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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

The Mariner's Mirror

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmir20>

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Published online: 22 Mar 2013.

To cite this article: R. Morton Nance (1921) SOME SHIPS OF 1541-2, *The Mariner's Mirror*, 7:12, 368-373, DOI: [10.1080/00253359.1921.10655068](https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1921.10655068)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1921.10655068>

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SOME SHIPS OF 1541-2.

BY R. MORTON NANCE.

IN the delightful series of pen-drawings, here reproduced from the originals that decorate a map or plan of Calais, and for which we fortunately have a date, we are presented with what is practically the same ship as she would appear in varying trim and from several different view-points ; and if at the end of this fairly complete exhibition of the ship we are left still without the quite intimate knowledge that a first glance at the series seemed to promise, this is due only to the narrow limitations within which the artist worked, either, as an expert wielder of the quill, for artistic reasons of which he was probably unconscious, or as we shall perhaps find easier of belief, for lack of the close sea-going acquaintance with his subject that would have perfected his representation of the ship that as a landsman he had at least studied with appreciation of its decorative qualities.

That he should design in what we should now call a conventional manner, relying upon his own taste and memory for his facts, and that he should, for instance, as in Figs. 1, 4 and 5, be more occupied with giving his sails a traditionally "wind-filled" air, even if need be by bagging out by sides at once, than with seeking to recover the exact curves that he had observed them to take, is exactly what we should expect of anyone brought up in his school, and artistically one might be quite willing to accept him without cavil. To the nautically curious mind and eye, however, a serious doubt is suggested as to whether the artist's vigorous, straightforward style and little tricks of the pen, that conspire to deprive us of the greater detail that would have been so valuable, are not just so much bluff, masking the weak points of his sea-wisdom.

Either he was ignorant of the inboard details of his ship, or in Figs. 1 and 5 he has gone a little out of his way to conceal his knowledge, giving us, instead of some desirable information as to the waist and the aftercastle, a couple of very annoying blank spaces ; and some part of his ship's rigging that to a seaman one would imagine must seem vital, are evidently far less than

III.

IV.

V.

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this to him, for although his yards hoist and lower, so that we see them at different heights, he consistently leaves out the ties and halyards that enable them to do so. Braces, too, he treats as negligible things and martnetts are quite forgotten ; parrels are not always shown, and lifts, even, are wanting from the foreyard in Fig. 6, while worse than all such mere errors of omission, which might be due to a heedless joy of covering the bare sea-spaces quickly with his jolly ships. We find two pairs of bowlines to the foresail in Fig. 1, one of them leading, like the main bowlines, straight out to the bowsprit, and the other running, quite as we find it in the other ships, through horses on the fore-stay and the bowsprit but leading—alas !—not from the sail, but from the yard, where it is quite meaningless, and an inspection of the fore-bowlines, as shown in Figs. 2 and 6, reveal a like weakness. Errors like these we may put down to a cheerful eagerness to see results, without utterly condemning the artist who made them, but they are warnings to us nevertheless, bidding us take heed how we accept as fact any detail in these ship-drawings that is not confirmed by other work of the same period, let it be never so often reiterated or boldly delineated, and of such unconfirmed details there are more than one.

For the general form and appearance of the ships there is corroboration enough. Except for the square-tuck stern and the more consolidated character of its superstructures, especially astern, the hull still keeps alive the *nef* tradition of the 15th century, and of how little that had changed by 1540-50 we have good contemporary evidence in the Anthony Rolls, the window at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, and other less detailed representations, and the fine plates by Bruegel, the ships of Le Testu, and those of Braun and Hogenburg, are sufficiently little latter to be of the greatest use for comparison. The placing of the guns varies but slightly and looks convincing enough, but we are not made to know without a doubt (although this is what seems likely), that the gun-ports and their lids are cut oblong and not as in later ships, square.

