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EARLY REEFS

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EARLY REEFS.

BY H. H. BRINDLEY.

IN a paper on the St. Christopher window (1465) in Thaxted Church, published in the *Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications*, xv., 1910, p. 26, I pointed out that though bonnets were in use in the Navy from at least 1338 (inventories of certain ships of King Edward III. preserved at the Record Office) continuously to 1720, and still survive in certain local small craft, reef-points (of which the earliest known representation is the twelfth century seal of La Rochelle) fell into disuse during the first half of the sixteenth century and reappeared at the time of the Second Dutch War (1665). The puzzling disappearance for more than a century of so convenient a method of shortening sail has been further discussed by myself in *THE MARINER'S MIRROR* for May, June and August, 1912, and a considerable amount of search has taken place for contemporary representations of or references to reefing by reef-points between 1500 and 1660. As a result a number of notes on the subject have been published in *THE MARINER'S MIRROR* by several contributors, and these all tend to the conclusion that reef-points did fall into disuse during the period mentioned; for it seems most unlikely that if reef-points were fitted from 1530 to 1665 we should not see them in pictures of the time or not find them referred to in works dealing with seamanship. So the subject still remains a puzzle.

A considerable number of early instances of reef-points have been brought to light since attention was first called to the subject, and most of these are embodied in a paper published in the *Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications*, xxi., 1919, pp. 83-99. I am much indebted to the Council of that Society for kindly giving me permission to reproduce much of the above paper in the present article and to borrow the blocks illustrating it. The latter are indicated by C.A.S. following the legend. Since the paper was published two additional representations of early reefs, both of the XV. century, have come to my knowledge, viz., one in the brasses on the tomb of St. Henry of Finland in Nouis Church, and the other in a window in Gresford Church. These are included in the following table, which summarises the mediæval representations of reefs so far known. Where the nature of the representation is not stated it is a miniature.

Date	Example	Side of sail seen	Position on sail	Number of rows	Single or double	Reef-bands
II century	La Rochelle Seal	..	lower half	three	single	present
XIII century	MS. français 403, Bibliothèque Nationale	..	all over	four	single	none
XIII century	Bodleian MS. Auct. iv. 17	..	all over	four	single	none
XIII century	Hastings Seal	..	lower two-thirds	three	single	present
1270	Marlay Add. MS., Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge	..	lowest third	two	single	none
1278	Bergen Seal	..	all over	four	single	none
1297	Dublin City Seal	..	all over	three	single	present
1375	Richard Stewart's Seal	..	all over	three	single	none
XIV century (late)	MS. français, 2810, Bibliothèque Nationale	..	upper half	one	double	present (probably)
1391	Earl of Rutland's Seal	..	all over	three	mostly single	none
1399—1400	Harleian MS. 1319, fol. 14	..	all over	three	double	present in one ship
1410—1420	Harleian MS. 1319, fol. 18	..	highest and lowest thirds	two	double	none
1425—1430	Bodleian MS. Misc. 264, fol. 218	..	upper two-thirds	two, three	single	none
1412—1450	Cottonian MS. Domit. A. xvii	..	or all over	and ? four	double	present
	Nousis Church, Finland, brass	..	upper half	two	single	none
XV century	MS. français, 2643, fol. 7, Bibliothèque Nationale	..	upper half	three, or perhaps four	single	none
XV century	The same, fol. 118	..	all over	five and six	single	none
1465	Rye Seal	..	all over	three	single	none
c. 1470	Thaxted Church glass	..	all over	roughly, six	single	none
late XV century	Breslau Froissart, II. fol. 48v	..	all over	five	double	none
c. 1480	Hillesden Church glass	..	all over	three	double	none
	Gressford Church glass	..	upper and lower halves	two	single	none
1493	"Compost et Kalendrier des Bergiers" (Paris), woodcut	..	all over	roughly, four	double	none
c. 1505	"Kalendrier des Bergiers" (Rouen), woodcut	..	middle	one	double	present
1523	Villequier Church glass	..	middle	one	double	none
1528	Vatville Church glass	..	upper half	two	double	present (probably)
c. 1550	"Orbis Civitates Terrarum," woodcut	..	lower half	one and two	single	present

The following notes are on the instances which have not been published in *THE MARINER'S MIRROR*.

