A Snapshot of Blakeney Haven in 1565

A Survey of the Ports, Creeks and Landing Places of Norfolk

by John Peake

Synopsis: Churches surrounding Blakeney Haven are rich in ship graffiti, much of it probably dating from the 15th and 16th centuries and later. The community who produced these drawings is explored using a 1565 Survey of the ports, creeks and landing places in Norfolk.

Introduction

Graffiti is found in many churches and cathedrals scattered across the British Isles. Some is well known, but here in the churches surrounding Blakeney Haven, from Stiffkey in the west to Salthouse in the east and inland to Cockthorpe, there is a wealth of images that are largely unrecognised outside the local community.

This local graffiti is strong in representations of ships that would appear to date from at least the 15th and 16th centuries and possibly earlier,[1] plus many examples spread across successive centuries. These 'drawings' vary from simple outlines to more complex forms showing details of both hulls and rigging (Photograph1). It is this detail that leads to the conclusion that the people who produced these works were closely involved with ships.

Whilst this graffiti may not have any great artistic merit, it does have considerable cultural interest in terms of its potential to extend our knowledge of both the vessels using the Haven and the local communities

It was against this background that the discovery of a transcript of a document in the Norfolk Record Office entitled 'A Survey of the Ports, Creeks and Landing Places of Norfolk, 1565' was of immediate interest. The original document is incorporated into the State Papers in the Public Record Office that is now part of the National Archives at Kew. The transcription used here was made by the Public Record Office.[2]

Even though many authors have already used this and similar surveys as sources of information on shipping and trade, here was an opportunity to take another look at a single snapshot of the Haven in the hope that it would provide a greater insight into the community who produced the graffiti.

Surveys of Ports: Background

During the 15th and 16th centuries numerous surveys of shipping were made by the Crown to determine the number and size of merchant ships that could be pressed into service for the Navy.[3] Yet the underlying factors that governed the collection of data for many of the earlier surveys are difficult to comprehend and their value at a local level is compromised.

However, during the reign of Elizabeth the quality of the data expanded enormously as the frequency of surveys increased and more detailed information was included.[3&4] Consequently the government knew how many merchant or fishing vessels were available to act as tenders and transporters or as fighting auxiliaries, together with numbers of potential crew members to man them. Furthermore, it was possible for the authorities to monitor the success of legislation designed to encourage the development of English shipping.

The 1565 Survey was one of these reviews, but it fell within a period that was crucial for East Anglian trade. Between 1550 and 1569 trade with the Low Countries was flourishing, although the vessels trading between the two areas were predominately Dutch rather than English. Smuggling was also prevalent and attacks from pirates operating on the high seas were a constant threat. Yet links with Antwerp and Amsterdam and other ports, sometimes via Yarmouth, facilitated a 'super highway' for goods, corn going out and a wide diversity of materials coming in from ports that were much closer to East Anglia than London. This highway gave Norfolk access to specialist items from the continent, such as fine cloths and wine and spices from the Far East. However, much of this trade suddenly stopped in 1569, and later when it did resume English vessels and merchants

Photograph 1. Example of ship graffiti from nave of Blakeney Church (15cm wide). This 'drawing' is on a flat surface although it extends onto a domed area above that is demarcated by a mason's line running across the picture. A line of mortar is clearly visible beneath the hull.

This is a three-masted vessel with a prominent beak and a bowsprit at the prow and indications of rigging. On the main mast there is clearly a top (a crow's nest is the nearest modern equivalent) and the wavy line above suggests a pennant. The fore mast also appears to have a top. Both these masts have horizontal spars with zigzag lines representing furled sails. There is a mizzen mast with a line running to it with another zig-zag line indicating a furled sail.

Many features of this vessel are reminiscent of the carved pew end from St Nicholas Church, Kings Lynn now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The carving shows a ship with sails furled resting on the sea with representation of fish swimming beneath it and dated about 1415. While such a date cannot be transposed to Blakeney, where the nave was rebuilt in 1434, nonetheless it supports the dating of this 'drawing' to the 15th century.

predominated.[4]

This is not the complete picture, for since the 14th century the ports and havens of East Anglia had been important centres for fishing. Besides the farmer-fisherman, who produced for the family, and opportunistic coastal fishing close to shore, fishing had become an industry encompassing drift-netting for herring migrating south in late summer and autumn or sailing north to Iceland in the spring and summer to trade and fish for cod and ling.

