeps the blade securely closed.

Lying beside the blade but separated from it by the two linerlock wafers, is a saw blade with an effective cutting length of almost 70mm. It will cut easily through a 50mm-thick branch. The saw pivots at the same end of the knife as the knife blade. It has the typical bi-directional peg-shaped teeth with which readers will be familiar from experience with similar folding saws. The saw blade is equipped with a thumbnail groove for easy opening and has a substantial cut-out on the butt end to minimise interference with the linerlock belonging to the knife blade. This cut-out portion also allows for a more comfortable grip when using the knife blade because it minimises the amount of saw blade standing proud from the handle. The tip of the saw blade serves as a small screwdriver. The saw blade is locked open with a linerlock, which is just a little tricky to operate easily when closing the saw because of its proximity to the main blade, which stands out from the



handle quite proudly at the vital location. I found I had to partly open the main blade to access the saw blade's linerlock. This was the only obvious negative point that I could discover on this exceptionally well-made knife.

A surprising feature is concealed on the spine of the Survival Folder. The wide back-strap can be levered out from the hinge end of the knife and removed completely revealing a short (30mm long) diamond sharpening rod and a piece of Ferrocerium rod of the same length. Both are held in place, end to end, with a central securing band. It would be possible (but perhaps inadvisable) to use both the sharpening stone and the Ferrocerium steel without taking them from the detachable spine.

Although not confirmed in the product details, I think that the back of the saw blade could strike a spark from the Ferrocerium rod. This is preferable to using the cutting edge of main blade, the back of which does not have sharp, angular edges suited for this purpose.

The Walther Pro Survival Folder weighs in at 304g without its pouch, which is too heavy to carry in a pocket. The pouch is a sturdy nylon affair moulded to shape around a firm insert. It is closed with a press stud. The pouch is fitted with a single belt loop to accept a belt up to 70mm wide in a vertical carry configuration.

Although marketed as a 'survival knife', this knife, because of its blade length, non-slip handle and robust nature, could well serve as a hunting knife if an unobtrusive folding knife was required - and I suspect the saw blade could cope with cutting through the bones of most game animals hunted in Australia.

Considering all its features, this is an inexpensive knife retailing at around \$155, which I think is great value for such a versatile tool.

Rescue Knife

The Walther Pro Rescue Knife is sold in packaging similar to that of the Survival Folder. The sturdy 90mm-long blade of the Rescue Knife, like that of the Survival



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Folder, is made of 3mm-thick coated 12C27 Swedish Sandvik stainless steel. It has an abrupt drop-point and is armed against the ricasso with a 25mm-long section of very sharp teeth. This feature comes into its own when cutting hard-twisted polypropylene rope or other tightly compressed materials that need severing to release a trapped victim. While generally I am not in favour of toothed portions on regular knife blades, those of rescue knives designed for use by ambulance officers and rescue teams (where a few seconds may make the difference between life and death) should be so equipped.

There are two other excellent features of the blade on the Rescue Knife; one is a grooved thumb stud on the back of the blade that assists with one-handed opening (either left- or right-handed), and the second is an extension to the blade just behind the ricasso which, when the blade is closed, protrudes about 7mm through the spine of the knife. This feature, easily operated by the thumb, is called a 'flipper' by some manufacturers and it greatly assists in blade opening. When the blade is locked into the open position, the flipper becomes part of the fingerguard and helps prevent a slippery hand from moving forward of the guard onto the blade. The blade locks into

position with a linerlock that also helps to hold the blade in the securely closed position by sideways pressure on the blade.

As in the Survival Folder, the blade pivots on a 5mm-thick screw-post, opening smoothly with no apparent slack in the joint either in the open or closed position. The handle material is G10 with a non-slip rubber coating. In the example reviewed, the knife handle is attractively presented in two appropriate colors, black and yellow. Although ergonomically shaped, the finger grooves are not so deep that they prevent the knife being held in the hand in a variety of positions to enable different cutting tasks to be undertaken.

The butt end of the handle is equipped with a short, strong but sharp conical point for use as a glass-breaker. Where you would normally expect to find a solid backspring in a folding knife, a strap cutter has been fitted. This blade is deployed by sliding it out into position using thumb pressure on a substantial band of jimping on the back of the blade, making its deployment simple and reliable in an emergency situation. I am rather uncertain about the mechanism that securely holds this strap cutter in the open position, or in the closed position for that matter, but I suspect that it is a ball and spring arrangement acting on the groove on

the bottom of the hook.

The knife weighs in at a substantial 208g, necessitating a belt pouch, which is provided. The moulded pouch, made of synthetic material, has a press-stud closure and is fitted with straps allowing for both horizontal carry on a belt up to about 40mm wide and vertical carry on a belt around 50mm wide.

In my view, the Walther Pro Rescue Knife is exceptionally good value, retailing for about \$110.