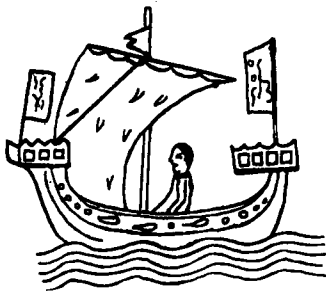
The miniature in the Bodleian Apocalypse (MS. Auct. iv. 17) represents the voyage of St. John to Patmos. I am indebted to Mr. Falconer, Bodley's Librarian, for permission to have a photograph made of this and of the miniatures of the embarkation of St. John and his arrival at Patmos. No reef-points are shown in the former and in the latter only the bow of his ship is seen.

The Apocalypse in the Bibliothèque Nationale whose press mark is MS. français 403 I have been enabled to examine by the kindness of M. Léon Dorez, Conservateur des Manuscrits. It is contemporary with the Bodleian MS., and like it is English work of the latter half of the thirteenth century. The miniatures of the two represent the same subjects and resemble each other so closely that they may be regarded as copies, though it is not possible to say which is the earlier work.

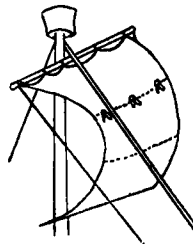
The manuscript of Vegetius's *De re militari* recently acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum (Marlay Add. i) is a translation into Norman French followed by the Latin original written on 149 pages of vellum. It dates from 1270 and seems to have been written at Acre by an English or Anglo-Norman scribe for Queen Eleanor of Castile. It contains two miniatures, one of King Edward I. as Prince of Wales and the sea fight here reproduced.

The seal of Bergen of 1278 bears a ship which was probably somewhat out of date in having its stem and stern pieces carved as beasts' heads. This subject and also other features of this ship and of those in the Bodleian and Paris Apocalypses I have discussed in "The Ships in the 'Cambridge Life of The Confessor'" and in "The Ship of the Seal of Paris" (*Camb. Ant. Soc. Communications*, xvii. 1916, p. 310 and xviii. 1917, p. 155)

For the seal of Richard Stewart (c. 1375) I am indebted to



Seal of Richard Stewart. c. 1375
(C.A.S.).



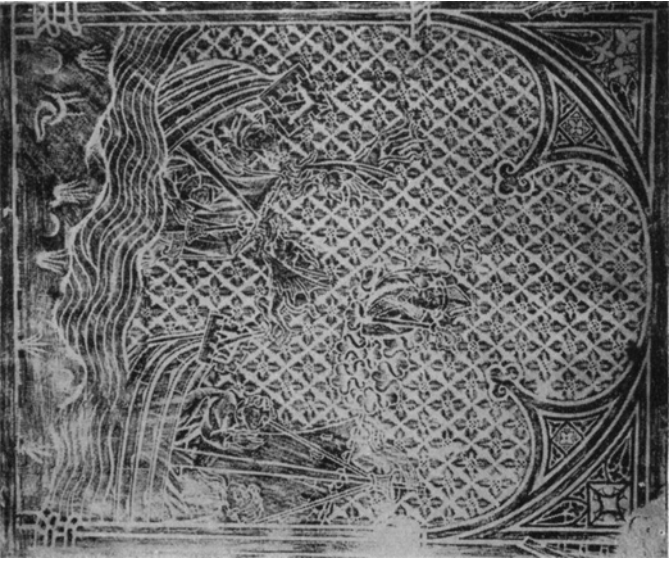
Livre des Merveilles. Late
xiv. c. (C.A.S.).