But it was an industry subject to the vicissitudes of politics at all levels, besides economic and even religious pressures. Cod wars were not an invention of the twentieth century, they have persisted for at least 700 years.[5]

Furthermore, early in the 14th century there was a decline in the numbers of fish being landed, although by late in the 15th a recovery was apparent and this continued into the 16th century, so that by the time of the 1565 Survey conditions were improving.[5] What the effects of these fluctuations were on the local economy is not known, but it was occurring at a time when probably some of the graffiti was being produced.

The wealth of the area around the Haven has frequently been attributed to agriculture with products like corn and malt being exported to other areas of England and the continent. In contrast, the contribution of fishing and the sea to the local economy has possibly been under estimated. The limited number of wills for the area from the late 16th century indicates that people leaving bequests of ships and fishing gear were probably merchants and certainly owners of land and property.[6] Undoubtedly there is a bias here, but some people of means were investing in fishing and, given the number of ships they owned, were obviously hiring masters and crews.

Fishing must have been a dynamic industry with revenue being generated from many sources. While vessels were unloading and selling their catch in the Haven during the 14th century,[5] there is every reason to believe that fish were also sold at other markets. Surely local boats participating in the 'herring fare' – the herring season – would have joined the large annual fair at Yarmouth where boats from ports and countries from around the North Sea and even further afield gathered to land fish and trade. A century later there is further evidence of the entrepreneurial nature of the industry with a boat or boats from Cley landing preserved fish, presumably salted or dried, at Southampton together with vessels from many other ports.[5]

As a counter balance to wealth production the dangers and risks inherent in fishing and trading by ship must not be underestimated. The Icelandic voyages, for example, were dangerous undertakings; conditions would have been harsh aboard vessels on the northern fishing grounds and in some years many vessels were lost, while on the homeward voyage ships had to contend with the constant threat of attack from marauding pirates and privateers. The loss of a boat would have been devastating across the Haven communities: it would have meant that twenty to forty men were drowned, plus all the financial investment in the vessel, the gear and equipment besides the cargo had disappeared.

It is against this background of high risk and fluctuating fortunes that graffiti from, at least, the 15th and 16th centuries must be viewed. Risks not only to the sailors, but also to ship owners and merchants transporting their wares by sea. Moreover, even at home harmony did not reign, religious values were being challenged by changes from a Roman Catholic to an English church and a concomitant rise in Puritanism.

A Survey of the Ports, Creeks and Landing Places in Norfolk 1565

This Survey of Norfolk was organised by Sir Christopher Heydon, Osbert Moundeford and William Paston, three influential individuals who were members of worthy Norfolk families.[2] It contains information on the numbers of ships, their size and a simple classification of use, together with data on numbers of mariners, fishermen and householders in named places around the Norfolk coast. The summary sheet from the report is shown in Table 1.

Some caution has to be exercised when using this information. There are, for example, some strange omissions with smaller ports or landings along the north coast to the west of the Haven missing. Although this was rectified in another survey made 20 years later when Stiffkey, Brancaster, Holme and Hunstanton were included.[4]

A similar problem is the absence from the Haven of smaller fishing vessels of between 1 and 4 tons, although such boats were recorded from villages between Winterton and Mundesly. There they were involved in fishing for mackerel, herring, whiting and 'spurling', plus ferrying corn. Presumably at certain times of the year some of these boats would have operated off the beach and it is difficult to believe that similar vessels were not associated with the Haven.

In Suffolk the records for Dunwich show that a century earlier, in the 15th century, there were up to seven names employed for different types of boats, it is thought that many were comparatively small vessels used close to the shore.[7] This highlights a serious gap in local knowledge, which must be recognised given the diversity of ship graffiti found in the churches.

Place	House holders	Ships for Iceland	Crayers & Boats of Burden	Mariners	Fish.
Yarmouth	553	7	104	150	250
Winterton	24			6	8
Hemsby	27				4
Waxham	11		2	4	9
Palling	29		1	2	3
'Coles'	10		1	3	3
Happisburgh	30		2		
Bromholm	46		1		12
Mundesley	16		3		19
Cromer	117				48
Sheringham	136				69
Weybourne	35				14
Salthouse	58				21
Cley	100	9	14	35	25
Wiveton	80	1	5		53
Blakeney	80	4	8	30	18
Wells	90	7	7		60
Burnham	56		2	7	5
Heacham	76		1	3	2
Snettisham	79				
Dersingham	75		1	3	2
Kings Lynn	542		5	90	30
Totals	**2270**	**28**	**157**	**333**	**655**

Table 1. Summary sheet transcribed from the 1565 Survey. Note: the names of the Governors of each Port, Creek or Landing Place have not been included.

