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GWYN'S BOOK OF SHIPS.

BY E. A. DINGLEY.

IN 1908 an interesting book of ship drawings came into my possession. It is a MS. book of sixty pages of drawing paper bound in vellum. On the inside cover is written, "No. 118 Gwyn's Cat. of Books, p. 32, lettered Ships, vol. 1. Drawn and coloured by Mr. Edward Gwyn, Coach Herald Painter, 110, Long Acre, London, circa 1780," and in another place, "Edward Gwyn, 1769, at the other end heraldic matters. H. G." At the other end inside the cover is written, "Henry Gwyn Herald Painter Greek St. Soho 1856. 1838." Beginning at this end the first page is an elaborate tablet with armorial bearings and inscribed, "E. Gwyn 1769." The following right hand pages contain coats of arms each with crest supporters and motto complete, only one of these is finished and twenty are partly done or only pencilled out. Turning to the other end, we find all the right hand pages filled with drawings of ships of all sorts, from a 90 gun man-of-war to a sailing boat. Twenty-six of these are finished and most of them carefully coloured, twenty-two are in various stages of completion, some only roughly sketched in pencil, others show signs of many alterations and corrections, whilst yet others are inked in and have a wash of colour for the sea. One striking feature of most of these pictures is that besides the broadside view of the ship there is added a separate view of the stern, which gives valuable information as to the build and appearance of the ship. In addition there are three pages of drawings of hulls of men-of-war, seven of which are finished and four incomplete. Those that are named are a 54, a 32, a 20, and a cutter 26; of the unfinished ones, two are three-deckers, one of a two-decker, and one of a small two-masted craft. There are also nine pages of pictures of groups of ships fighting, etc., only one of which is finished. These are of very minor importance.

That the individual ship drawings are interesting is beyond doubt, but the question is, are they accurate were they a serious

attempt by Mr. Gwyn to pourtray the shipping of his time, or were they only drawn to please his fancy? I am inclined to accept the former view for three reasons. (1) Mr. Gwyn was a Coach Herald Painter and these are drawn in one of his working drawing books. Now Heraldry is an exact art, and as a painter of coats-of-arms, he would be trained all his life to exact accuracy of detail, and imagination or originality would have no place in his work. Such a man would, I think, be as accurate and careful in his hobby as he was in his work. (2) The care with which the finished drawings are executed is evident, both as to drawing and colouring, but the unfinished ones show this still more, as it is evident that many of the lines have been erased and drawn again and again in pencil before being inked in. It is very clear that a great deal of time must have been spent and trouble taken over them, and that they were a very real labour of love and no mere hurried or casual production. (3) The rigging is contemporary and accurate as far as I can test it. Some years ago Mr. Harold Wyllie pointed out in the "Army and Navy Gazette" that, according to Steel, in his "Elements and Practice of Rigging and Seamanship," 1794, p. 49, ships of more than 50 guns carried the long mizzen yard. In Gwyn the only ship drawn with it, is the 90 gun ship, all the others having the gaff. It is true one of these is a 64, but no doubt there was a margin in this transitionary period. None of the ship-rigged vessels have a boom for their spankers, and these, when not set, are represented as brailed up to the mast and gaff. None of the ships have dolphin strikers or martingale stays. The braces are generally as given by Steel, though there are slight differences. In the 90 and 64 gun ships and men-of-war generally, the sprit-topsail braces lead to the fore cap instead of to below the fore top with the spritsail braces. The foreyard braces lead to the mainstay, but lower down than they are generally shown. The mizzen topsail and topgallant braces lead to the peak end of the gaff, as they used to do with the long mizzen yard. The crossjack braces lead forward to the main shrouds though as the drawings are in profile, the crossing of these is not apparent. The futtock shrouds are attached to the lower shrouds and not to the mast. The fore topsail bowlines lead to a block on the fore topmast stay, and the fore topgallant bowlines to one on the fore topgallant stay. In some of the drawings the main topgallant bowlines lead to the main topgallant stay and the main topsail bowlines to the main topmast stay. Other details might be given, but enough has been said to

establish a sufficient proof of the general accuracy of the drawings to make them of interest and value.

The Editor has chosen eight of the pictures for reproduction here. They are as follows :

(1) **YATCH SLOOP**, as Gwyn quaintly spells it. This light and elegant craft is rigged much as a cutter, but there are important differences. The bowsprit is lighter and is fixed and not made to run in as it is in the cutters, it also steeves slightly instead of being horizontal. At the end is a small socket for the Jack staff. The gaff is a standing one, with the mainsail brailed up to it, and she has no boom, whereas the cutters are drawn with one almost as heavy as the lower mast. The topsail braces lead to the bowsprit end, but the lower yard's go to the deck aft. Besides the usual vang pendants from the peak there are two "Y"-shaped ropes from the gaff to the deck, these appear not only in the small craft but also in the pictures of most of the larger ships. Are they to steady the yard or to help control the sail? The hull differs too from that of the cutter, especially the bow, which is ship-like with an elaborate figure head, scroll work and a square bulkhead. On the quarter there is a grand saloon window, and at the stern a large lantern. Amidships four guns are seen peeping over the bulwarks through half ports. The hull is painted white below the water line, above this, is a broad stripe of chocolate, surmounted by one of yellow with a narrow chocolate band above, whilst at the forecastle and poop there is a narrow band of bright red, edged with yellow and in the latter place having another brown streak above. She flies the white ensign at the stern and the naval white pennant with two tails at the mast head.