Mr. W. R. Macdonald, of Edinburgh, who has kindly given to me a copy of the cast in his collection of Scottish seals.

All the above examples resemble one another in the reef-points being single and in being sewn in over most of the sail, thus agreeing with the Dublin seal (1297) [photo. "M.M.," Jan. 1913, p. 14], the Earl of Rutland's seal (1391) [photo. "M.M." May, 1912, p. 132], the miniature of Marco Polo sailing from Venice in Bodleian MS. Misc. 214 (1410-1420) [photo. "M.M.," June 1912, p. 167], and the fifteenth century seal of Rye [photo. "M.M.," May 1912, p. 132].

We now come to the earliest representation known to me of double reef-points. The text figure is a sketch from a drawing by Mr. Morton Nance ("M.M.," June 1912, p. 174) of a miniature representing two ships under way in a "Livre des Merveilles" in the Bibliothèque Nationale (MS. français 2810) of late in the fourteenth century. The points seem to be sewn into a reef-band, as in one of the ships in Jehan Creton's miniature of King Richard II.'s voyage from Ireland (Harleian 1319, fol. 14) of 1399-1400 and as in the La Rochelle, Dublin and Hastings seals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries [photo. "M.M.," Jan. 1913, p. 14; May 1912, pp. 132, 133.]

The brasses representing St. Henry of Finland and scenes in his life were placed on his cenotaph in the church of Nousis in Finland between 1412 and 1450. St. Henry, by birth an Englishman, was Bishop of Upsala about 1150. One of the brasses represents the arrival of St. Henry and St. Eric in Finland, each in his own ship. Both have one mast and square-sail set, the King's ship has a round top, but this fitting is not carried by the mast of St. Henry's ship. The yards have lifts and at least one brace can be made out. Both vessels have an embattled fore-stage and a short bowsprit without any fittings. The margin of the brass cuts off both their sterns. The forward halves of two similar ships under way are shown in the brass which probably represents St. Henry saying farewell to St. Eric. None of the sails are fitted with reef-points, but a row of single points are seen in the upper part of the sail of one of the two ships on the brass which represents Sir Henry appearing in the clouds to succour the crew of the other vessel, which is foundering. The photograph of this scene is made from the set of rubbings of the St. Henry brasses possessed by the Society of Antiquaries, to whose Council I am indebted for permission to reproduce it. Dr. M. R. James has described these brasses in the *Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications*, X. pp. 215-21, and they



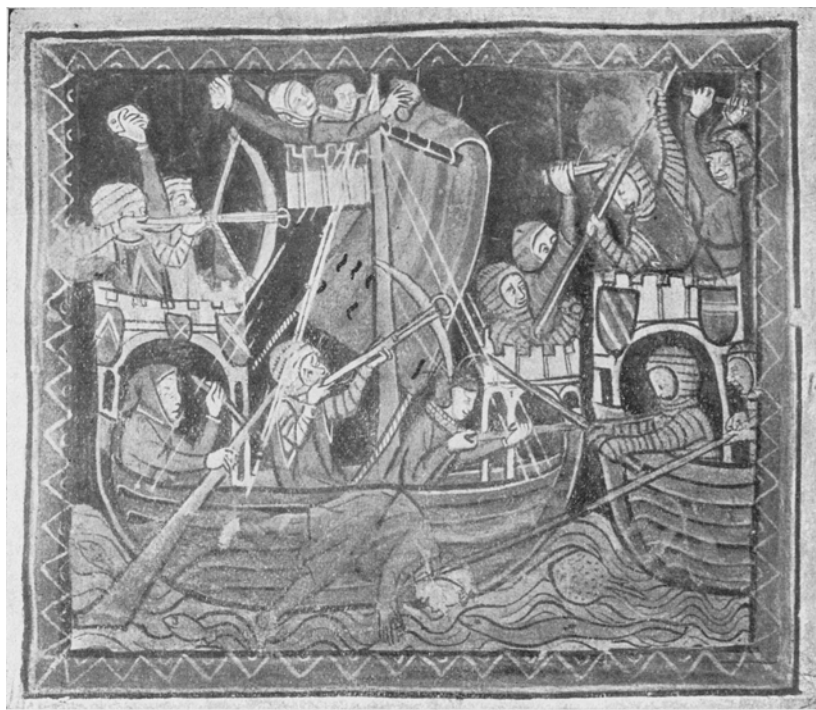
NOUSIS CHURCH, FINLAND, BRASS, 1420—1450.