Of the planking the drawings tell nothing. The few lines of conventional "shading" are far too close together to be taken as representing the seams between planks, and it would be rash to deduce from such lines in Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 6, that the square-tuck was planked straight across, and not diagonally upwards from each side towards the stern-post, in what from other sources we know to have been the usual way, chosen no doubt as coming nearest in appearance to the planking of the round stern that it

replaced, and softening to the ship-loving eye what must have been a change of build not easy to admire and adopted only for its supposed practical necessity. Of the changed direction of the planking covering the bows from the upper wale to the underside of the forecastle we are given no hint, either, and such shading-lines as we find here in Fig. 1 are misleading probably; for the evidence is fairly conclusive that the planks ran in the opposite direction at this time.

The wales are clearly shown, and in several of the ships—Figs. 2, 3, 5, 6—short skids connect the upper two of these at intervals; either along the waist and beneath the aftercastle, or in some cases in the latter position only. In these details of wales, skids and the accompanying depth of the waist the ships differ more than in any others, however; Fig. 5, for instance, showing skids that connect three wales at the aftercastle, and Figs. 1 and 4 having no skids at all and showing the extremes of height and lowness of side amidships.

No channels are indicated, although they certainly should be shown, and the form of the rudder is sadly wanting in capacity to convince us that the artist's eye for detail was a good one, for it hangs upon a single pintle, the timber itself being, one would have to believe, cut away and bored through to form its gudgeon. The same obtuseness to detail, or lack of precision in the setting of it down, is shown in the absence of information as to where tacks and sheets come aboard, except in the two renderings of the same pose that make Figs. 2 and 6, where the main-tack is made quite clearly to lead to its chess-tree just abaft a port-hole. The hawsehole is evident in Figs. 1 and 3, and the anchor, with the painter-ring at the crown, that is in Fig. 1 shown in use, rather a late example of what was earlier a very common thing, although one so seldom shown with the painter passed through it as to have left much doubt as to whether it did not serve as attachment for a buoy-rope or a becueing only. The dragon figure-head, the arched ports, the pavisades, the great opening in the fore-castle cubridge-head, here square-headed and not, as more commonly, arched, are all features that occur constantly in contemporary pictures. The banners in Fig. 3, with their royal devices—the crowned rose, lily and harrow, the feather and the lilies-and-lions of France and England—are for clearness designed on so large a scale that to keep something of their own relative importance, the ship's masts have shot up above them to a height that looks more than dangerous even with furled sails, and were the ship a real one and floating as she is shown us we should look

anxiously at the great red-cross pendant that writhes aloft, expecting the next wag of it to be the final one before a capsize.

Exact proportions, of course, any more than a full observance of the rules of perspective, are not to be looked for, the artist had some eye for balance, however, and has not gone very far from fact in the other drawings; the enormous bowsprit and over-tall foremast of Figs. 2 and 6, like the impossible amount of forecastle shown in the same two, are errors of perspective rather than of proportion, and one has seen quite modern ship-drawings, the work of expert seamen but untrained draughtsmen, in which exactly similar faults occur. It would seem as though the proportions by measurement of the spars are so well known, and the facts of a ship so familiar to such men, that the apparent falsifications and contradictions demanded by true perspective seem to them to be deformities that must, somehow or anyhow, be corrected; and it is probable that it would take more than a photograph to persuade such sailormen that, for example, a ship's fore-truck could ever seem to stand higher above the horizon than the main one, or that her bowsprit, or boom, or yards, could ever from any possible view-point be foreshortened to such an extent that a tiny circle could enclose the whole.

Making allowance for the drawbacks of a pen-work style that, excellent as it is, attains its clearness by leaving out all detail that could possibly look confused, and remembering that the perspective is not an exact record of fact, we find in the consistent lines of the rigging what promises to be the chief contribution of these drawings to ship-history. We are soon met here with disappointments—the dead-eyes of the shrouds are shapeless blobs, and their laniards left out, like the channels. The method of setting up the stays on the bowsprit is hinted at by the presence there of a single block or heart, and the bowlines seem to be quite correctly shown, except for the blunders in one or two instances already mentioned. Those of the courses repeat the fifteenth-century arrangement, as seen so clearly on W.A.'s carrack—the main-bowlines to blocks out on the bowsprit and thence back to the forecastle, and the fore-bowlines having a similar lead, except that they first pass through bull's-eye leads, fixed on horses to the fore-stay. The fore-topsail bowlines all lead to horses on the fore-topmast stay, to blocks on the bowsprit, and thence home to the fore-top. In later ships we find these bowlines leading through blocks *beneath* the top and thence down to the deck; but here they seem to lead in over the top-rim, and it is quite likely that they would do so, for it seems to have been the early custom

