

Ancient and Modern Ships Fully Illustrated Wooden Sailing-Ships By Sir George C. V. Holmes An endeavour has been made in this handbook, as far as space and scantiness of material would permit, to trace the history of the development of wooden ships from the earliest times down to our own. Unfortunately, the task has been exceedingly difficult; for the annals of shipbuilding have been very badly kept down to a quite recent period, and the statements made by old writers concerning ships are not only meagre but often extremely inaccurate. Moreover, the drawings and paintings of vessels which have survived from the classical period are few and far between, and were made by artists who thought more of pictorial effect than of accuracy of detail. Fortunately the carvings of the ancient Egyptians were an exception to the above rule. Thanks to their practice of recording and illustrating their history in one of the most imperishable of materials we know more of their ships and maritime expeditions than we do of those of any other people of antiquity. If their draughtsmen were as conscientious in delineating their boats as they were in their drawings of animals and buildings, we may accept the illustrations of Egyptian vessels which have survived into our epoch as being correct in their main features. The researches now being systematically carried out in the Valley of the Nile add, year by year, to our knowledge, and we already we know enough to enable us to assert that ship building is one of the oldest of human industries, and that there probably existed a sea borne commerce in the Mediterranean long before the building of the Pyramids.

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