BERGEN, 1278. (C.A.S.)



KING HENRY VI'S PSALTER,
1425—30. (C.A.S.)



FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM VEGETIUS. 1270 (C.A.S.)



BIB. NAT. FROISSART, MS. FR. 2643, XV. C. (C.A.S.)

have been illustrated in the *Portfolio of the Monumental Brass Society*, part for June 1903. In the brass representing the finding of St. Henry's finger after his murder there is a small boat rowed by two men. Like the sailing ships, she has wide planking and an uprising stem, but this is without the fore-stage. This boat, however, is of some interest as two thole pins are shown for each oar. The oar out of water has a rather narrow blade ending in a blunt angle.

The Cottonian MS. Domitian A xvii. in the British Museum is a Psalter written for King Henry VI. when about ten years old. In the miniature of Our Lord stilling the Storm double reef-points in two rows and apparently sewn into reef-bands are represented in the upper half of the sail. The ship is interesting also in the details of its rudder. The hull, with fore and after stages, is of the "crescent type" usual in representations of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

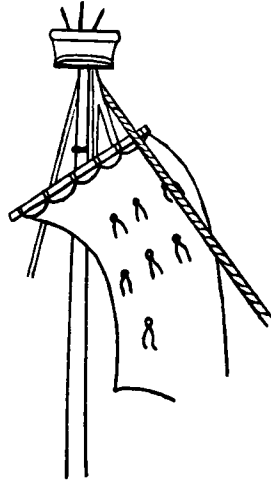
The Bibliotheque Nationale "Chroniques sire Jehan Froissart" (MS. français 2643) is work of the second half of the fifteenth century. It contains several miniatures showing ships, and one of these in which reef-points are seen (fol. 7) I have reproduced in "M.M.," August 1912, p. 239. This represents the arrival at Dover of King Edward II. and his Queen, Isabel of France, in 1307; and in the same journal Mr. Morton Nance has published sketches of ships in other miniatures of this MS. (June 1913, p. 183). The illustration in the present article reproduces the miniature of the Battle of Guernsey in August 1342 between the English Squadron and the Spanish and Genoese fleets (fol. 118). Single reef-points in several rows are represented in the same manner as in Queen Isabel's ship. In notes by myself, written at the time of examining the MS. ("M.M.," June 1914, p. 215), I agreed with Mr. Morton Nance in his conclusion that "the artist responsible for these pictures was evidently no sailor," but with all his obvious faults he has usefully given us evidence confirming the conclusion from other representations that mediaeval reef-points were often sewn in rows covering most of the area of a sail. In a Froissart of about 1470, preserved at Breslau, a miniature of the Battle of La Rochelle, in 1372, again shows reef-points sewn in all over the sail, but in this case the points are double.

In Hillesden Church, Bucks., which was rebuilt in the last decade of the fifteenth century, there is a window depicting events in the life of St. Nicholas (for a description *v.* W. de Gray Birch, *Journ. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* 1888, p. 222). In the lights

representing the episode of The Child and Cup of Gold and The Miracle of the Corn Sacks there are ships, and that of the former has double reef-points in three rows sewn in all over the sail.

