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## MEDIÆVAL SHIPS.

No. VII.

BY H. H. BRINDLEY.

ONE of the earliest representations of reef-points is in the ancient seal of the City of Dublin, which Birch (Brit. Mus. Cat. of Seals, IV., p. 178) gives as dating from 1297. Reference to the table already given ("M. M.," August, 1912, p. 243) of the representations of early reef points so far collected will show that only the XIIth century seal of La Rochelle ("M. M.," May, 1912, fig. 1, opp. p. 132) and perhaps the XIIIth century seal of Hastings ("M. M.," *loc. cit.*, fig. 2) are older than the Dublin Seal. The cast reproduced in the upper part of the accompanying plate is a copy of the British Museum impression of this seal. Its most projecting part, the side of the hull, is so worn that the lines of the planking save in the bow and stern have vanished, thus it cannot be seen whether the ship was fitted with the pointed fenders or short rubbing wales which are so characteristic of ships by mediæval artists and which are seen typically in the lower seal in the plate, which is also one of the XIIIth century. This will be referred to later. The sail of the Dublin ship is of eight somewhat unequal cloths (the flat appearance of those most bellied out in the middle of the sail is the result of wear), and these cloths are divided up into four oblongs each by three equidistant bands which look like ropes sewn into the sail. From these bands, which perhaps we may call reef-bands, depend regularly between the cloths short pieces of rope which are exceedingly like reef-points. They are all about the same length, but they are not all straight. Most of them are more or less bent or curved and not all in the same way, so that they suggest very clearly loose ends lying against the canvas. The foot of the sail is finished off with a strong rope-like band, and the thickness of this and the deep roach suggest for a moment that a reef has been taken in. But more



*Above* : DUBLIN, CITY SEAL, A.D. 1297.  
*Below* : SOUTHAMPTON, SECOND TOWN SEAL, XIIIth CENTURY.

likely the artist wished to show the crew plainly ; we should be sorry to miss the man who is taking refreshment. The man just behind him may be holding out his hand for the wine cup, or he may be shouting an order as the seaman in the bow of the lower ship appears to be doing. The seal of Dublin is the earliest instance known to me of a sail apparently made by sewing together a series of oblong or square pieces of canvas. There are a good many instances of this in the Flemish or Franco-Flemish miniatures illustrating volumes of "Chroniques" of Froissart and other historians in the British Museum, but these are mostly mid XVth century work: the Duke of Bourbon's ship in Harl. MS. 4379, fol. 115, is a good example. In none of these that I have seen are anything like reef-points depicted. In the way in which the reef-points are represented the three earliest instances so far collected, viz., the seals of La Rochelle, Dublin and Hastings have certain features in common:—reef-bands, three rows of points, the points are single, and they do not all hang in the same way. Dublin differs from the other two in having the uppermost row quite near the head of the sail. The main respects in which the reef-points and bands of these three seals differ from later examples are indicated sufficiently in the table on p. 243 and need not be repeated here. It may be suggested that we now possess fairly satisfactory information as to the usual arrangement of reefing gear in northern ships during the latter part of the XIIth and in the XIIIth century.

Besides the reef-points the Dublin ship has one or two other points of interest. The series of short vertical lines—*striae* as it were—from the yard are curious. They are evidently intentional and perhaps represent the lacing. The port sheet and port brace are shown clearly, the latter is double and rove through a block at the yard arm. It seems unlikely that the apparent rope coming down behind the cap of the man blowing a horn in the aft stage is the brace continued, it is not in line with the latter. This seal is evidently the work of an engraver who was careful about details, for what is left of the smaller features, such as the roping and reef-points, the three-pointed pennon and the lettering, are executed admirably. Possibly the line behind the hornblower's cap is part of the cap itself. As in the La Rochelle ship the mast is surmounted by a cross. The seal illustrated below is the second town seal of Southampton, and dates from the XIIIth century. The photograph is from a copy of the British Museum impression. The hull is of a later type than that of the Dublin ship, which is early in several

features, *e.g.*, its sharp sheer into quite narrow stem and stern pieces, the small fore and aft stages, and the absence of a top. The beast's head carved on the *stern* piece is certainly an early feature; whether the stem piece carries a similar ornament cannot be made out. The hull of the Southampton ship has much less sheer and the larger fore and aft stages look more like permanent structures. The latter is supported by what seems to be a V-shaped skid. The mast has a top which is fitted only on its fore side, possibly an early arrangement. In this seal we have one of the earliest representations of a bowsprit. It is shown with great steeve and stepped well abaft the fore stage. Exactly the same arrangement is seen in the much later seals of Edward Earl of Rutland, 1391 ("M. M.," May, 1912, fig. 3, opp. p. 132), of Richard Cletherowe, Admiral of the West, 1406, of Thomas Beaufort, second Duke of Exeter, 1416-26 ("M. M.," February, 1912, fig. 20, opp. p. 44), in another of his seals not figured in the "M. M.," and in the XVth century seal of the Sub-Admiralty of England. In the series of gold nobles and angels of King Edward III. onward where a bowsprit is represented it comes through the floor of the forestage and so is stepped much more forward than in the cases noted above ("M. M.," January, 1912, opp. p. 2). The seal of S. Sebastian gives another example of a bowsprit in the XIIIth century. This seal is figured in the British Museum Catalogue of Seals, VI., pl. xxii. The vessel has a high stem piece and no fore-stage, but the large bowsprit has considerable steeve and is stepped as in the Southampton seal. From its head leads a slack double rope to the stem piece. What was this rope and what was the use of the bowsprit itself in these mediæval vessels? It is important that we should put on record all the early representations of this spar and of the rigging it carries. Was it fitted first only to carry the grapnel as in such examples as that figured in the "M. M." for August, 1911, fig. 1, p. 196? With the introduction of a foremast it became a useful spar to make forestays fast, as in XVth century ships, for instance, that illustrated in the "M. M.," May, 1911, p. 131, and in those of the Rous Roll, discussed by Mr. L. G. Carr Laughton in the "United Service Magazine," February, 1908, p. 459. As the foremast increased in size and importance it became still more necessary for the lead of various parts of the fore rigging, as pointed out by Mr. Morton Nance in the "M. M.," September, 1912, p. 230. The earliest mention of the bowsprit in MSS. I have seen is "bowesprete" in Exch.

K.R. bund. 19, No. 31 (expenses of building the "galley," *La Philipe* at Lynn, in 1336), and the N. E. D. quotes "bouspret" from R. Brunne, *Chron.* (K. O.), c. 1330. The evolution of the bowsprit must be considered with that of the foremast, and as yet we know but little of the advance from the one-masted to the two- and three-masted craft in Northern waters.