Cley

Sailing to Iceland

John Dobbe	Mary Grace	100
Richard Wilkinson	Mary Grace	80
Robt Taylor & John Rooke	Megge	80
Richard Byshoppe	Leonard	60
Andrew Michelson	John	60
Gyles Symondes & Andrew Michelson	Thom's	55
John Rooke	Peter	50
Robt Roper & Richard Astle	Mary	50

Herring fishing, carrying corn north and coals south

Richard Byshoppe	Nicholas	40
Robt Dowell	Mary An	34
Richard Wilkinson	Goddes Grace	34
Henry Shilling		30
James Howarde & Richard Baylie	Anne Gallant	30
James Howarde	Cecille	27
John Rooke	Georg	20
John Springolde	Kate	20
Willm Prater	Py'nas	18
Edwarde Brooke	John	16
John Webster snr	George	16
John Webster snr	Peter	14
John Webster jnr		6

Wiveton

Sailing to Iceland

George Curry & John Smythe	Marie Fortune	70

Herring fishing, carrying corn north and coal south

George Curry	James	50
Edmunde Bunting & Xpofer Thurlow	Nich'as	40
Margaret Smithe & John Smythe	Trinitie	40
John Smythe	Will'm	40
John Podage	M'get	20

Snyterly (Blakeney)

Sailing to Iceland

Thomas Barker	Mary George	80
Thomas Barker	Anne	80
Thomas Barker & John Dobbe	Gregory	60
Thomas Pay[g?]e	Mary Kateryn	60

Herring fishing, carrying corn north and coal south

George Barker	Valentyn	50
Thomas Page	Peter	50
Thomas Barker & John Dobbe	Blyth	40
Thomas Barker	Pet'r	35
Willm Barker & Richard Makdans	James	30
Symon Bright & John Person	Willm	20
Willm Rye	Endycke	15
Jeffry Tansy	Thomas	12

Table 2. Extract transcribed from Survey showing owner(s) and name of ship plus size in tons, organised under types of trade.

Haven Shipping

In 1565 the Haven was a creek of the Port of Great Yarmouth with all the Haven villages having loading and unloading rights under the jurisdiction of the Customs House of that Port. Yet only boats from the three principle villages of Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney were listed. These boats were divided into two groups, the larger boats that were voyaging to Iceland and the smaller boats associated with herring fishing and the coasting trade with northern ports in corn and coal (Table 2); the critical size for this division being about 50 tons*.

The investment made by the three villages in the Iceland trade compared to other places in Norfolk was considerable, to the extent that in this Survey it may be regarded as a defining feature of the Haven. Fourteen ships representing 50% of the vessels from the county were recorded as making the voyages north, although only thirteen are individually named. The other places involved were Wells and Yarmouth, with the latter contributing five boats of a hundred tons and over, nevertheless the Haven was still represented by the highest total tonnage.

Types of Vessels

The majority of the vessels recorded from the Haven irrespective of size or use were listed individually in the Survey as 'shippe'. The only significant exceptions were the smaller boats of less than 50 tons from Blakeney that were all individually identified as

*Footnote: size at this time was measured in carrying capacity, rather than displacement

Barker, Thomas the elder			
1558	PCC	Blakeney	1. "my parte of my shippe called the Valantyne" 2. "my doggar Shippe called the George with all thinges therun to belonging [with] the voyage as god shal[l] sende her home"
Barker, John the elder			
1562	NCC	Blakeney	1. "all that my half of the Crayer Called the Valentyne"
Howard, James			
1570	NCC	Cley	1. "give as much borde and Tymber as to make a Bote [with] all" 2. "give to James feaser of Beson one Boote [which] was Brookes and as many bordes as shall make her uppe" 3. "one quarter that is the Forthe [parte] of my little shippe calde the Cicelie" 4. "rest of the said Shippe that is the whole before any man payenge thertie powndes" 5. "have our bote [with] twelve newe Owers [with] Mast Sayle and ruther"
P**age, Thomas**			
1572	PCC	Blakeney	1. "to Robart Page my sonne .... a quarter of my Shippe called the Peter with the tackle apparrell ymplementes" 2. "to Thomas Page my Sonne a quarter of my other Shipp called the Peter together with the tackle" 3. "a quarter of my Dogger shipp called the Marie Katherin"
Hawarde, Thomas			
1588	PCC	Blakeney	1. "trimming the Crayer at Lynne forty shillings"
Monne, Edward			
1588	NCC	Cley	1. "my halfe shippe called the John Baptist w[it]h the app[er]tinannoes & app[er]ell to her belomging"

Note: NCC = Norwich Consistory Court PCC = Prerogative Court of Canterbury

Table 3. Quotations from wills from the second half of the 16th century, together with the name of the person, the year the will was proven (either in Norwich or in Canterbury) and the place where the individual stated he was living.