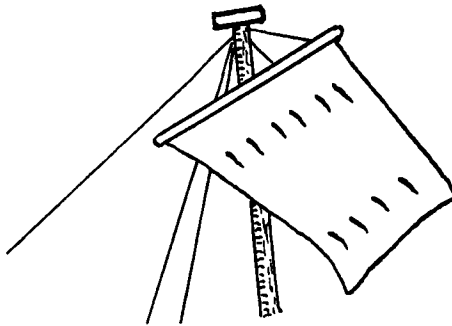


Breslau Froissart *c.* 1470.
(C.A.S.)



Hillesden Church Glass.
Late xv. c. (C.A.S.)

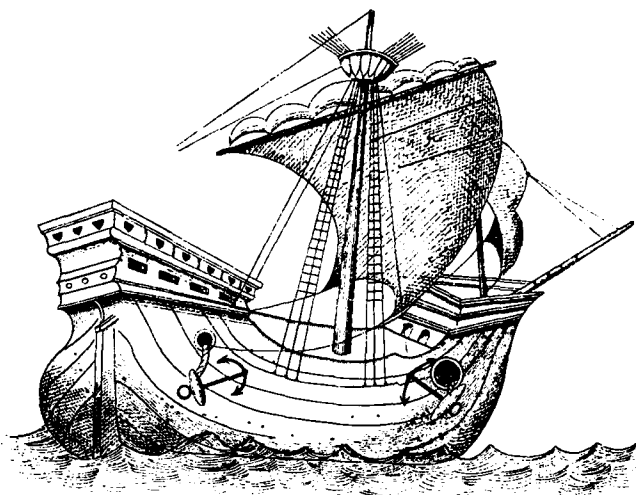
The window in Gresford Church, Denbighshire, illustrating the Life of St. Mary, is glass dating from about 1480. In the Presentation of St. Mary panel there is a small one-masted ship under way whose sail has two rows of reef-points, one in the head and the other in the foot.



Gresford Church Glass. *c.* 1480.

In the south transept window of Vatteville church, on the left bank of the Seine, about two miles below Caudebec-en-Caux, there is, as in Villequier church on the opposite bank, a representation of reef-points in glass of the early part of the sixteenth

century. I have described these examples in a previous article (*Camb. Ant. Soc. Communications*, vol. xv. 1911, p. 31) and later in the work of my friend the Abbé Anthiaume, Aumônier du Lycée du Havre, *Cartes Marines, Constructions navales, Voyages de Découverte chez les Normands, 1500-1650* (Paris, 1916). I am indebted to him for much kind assistance extending over



Vatteville Church Glass. 1528.

many years in obtaining information as to mediaeval representations of ships in Normandy, and for now lending to me the block of my sketch for his book of the ship *La Roumaine* of the privateer Billes as she is depicted in the south transept window of Vatteville church. This sketch is of the ship only; in the glass we see the crew and on the poop a conventionally gigantic figure of St. Clement by which the artist displaced the mizzen mast the ship evidently carried, an artistic expedient which explains the incompleteness of the back-stays. The double reef-points and a suggestion of reef-bands are seen in the upper half of the mainsail. In the beautiful window of 1823 in Villequier church in which the chief picture is a naval combat one of the ships has similar double reef-points.

The latest example of early reef-points known to me is of about the same time as the Norman glass, for it occurs in Braun and Hogenburg's *Orbis Civitates Terrarum*, published at Cologne. Of this work there were several editions, the first bearing the date 1573. Mr. Morton Nance's sketch of a "Turkish" *terrada* or *gelve* from the woodcut in this Cologne picture book appears

as Fig. 7 on p. 9 of the "M.M." for January, 1914. Allowing for the time occupied in collecting the drawings, we may safely call this curious *terrada* a ship of about 1550. However exaggerated and fanciful some of her ornamental and other features may be there can be little doubt that reef-points are intended by the lines of short ropes on her fore and mainsails. This example from eastern waters must be accepted with some reserve in the absence of knowledge as to how the sixteenth century authors of *Orbis Civitates Terrarum* procured and reproduced their pictures. It is not impossible that the reef-points were introduced for artistic effect from sources much nearer Cologne than the Gulf of Aden and Levant, though the care as to the details of the ships represented renders the *terrada* worth mentioning.