to belay all the running gear belonging to the topsail in the top itself, the increasing size and importance of topsails having been the only reason for its abandonment. The main-topsail bowlines are like them in leading to horses on the stay, but these are certainly not led back to be belayed in the top, for we see them running down to blocks beneath the fore-top, and thence to the waist, if we are to trust Fig. 3, which is the only one to give this detail.

The lifts as drawn in Figs. 2 and 3 are not very convincing—personally I have failed to make them work at all—and it is a little discouraging to see their falls, on the main-yard of Fig. 3, leading, one down *before* the yard, the other abaft it. In the simpler form that they take elsewhere, however, the lifts are at least possible. The mizen-lift is also just a barely possible contrivance, although a very brief trial of it in action brings out the fact that by the time it was brought as high as possible its three blocks would all be jammed up together, without any certainty that they would ever come unjammed again. The fact that we have exactly the same arrangement doing duty as fore-topmast backstay (it can hardly be here a topsail halyard if it is at all like the actual fitting) is another warning to us to look twice at it before accepting it, and in the end we shall probably agree that it is merely a conventional representation (or a muddled version if we so care to put it) of the usual form of mizen-lift as we find it from the middle of the fifteenth century right on to the early years of the seventeenth (see "M.M.," Vol. II., p. 227, and Vol. IV., p. 230) and not to be taken too seriously.

One of the things at which we are always left to guess by sixteenth-century ship-draughtsmen, is the exact way in which the spritsail was set. After our experience with his bowlines and lifts we shall not be disappointed to find that here again we have a rather incredible arrangement that agrees with none that appears elsewhere—a more or less elaborate crowfoot at the yard-arm, from whence a lift runs up to a block on the bowsprit to end with a tackle capable of raising it only a few feet. Another disappointment is given us when we seek for information as to the lead of the braces. They are entirely left out, but for a pair of main-braces in Figs. 4 and 5, and a very interesting lead for the main-topsail braces in the latter, namely, straight down to the deck. This unfortunately we have to reject, as it stands, for it does not lead far enough aft to do the work required of it, and the same remark may be applied to the main-braces, for their *pendants* are so long that even were they brought back to their proper place, they would move the yard very little.

Where the sails are set, the latchet-holes along the bottom of the bonnet, and allowing for the possible addition of a drabber beneath, are always put in, and the division of course and bonnet is made quite clear, again however no sailorly detail as to the method of lacing the bonnet is given. Perhaps as a crowning weakness, having by this time run over the rest of the ship, we may notice that this artist has no idea that the outlicker should have a mizen-sheet leading out to its end, even when the sail is not set, instead of showing as a mere bare stick.

Taken as a whole, then, these, at first view most charming, little pictures are a blank as givers of information that cannot be found as well or better elsewhere, and no details in them (not even the armorial devices—the rose and the cross-shield in Fig. 5, the rose and crowned fleur-de-lis in Fig. 6—that are painted on the counter), can be taken as good evidence by themselves, although they may be of some use in bearing out the testimony of other pictures, if such there should be, that repeat them, and for this reason are worthy of being put on record here.

THE WHITSTABLE OYSTER FISHERY.

BY BERYL COUPER.

THIS well-known fishery is probably the oldest in existence. It is impossible to state with any certainty whether Sallust, writing about sixty years B.C., referred to the Whitstable oysters when he declared that there was some good in the poor Britons—they produced an oyster; but taking into consideration the geographical situation and the fact that Kent at that time was a happy hunting ground for the Romans, the inference is not entirely without justification. At any rate we know that oysters were exported from Regulbium—the modern Reculvers—as far back as the time of Julius Agricola, 80 A.D. The drying up of the River Wantsume, which formerly cut off the island of Thanet from the mainland of Kent, probably caused some slight shifting of the