'craior' or 'crayor', yet it seems unlikely these were different from boats of comparable size from other places in the Haven (Table 2).

Even in the Bacon papers just over 10 years later still very few other types of vessels are recorded from the Haven: a hoy and two busses being brought in after being captured at sea and a hoy at Stiffkey.[8] At this time the buss was primarily a Dutch fishing vessel used for catching herring.[9]

There are many references to crayers in documents from the 15th and into the mid-16th centuries[9], but herein lies another problem. For much of this period the English vessels were recorded as small sailing boats between 30 and 50 tons and this agrees with the Blakeney figures, but there must be some doubt whether these references always apply to the same type of boat. For example, two inventories for crayers show the variations that existed in the number of masts or rigging and sail patterns. In 1536 a small crayer from 'Sowthroppes' in Norfolk is described as a ship with two masts, a main and fore. Another inventory from the same century identifies a crayer with 3 masts. Nevertheless both of these accounts indicate that crayers had complex sail patterns even though it was a small and simple sailing vessel. There are even records of foreign crayers from the same period of up to 80 tons, so size does not appear to be a distinguishing feature, but what was?

Evidence from Wills

Wills provide an opportunity to search for additional data that may illuminate these bare facts. So far references to six boats named in the Survey have been found in

wills from the second half of the 16th century[6] and this information is presented in Table 3.

Of the three smaller vessels only one, the Valentyne is identified as a crayer, the other two being called simply 'shippe' or 'my little shippe'. But another two, the 'George' and the 'Marie Katherin' involved in the Iceland trade are identified as doggers. The dogger was of Dutch origin, although it made an early appearance in England with a reference from 1357 of such a boat from Norfolk being involved in the North Sea and Icelandic fisheries.[9] However, the name persisted into at least the nineteenth century and is immortalised in the 'Dogger Bank'.

Phrases in both Dutch and English refer to 'dogge varen' and 'Dogger fare'. The Dutch can be translated as 'to go cod fishing', while the English phrase is applied to a ship at Yarmouth ready to sail to Iceland.[9] But what did doggers look like and did the design change over the centuries? The only clues lie in their size, the two Blakeney boats were 80 and 60 tons.

The wills also illustrate two other points. Firstly vessels had multiple owners leaving 'halfe' and 'quarter' parts to benificaries, and secondly the frequent references to nets. Owners of ships were leaving large numbers of 'manfare* of nettes', with a distinction being made between those that were roped and ready for the sea and others. These were drift nets and the inference is that all types of boats, including crayers, were using these nets in the herring fishing that dominated the autumn months.

The 1588 will of Edward Monne of Cley includes an illuminating phrase: "three manfare* of nettes commonlye called nyne soores as they now be with one rope". The three manfare were obviously joined together, while nyne soores (nine score) refers to the size of the net; there were other sizes of six and twelve score but nine was the commonest. The nine score means that the depth of the net was 180 meshes, as each mesh was about one inch square, this net would have been fifteen feet deep.[10]

There are also references to 'sperlinge nettes'. Sperlinge (there are various spellings) have been identified as sprats[10] or smelts[11]; both types of fish are considerably smaller than herring, so the mesh size would have been adjusted accordingly. There is, however, a problem: if they were used for catching sprat then they would probably have been drift nets, but if they were for smelt which frequently enter estuaries they could have been shore or drag nets.

*Footnote: the term is obviously a measure of drift nets but there appears to be no consensus regarding the meaning

Households

The inclusion in the Survey of household totals (Table 1) for each village enables another aspect of the communities to be explored. Haven villages were not individually large, ranking behind Yarmouth and Lynn, both important ports with a highly populated hinterland accessible by boats. Then there was a large gap to Sheringham and Cromer followed by the three Haven villages and Wells. But when the totals for the three villages of Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney are amalgamated they form the largest concentration of households along the north coast of the county, yet still only about half the size of Yarmouth.

