



The Mariner's Mirror

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

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

MEDLÆVAL SHIPS IN PAINTED GLASS AND ON SEALS

H. H. Brindley

Published online: 22 Mar 2013.

To cite this article: H. H. Brindley (1911) MEDLÆVAL SHIPS IN PAINTED GLASS AND ON SEALS, *The Mariner's Mirror*, 1:3, 71-75, DOI: [10.1080/00253359.1911.10654481](https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1911.10654481)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1911.10654481>

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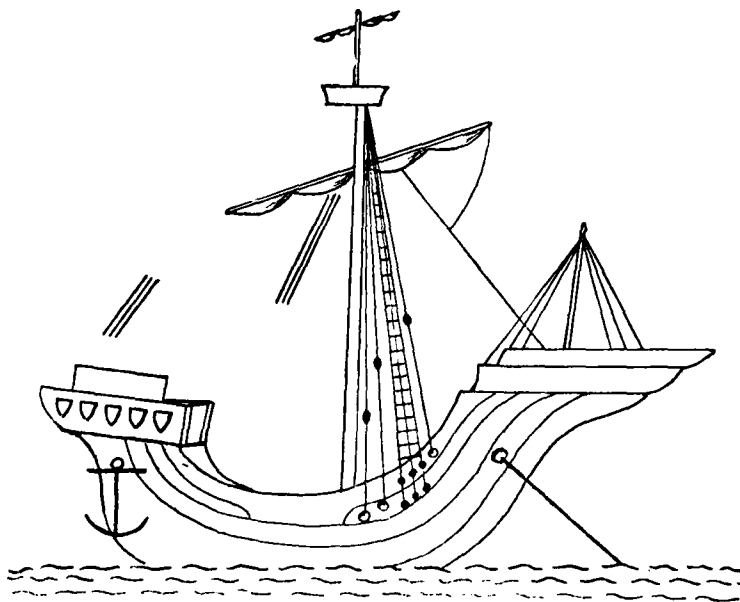
The object of this article is not to recount the course of events then or subsequently. The sole purpose has been to illustrate the relations which existed between French soldiers and sailors at the time, and some of the conditions of life in the French ships. Not everything was unsatisfactory. Decaen himself, speaks of a comedy enacted on board, of amusements in the fine weather, and of music nightly in the great cabin of the *Marengo* during the long passage. But of hearty co-operation between himself and Linois there was no trace, and their personal differences and quarrels were not without influence upon the greater events of the time.

MEDIÆVAL SHIPS IN PAINTED GLASS AND ON SEALS.

No. II.

By H. H. BRINDLEY.

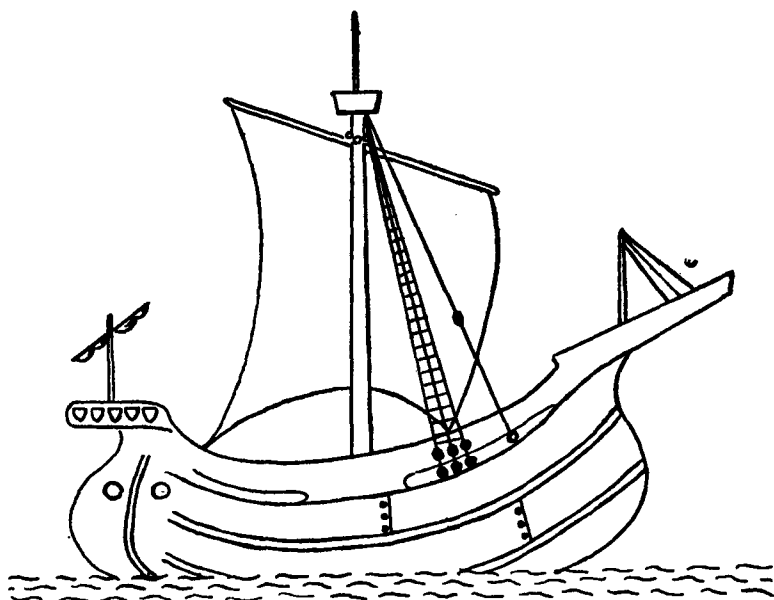
VILLEQUIER is a large village on the east bank of the Seine, two and a half miles below Caudebec-en-Caux. Like Vatteville opposite to it, and Jumièges several miles further up the river, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ships sailed from its quays in the Newfoundland trade, and it furnished seamen for the naval wars of those times. Several of the windows of the parish church, which is dedicated to St. Martin, are beautiful examples of glass painting. Portions of the church date from the twelfth century, while most of it was completed early in the sixteenth, at which time the glass of both aisles was also put in. Remembering the maritime importance of Villequier in that age, it is not surprising to see pictures of ships in some of the windows. The window depicting scenes from the life of St. Jean Baptiste contains two vessels, and another window, an *ex voto* given by mariners of the families Busquet, Renault, and Breton, represents a naval combat.