With the continuance of this puzzle of the disuse of reef-points in large vessels of the northern seas at least for more than a century it is natural to enquire if the tradition of reef-points was maintained in smaller craft. As to this I have to thank Mr. Morton Nance for some suggestive notes. He is inclined to think that square-sailed fishing craft are very likely to have continued the use of reef-points when they were discontinued in large vessels, though pictorial evidence of a reliable kind is wanting. Mediaeval reef-points are sometimes represented all over the sail, sometimes near its head only, and again, sometimes near its foot only. No doubt many representations still remain undiscovered, but in those we know the position on the sail does not exhibit any chronological grouping. Modern reef-points, *i.e.*, those since the fitting was revived, are in the upper portion of a square sail: those of fore-and-aft sails are in its lower portion. The latter may be neglected, as jibs were first fitted in ships of the Royal Navy only as late as 1705 and it seems likely that the reef-points of lateen sails were introduced as imitations from square sails at a comparatively late date. As regards square sails, Mr. Nance calls my attention to Dutch fishing boats having reef-points near the foot of the sail, while Norwegian boats sometimes carried a row of reef-points near the head of the sail as well as the customary rows near its foot. He also remarks on the Lanvéoc fishing boat, a primitive Breton type, which still carries a row of reef-points near the head and two or three rows near the foot, the latter being very possibly inherited from her ancestors of a time before reefing at the head of the sail, *i.e.* modern ship fashion, was introduced. Mr. Alan H. Moore tells me that the Biserta fishing boats also carry reefs

at the head and foot of their sails. Mr. Nance is inclined to look upon the sail reefing below as a survival of the ancient method of northern European waters, and such examples as square-sailed Norwegian boats and the Lanvéoc craft as transitions to the modern fashion of reefing a square sail above. Reefing below has survived in fore-and-aft sails by reason of their cut rendering reefing above impossible.

Mr. Nance has recently sent to me some notes on the possible meaning and use of the bight or ring, in some instances represented (probably incorrectly) as a knot, which is seen in mediæval drawings of *double* reef-points at their insertion into the sail. I hope that he will publish his elucidation of this curious and hitherto unexplained detail of rigging in these pages. It occurs so uniformly and through so long a period that there can be little doubt that it is a real fitting and not merely an artist's fancy.

NOTES.

EARLY REEFING.

One would almost think that amongst mediæval draughtsmen there had been a conspiracy to conceal all the mysteries of the contemporary "Shipman"—a sort of fellow-feeling, perhaps, for those who, like themselves, were engaged in work that must savour of the marvellous to plain men.

One of the most baffling of these mysteries is that of the reefing-gear that they show; for if they are to be trusted—and from the agreement that exists among them on the point, trusted I think they must be—sails, during the long period from the first reefs to the earliest bonnets that afterwards for a time replaced them, had their reefs fairly evenly distributed over their whole surface, instead of being confined as in our day to their head or foot.

Those secretive draughtsmen seldom or never show such a sail reefed. The only exception that I can think of is that shown in Fig. 1 from the early 14th century copy of *Albumazar*, Sloane MS. 3983, in the British Museum.

This is not supremely satisfactory either; but I think it may give a hint as to how such reefs were used.

If I am right, this was quite different from our own reefing method; for it seems to me that in the reef taken in this "sail of the ship *Argo*," the engaging reef-points are not those on opposite sides of the sail, but that the points of a band at the bottom of the sail are tied to those of the band next above them, forming a bag along the sail. Such a bag-reef is still all that is ever taken in the mat sail of an East African *mitope*, but we may suppose that a second tying, of the cor-