Households, however, are not synonymous with families, although it would appear that over many centuries the predominate type was in fact one married couple with their own children in a single household.[12] That is not to say that large households did not exist, rather they were rare and not the norm. Indeed, the only study available gives an average household size in England between 1564 and 1649 as 5.1 persons, dropping to between 4.5 and 4.7 in the period 1650 to 1749.[13]

Using the multiplier of 5.1 the population for Cley in 1565 was just over 500 and for both Blakeney and Wiveton about 400. These figures make interesting comparisons with population estimates for Blakeney and Cley made over two centuries later in 1770 and 1801. In Blakeney in 1770, 458 residents were recorded in 100 households,[14] but the population grew in the next 30 years, between 1770 and 1801, by 169 persons, more than in the previous two centuries.[14] In Cley in 1801 there were 550 people, but the number of households is unknown.

These data for population sizes between 1565 and 1770 or 1801 are consistent with trends in the total English population that suggest for over four centuries prior to the middle of the 18th century there was very limited expansion. Indeed it has been suggested that there may have been fewer inhabitants in England in 1750 than in 1300, a major factor being the catastrophic decline in the 14th century. However, this picture changed dramatically at the end of the 18th, during the whole of the 19th century and on into the 20th when there were spectacular increases in population size.[13]

A diversion – the population survey made of Blakeney in 1770[14] is invaluable for it was taken at a critical time when the population numbers in the village were on the brink of a major change. It records information for every household in the village and shows that the overwhelming majority consisted of single family units. The average size of a household was 4.58 people, although there were a few large house-

holds and two may have been local inns. Although this survey was made slightly later than the period 1650 to 1749 for which a figure of 4.5 – 4.7 persons per household is quoted,[13] it is consistent with it. So while the number of households in Blakeney rose by 20, that is 25% over two centuries, the population increased by less than 15%; however, caution – these figures could easily lie within the margins of error.

The data for households are illuminating in a different context: at nearly the mid-point between 1565 and 1770, a series of Hearth Taxes were taken. In the surviving return lists for 1664 and 1666 only the number of houses with hearths on which tax was to be paid survive, the numbers of houses exempt from taxation are missing. Based on the information given above, the total number of households in Blakeney for these years should lie between 80 and 100, but in the two years only 34 and 32 houses are listed as paying Hearth Tax.[15 & 16] This leaves a deficit of about 50 houses exempt from tax. The basis for exemption being people who did not pay local church and poor taxes and did not own property over a certain value, so presumably the majority of those who were exempt were the poorer people of the community.[17] This is a large proportion of the community who are frequently ignored, as they leave few if any written records, and an apt reminder that they must be considered when looking at graffiti.

There are a number of possible explanations for the large numbers of exemptions: firstly there is an error in the figures, but they are consistent with data from other sources; secondly there was a major fall in the numbers of houses inhabited, there is no evidence on this point, or thirdly the economy of the village was depressed and many people were poor. The last explanation is supported by information from the shipping records that show a decline in numbers of Glaven ships using the port in the second half of the seventeenth century.[18] This would be an interesting issue to explore!

It is tempting to speculate even further, even though this may be unwise. There is, nevertheless, sufficient information to suggest that in the centuries prior to 1770, which was probably the period when much of the graffiti was made, population numbers for, at least, one village were comparatively stable. Nevertheless, the risks of death in these coastal communities were probably higher than in many inland communities. On top of the prevailing vicissitudes in the rest of the county death from drowning or being killed at sea was a constant threat and there is no reason to presume that it was lower in the 16th century than in the 18th and 19th when it is known that many ships and lives were lost on these shores.[19] So, if the population of the Haven villages was not declining this loss of life would need to be balanced by in-migration of people[20] or an higher birth rate than for villages inland. Furthermore, it may not be unreasonable to expect local communities to be frequently challenged by wide range of diseases being carried by seamen that have been infected in other ports, both in this country and overseas.

Mariners and Fishermen

Although an attempt was made in the 1565 Survey to differentiate between mariners and fishermen this obviously broke down in some places. There could have been a multitude of reasons, but it is extremely likely that seamen moved between tasks depending on the season. So here they are all treated as a single group.

The high numbers of seamen compared with the number of households in the Haven villages clearly indicates the dependency of these communities on the sea (Table 1). The ratio lies between 63 and 72 seamen per 100 households. However, as some households would have had more than one member involved with the sea, this figure could have dropped to about 50% of households that were dependant for their sustenance on men working aboard boats. However, there would have been numerous other trades dependant on ships, trading and the fishing industry, from shipwrights to those providing provisions, but also those organising the distribution outlets whether it be merchants buying and selling or carriers taking fish to inland villages and towns.