(2) **TOPSAIL SCHOONER**.—This and two more like it are the most remarkable pictures in the book, and quite unlike any other schooners I have ever seen. I refer to the extraordinary cut of the topsails. This shape of topsail is of course, common enough in cutters of the period, and in many Dutch galliots. Groenewegen, in his wonderful book of etchings, gives one of a two top sail schooner, the topsails of which have a large notch cut out of them, but it is only half as deep as those of Gwyn's. If he were not so accurate in other details, I should hesitate to accept it, and as it is I should be glad of corroborative evidence. The reason is, of course, to let the fore and main stays pass through, but even then, why should the lower yards be set so low on the masts? Another interesting point is the spritsail (the other two schooners in the book have neither spritsail nor jibboom).

Note also the Jack staff at the bowsprit end, and the fore topsail yard braces leading to the jibboom end as in a cutter, the top-gallant sails are set flying. There are also eight light guns showing over the bulwarks through half ports, as in the sloop.

(3) **ROYAL YATCH.**—This is one of the most finished drawings in the book, and the only pity is that the Yacht is not named. In a very interesting series of articles on Royal Yachts, published in the "Army and Navy Gazette," by Rear-Admiral Sir R. Massie Blomfield, a list of the Royal Yachts in existence at the end of the 18th century is given as follows :—

William and Mary, of 172 tons, built at Portsmouth, in 1694.

Medina, of 66 tons, built at Portsmouth, in 1702.

Princess Augusta, of 184 tons, built at Deptford, in 1710.

Catherine, of 168 tons, built at Deptford, in 1720.

Mary, of 83 tons, built at Deptford, in 1727.

Portsmouth, of 83 tons, built at Portsmouth, in 1742.

Royal Charlotte, of 232 tons, built at Deptford, in 1749.

Dorset, of 164 tons, built at Deptford, in 1753.

Plymouth, of 88 tons, built at Plymouth, in 1755.

Of these the *Portsmouth* and *Plymouth* were more or less appropriated to the service of those ports, and the *Dorset* to that of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, whilst the *William and Mary*, *Medina*, *Catherine* and *Mary* were no longer fit for active service, leaving only the *Princess Augusta* and the *Royal Charlotte* available for Royal purposes. Which of these is here represented I cannot say, but I incline to the *Royal Charlotte*, as I think Gwyn would naturally choose for portrayal the larger and more recent of the two. The chief points of interest are the rich ornamentation of the hull with the gilt scroll work running the whole length of the bulwarks, but especially abaft the main-mast, where emblematic figures can be made out ; the gilt lion rampant figure head, with a ball or globe in its paws, rising from a bright blue cutwater ; the large and ornamental quarter window with its fourteen panes of glass ; the three poop lanterns and also the one in the after part of the main top and the awning stretched between the main and mizzen masts. The rigging is much the same as described in the other ships, except that the bowlines do not lead to the stays. She flies the White Ensign at the stern, the Union flag at the Jack staff. At the foremast head flies the Admiralty flag with the single rope entwined around the anchor, at the main, the Royal Standard of George III. and, at the mizzen, the Union flag without St. Patrick's Cross.

(4) **YATCH KETCH.**—This from its title would seem to be a

private and not a Royal Yacht. She flies the Red Ensign, and at the mast head a pennant like the Church Pennant, only much longer and with two long tails, one red and the other blue. The hull is richly ornamented, almost as much so as the Royal Yacht; the figurehead is a woman holding in her hand a ball surmounted by a cross. The quarter window is almost as large as in the preceding picture, and both hulls are painted in the same way, grey or white below the water line, the three narrow stripes black, yellow, black, with a broad yellow one reaching up to the ornamented bulwarks, whilst along the poop and forecastle there is a strip of bright red, which in the Ketch has a red rail above it. She has one stern lantern and one in the main top. There is also an awning abaft the main mast. Falconer says that in 1769 the Royal Yachts were commonly rigged as ketches, except the principal one reserved for the Sovereign, which was equipped with three masts like a ship. He also says that "a ketch was a vessel equipped with two masts, viz., a mainmast and a mizzenmast, and usually from 100 to 250 tons burden. She was furnished with a trysail like a snow, and had a foresail, forestaysail and jib, nearly similar to those of a sloop, but with square sails on the main and mizzen masts." The only difference in the rigging between this yacht and an ordinary ketch on the next page is that here the foretopsail bowlines lead to the fore-topmast stay. Could this be one of the smaller Royal Yachts used for Government service such as the *Portsmouth*, *Plymouth* or *Dorset*? This may throw some light on Mr. Anderson's query in the "M. M." for July, 1912, as to whether any of the Stuart yachts were ketch rigged.