The St. Jean Baptiste window is in the south aisle, second from the choir. The dedication bears the date 1518. The two ships are in the upper part of the window. They are painted with some care in yellow, which was the colour usually adopted for ships on glass of the time. On the poop of each stands a figure in bishop's mitre and robes, which is gigantic compared with the vessel, a not uncommon mode of representing the patron saint. One of the ships, painted ten years later, in the neighbouring church of Vatteville similarly carries a bishop, probably St. Clement, patron of Vatteville mariners, of vast stature on her poop. One of the Villequier ships lies at anchor with furled sails, while the other is under way. The Abbé Cochet (*"Les Eglises de l'Arrondissement d' Yvetot,"* éd. 2, Paris, 1853, i. p. 118) identifies the two saints as St. Nicholas and St. Clement, patrons of seamen, the former being on board the anchored ship. The general features of the two vessels are illustrated by the sketches, in which the two saints and the members of the crews in the pictures have been omitted. In both cases the rigging is shown as in the windows, no portion of it has been extended where it might be supposed to be seen by the omission of the figures. Both vessels are three-masted, though in the anchored ship the saint regarded as St. Nicholas obscures the mizzen mast, which is suggested only by portions of three shrouds. The hulls

resemble those we see in other pictures and certain seals of the period. That of the vessel under way, on whose deck St. Clement stands, is in form and general proportions probably a more truthful representation of the hull of the time than the other, in which the shortness, extreme sheer, fore-stage and poop remind us of the conventional ship of many seals. It is uncertain what such craft should be called. In general features, and in the relative sizes of the masts they much resemble a Flemish "barge" reproduced by M. de la Roncière (*"Histoire de la Marine Française,"* ii. 1900, p. 244), from an engraving by the Master of unknown name who worked about 1485, and who has left us six other remarkable pictures of ships. Reproductions of these will be found in the monograph on this Master's work by Max Lehrs (Leipzig, 1895). The drawings are very valuable to the nautical archaeologist in their detail and accuracy; but the authority for calling the vessel a barge is not stated. Mr. Julian Corbett (*"Drake and the Tudor Navy,"* 1898, i. p. 18) considers the term "barge" usually meant something larger than a ship's boat or tender, and mentions 60 to 80 tons as the usual size of barges in the early part of the fifteenth century. Nicolas (*"History of the Royal Navy,"* 1847, ii. p. 159), says that barges of the later fourteenth century seem to have been smaller than cogs, which were probably the first-class vessels of the time. Jal (*"Glossaire Nautique,"* 1848), suggests a considerable range of tonnage for the "barge." What a barge really was, both as regards size and rig, is still obscure. Perhaps the shields which adorn the poops of the Villequier ships suggest that the artist had in his mind a larger vessel than what was known as a barge.

Beside St. Clement, the only figure in his ship is a man on the look-out in the top, but in the ship of St. Nicholas three small men are in a row on the poop, apparently receiving his benediction, while at the break of the poop is a much taller sailor giving orders. The chief points of interest in the ships are, I think, as follow. In both the uppermost "waling" or "rubbing streak" (only one waling is seen in St. Nicholas' ship) is not continued along the waist. It is usually complete in pictures of the time. The shrouds are made fast to the fore part of the waling, as they are, though without dead-eyes, in the Flemish "barge" mentioned above. Possibly at this time a true "chain-wale" was not employed in small craft, if, indeed, it was at all a common fitting, when the shrouds had only just come to be set up outboard. In the very detailed and careful



engraving of a Flemish "carrack," evidently a much larger vessel than the "barge," reproduced by M. de la Roncière (*op. cit.* p. 220) from another picture by the Master mentioned above, the dead eyes of the ten aftermost shrouds are made fast to a wide chain-wale just above the uppermost waling, while the four shrouds forward of these have their dead eyes on the waling itself. Early methods of making the shrouds fast have been discussed briefly by Mr. Alan Moore and myself in "Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society," xiv. No. 1, 1909, p. 87. In both ships a rope with a block on it, suggesting that a purchase was in the artist's mind, leads from under the top to a hole above or in the uppermost waling, and in St. Nicholas' ship two similar ropes lead down abaft the shrouds, also through holes in the waling. Perhaps the artist had halliards in his mind, and drew them outboard in some confusion with shrouds; but more probably the "tackles," the exact use of which is undiscovered, were intended. The blocks are but a slight guide as to what ropes were intended. It is not uncommon to find what seem to be blocks on single ropes in pictures by mediæval artists, though now and again they evidently belong to purchase tackles drawn incompletely.

In St. Clement's ship the topmast is stepped exactly above the lower mast, but distinctly abaft it in the other. In view of the obvious imperfections of the pictures from a technical standpoint we cannot accept the stepping of the topmasts without reserve; but, as there is considerable doubt as to whether the practice of the early sixteenth century was to step the topmasts before or abaft the lower masts, the Villequier ships are of some assistance to us. A topsail is carried only in St. Nicholas' ship; topsails were common by 1518 in ships of fair size.

It is common knowledge that most of the ship pictures and seals to the close of the fifteenth century are the work of artists largely ignorant of shipping. Essential and, to an untechnical but intelligent observer, conspicuous portions of the rigging, are frequently omitted; but an examination of a series of early pictures shows that three different portions of the rigging are represented with great constancy. Two of these are the forestay and the braces. They are conspicuous ropes, whether the ship is at anchor or under way, so it is natural that they should be inserted. The forestay especially usually has full justice, being sometimes as thick as the mast, and pains are bestowed on its strands. Curiously the other fitment is a small one, the parrell. Somehow this seems to have caught the fancy of artists, and is usually drawn with care. In respect of these three portions of gear the ships of St. Clement and St. Nicholas at Villequier are exceptional, as will be seen from the sketches. We might wonder a little that these ships were allowed to stand as they are in so maritime a place as Villequier was in the fifteenth century, but when we remember other *ex votos* of mariners and the seals of admirals of the age, it is evident that, unfortunately for the nautical archaeologist, the criticisms which seaman would apply to actual vessels were remitted in the case of pictures.