Multi Tac

A workshop in your pocket is how Walther describes the Pro Multi Tac, which has characteristics of both a tactical knife and a multi-tool. Apart from the almost 80mm-long blade, this unit has pliers, scissors and a magnetic bit holder that accepts nine supplied bits. There is a glass-breaker at the opposite end of the handle to the pivot joint. The main pivot for this knife seems the same type of screw-post used in the two aforementioned knives. Like its two relatives, the blade of the Multi Tac is also made of top-grade 12C27 Swedish Sandvik steel with a tough grey titanium coating. The blade has a thumb stud and thumbnail recesses on both faces to assist opening. The manufacturer's publicity for this knife

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implies that the thumb stud is dual sided; this may be so, but if it was changed to a left-handed opening, the operation would be very difficult because the pliers occupy a space about 8mm wide on the off-side of the blade across which the thumb would have to reach. So, I am not convinced that the thumb stud would be a convenient feature if swapped over to suit a left-handed operator. The manufacturer's information also says that the ergonomic handle shape is designed to assist blade opening when wearing gloves; I think that this action too, would be quite a challenge. If the blade shape was revamped to put the thumb opening stud location exactly opposite the cut-out in the handle, one-handed opening would be facilitated.

The spear-point blade has some jimping against the handle, presumably to assist with blade control if the grip is shortened, but my view is that this feature is unnecessary. The blade is held in the open position by a linerlock similar to those described for the other two knives.

A pair of pliers is located beside the blade. The sprung jaws are 45mm long and about 5mm wide tapering to 2.5mm. They have a gripping area, a cutting area and the terminal finely toothed and pointed section for more delicate gripping. The lever arm of the pliers is made from quite thin steel to which a thicker portion has been riveted for comfort. Some jimping on this lever were not subjected to any strenuous test during this review and there may well be a good reason for this feature. I found that the most comfortable grip when using the pliers is to have the knife handle in the palm of the hand letting the fingers operate the movable arm.

Other tools stowed in the spine of this knife include a tiny pair of spring-bladed scissors useful for trimming the ends of a knot in a fishing line but really too small even for trimming your fingernails. Closing these scissors is a little tricky as the sharp edge of one of the scissor blades presses against the closing thumb unless the thumb is kept very close up to the knife handle. A notch in one scissor blade could serve as a wire stripper but it's not the only notch on the knife as the seatbelt hook also contains a notch; actually providing a place that can be engaged by a thumbnail so that the hook can be deployed, but it will strip plastic insulation from wire with a little encouragement. The seatbelt hook is sharpened on two sides and in a pinch, could be used as a gut-hook but is probably better suited to cutting woven nylon strapping than opening the paunch of a goat. A bottle opener or



cap-lifter with a small screwdriver (3mm-wide blade) on its tip is adjacent to the hook. This tool is a little difficult to access even though both sides have a substantial opening notch stamped into them. This is because the tip is buried well down in the spine of the knife and below the level of the tab on the scissors and the square drive. I had to open the square drive to deploy the bottle opener. The screwdriver end will turn small screws with slotted heads.

The final tool on the spine is a square drive that folds out on its own pivot point and accepts nine plug-on accessories kept in a flexible plastic holder. This holder slides into an elasticised pocket inside the pouch at the back of the knife compartment where it is held very firmly. The holder is a little difficult to remove from its pocket, but no doubt this problem would vanish after some use. The plug-on tools consist of three hexagonal post drivers (3, 4 and 5mm), three flat screwdrivers (3, 5 and 7mm) and three cross-head screwdrivers along with one hex drive (8mm) that is also the connector between the nine tools and the square drive. The hex drive/connector contains a strong magnet that holds it firmly in place on the square drive, and in turn holds each of the nine tools in position during use. It is my opinion, and I am sure you will agree, that the magnet is a most useful feature as it prevents a considerable amount of frustration arising by keeping tools firmly attached to the square drive during use. With so many other features, you could almost overlook the conical glass-breaker at the rear of the handle that really rounds off the wide capabilities of this exceptional knife.



The Multi Tac weighs in at 227g. In my estimation, this tool falls somewhere between the large Swiss Army knives and the multi-tools made by a number of other firms. The substantial broad blade is a definite advantage but the scissors and bottle opener are certainly outclassed by some available on other multi-tools; these two features are the only obvious drawbacks on this otherwise very useful folding knife. The black nylon pouch supplied with the Walther Pro Multi Tac is moulded to shape as in the other examples described above and, like them, closes with a press stud. The pouch has two carry options; straps for horizontal carry will accept a belt about 38mm wide, while the strap for vertical carry will take belts 55mm wide.

The Walther Pro Multi Tac is good value at its retail price of around \$150.

Summary

Walther Pro products are distributed in Australia by Frontier Arms. For more information, ask at your local Walther retailer or visit frontierarms.com.au ●