(5) COAL BRIG. This picture throws light upon a query in the "M. M." of 1920, where the writer doubts whether these craft ever carried royals. The hull is of the typical plain bluff build, with a severely plain bow and a straight cutwater destitute of any figure head or ornamentation, thus agreeing with E. W. Cooke's Collier Brig of 1828. The stern view shows a considerable amount of tumble home in her sides. Below the water-line she is coloured grey, then comes a broad black band, above which is a broader brown one, with a narrow strip of red edged with yellow, at the forecastle and poop. The formast is stepped very far forward as it always was in these craft. The mainmast is exactly amidships, and the bowsprit which steeves at a sharp angle carries a spritsail. The running rigging is quite different from that of the six other brigs in the book. Both fore and main braces lead to the deck. The foretopsail braces to the

main stay, the maintopsail to the foretopmast shrouds. The royals are set flying without any. The mainsail is large and there is a crutch for the boom to rest upon. The bowlines lead to the stays as described above.

(6) [FRIGATE WITH OARS.]—In April, 1912, Mr. Anderson asked whether any ships of 60 guns and upwards carried oars. I do not think that this Query was ever answered, but it is certain that frigates often did so. Besides the one reproduced, there is in the page of profiles of ships, one of a frigate which is pierced with eleven small square ports between the gun ports, and on a level with their lower sills which I think were meant for oars. In the picture before us the oar ports are on a lower level and are fourteen in number. These ports seem to have been closed by port lids hinged on the after side and opening aft, they are painted red on their inner side, like the gun ports, the oars, too, are painted a crimson red. In R. C. Leslie's "A British Privateer in the time of Queen Anne," giving an account of Capt. Woode Rogers' voyage in the *Duke* and *Dutchess* of Bristol, several instances of the use of oars are given in 1708. Thus, on p. 35, he says, "they were two days rowing and towing the ship," and on p. 44, "falling calm we got out our oars, rowed and towed with boats ahead and gained on the chase," and on p. 102, "having no wind we got out eight of our ship's oars and rowed above an hour." One curious detail about the gun ports is that those under the chains have lids hinged like doors instead of the usual lid dropping from above, all the ships with ports are so drawn, from the three-decker down to the brig, the reason being that the chainplate prevented the lid from being hauled up enough to be free from the blast of the gun fire. I do not remember seeing this form anywhere else. Charnock does not show it, nor if I recollect aright do the models at Greenwich; it would be interesting if any of our readers know of any others. The lower part of the hull is painted black, and the upper portion a French grey. The figure head is that of a female figure with a spear in her right hand and a shield with a cross, in her left. The big stern lantern is very conspicuous. She carries spritsail and topsail, her spanker has no boom, and the mizzen topsail and topgallant braces lead to the peak. The Ensign is red, but the pennant is blue and white at the hoist with two long tails, red and white.

(7) PRIVATEER BRIG.—This jaunty mischievous-looking craft with her yellow and black hull pierced for nine guns, has several points of interest. Like the yachts she has in her quarter

an ornamental many-paned window for her cabin, amidships the boarding nettings are triced up, whilst showing over them and the poop, there are eleven quaint swivel guns. She has a sprit-sail and sprit topsail. The main mast has a marked rake, the gaff is lowered down and the mainsail furled to it. The main yard has, of course, no sail bent to it. She flies both at the stern and at the Jack staff, the plain St. George's flag and the very long two-tailed pennant has the same cross in the upper portion. Were privateers allowed to fly pennants, and why St. George's flag and not the national Ensign?

(8) [BOW AND STERN VIEW OF A FRIGATE].—These are in an unfinished state, only the sea and the flags being tinted in. If the drawings be correct, and the artist has not let his fancy run away with him, not only is she very low in the water, but her beam seems to be very great, and the stern is almost as sharp as the bow. The rigging on the whole is carefully done, but one error is that the starboard fore brace leads to the deck, whilst the port seems to go to the mainstay as in the other pictures. The fore topsail and topgallantsail are fitted with leechlines as well as buntlines. The topgallants and the fore sail have a double row of reef points, whilst the fore topsail has four rows in the bow view and only three in the stern one, this and the absence of bowlines are probably due to the unfinished state of the drawing.

I have written these notes in the hope that some of our members whose knowledge is more extensive and accurate than mine will criticise the doubtful points. I think that on the whole, Gwyn's accuracy is sufficient to make a *prima facie* case for further research and investigation even where he seems to be most original and unusual.