Both Yarmouth and Wells have similar patterns to the Haven villages, but Kings Lynn would appear to be different with a ratio of only 22 to 100 and this may point towards differences in trading patterns with the latter having greater reliance on ships from the Low Countries. However, these figures could also reflect a more fundamental difference: In medieval times it has been suggested that Kings Lynn was a trading port, while Wells and the villages of Blakeney Haven were fishing ports, with Yarmouth unusual in being both.[5] Did this pattern persist? If it did, then it is reasonable to speculate that the differences in the ratios reflects the much higher numbers of fishermen needed aboard fishing vessels, particularly the Iceland boats, compared to boats involved solely in trading.

Discussion

The richness of the graffiti, and particularly 'drawings' of ships, found in the churches associated with Blakeney Haven, particularly Salthouse, Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney,

surpasses any found in the surrounding parishes. The obvious questions are why this abundance and in this context what is the relevance of the 1565 Survey?

The Survey highlights the importance of ships in the local communities, whether they were involved in coastal trade or fishing for herring and making the dangerous voyages north to Iceland. This pattern had probably existed for the previous two centuries and the concomitant risks involved would have been a constant and continuing hazard. The communities would always have been vulnerable to unexpected death and the loss of a ship and its cargo. Together with the wills the Survey shows that such tragedies would have had repercussions across many social levels and potentially many households.

Political uncertainties and economic and religious pressures must have compounded these risks. Yet people still invested and were involved in these ventures, probably out of necessity and the hope of an excellent financial return.

Against this background the position of the church would have been pivotal, it was a place where many would have turned to in times of thanks and grief. Graffiti in these circumstances could have played a very poignant role: an offering for deliverance both before and after a voyage, a reminder to pray for those at sea and for the souls of the dead or those residing in purgatory.

So, while the nature of the community played a crucial role in the production of the ship graffiti, has the history and nature of the churches influenced what is seen today?

Where churches are built with a stone that is particularly soft, as in some areas of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, the richness of the graffiti has been attributed to the ease of scratching the stone surface.[1] This cannot be the case with the Haven churches where the stone is much harder, although the wood and painted surfaces used at Salthouse would be a more accommodating surface.

The range of dates found amongst the graffiti provides another clue for it demonstrates that it has accumulated over many centuries, even though the rate has probably varied. For example, there is, as might be anticipated, very little from the twentieth century, while in contrast many of the merchant marks are probably attributable to the 15th and 16th centuries.

Accordingly, the long time scale provided the opportunity for graffiti to accumulate and consequently this must be a contributory factor to the diversity, so must the depth that the lines are incised and the hardness of the stone that enabled some 'drawings' to survive in spite of the churches being cleaned and restored. Nevertheless, the many unconnected lines and fragments of ships that can be found today indicates that much has probably been lost and even obscured by later 'drawings'.

Nevertheless, it is amazing that any has survived given the successive changes and restorations that churches have undergone since they were first built. The interior surfaces have been painted, covered in limewash and subsequently cleaned to give the austere forms that are so admired today. Undoubtedly other 'drawings' remain hidden under the limewash that still covers some of the interior surfaces of these churches, although occasionally they show through as stains in the overlying wash.

Even given these constraints some patterns are emerging, the most obvious is that the ship graffiti is not distributed randomly within the churches, but is concentrated in selected areas, although not exclusively so. In three of the churches the favoured locations are the columns of the nave at heights of less than two metres.

Another aspect that is easily forgotten was the ability of congregations using the churches to identify the people making the graffiti – the merchant marks, the signatures and even the initials. Indeed, some of the people making this graffiti would have been pillars of the local community. Surely a conclusion must be that these additions to the fabric of the church were not considered acts of vandalism, as they are today. Continuing this line of thought raises the intriguing possibility that in a community so dependant on the sea many of the 'drawings' of ships would also have been identifiable and instantly linked to the individuals who owned or worked aboard them.

Although no direct link can be made between the graffiti and the Survey, there are clues that show some congruence between the two. So the initial objective to use the Survey to provide both a setting and a context for, at least, some of the graffiti has been achieved. Poignantly, this same graffiti continues today to be a reminder of the people who lived, worked and worshiped in these villages.

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