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Newsletter

Ship Types in the Age of Sail—2 Masts

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Ships with two masts were common along all coasts and carried much of the coastal trade. Most designs were manoeuvrable and took less crew for the two masts than a three-mast ship.



Brig

A brig has two square-rigged masts and generally carries two to three jibs or foresails to aid manoeuvrability. Behind the mainsail the brig often carries a spanker or boom mainsail. Brigs are fast and reasonably manoeuvrable, but require between 20 to 30 crewmen.



Snow

The Snow is similar to the brig and is often initially mistaken for a brig. The main difference is that instead of a spanker or boom sail, the snow has atrysail mast stepped directly behind the mainmast. Technically, the snow can be classified as a 3-mast ship.



Schooner

The schooner has two large sails raised from the deck. A wooden gaff secures the upper part of the sail similar to a yardarm. There are many variations including top-sails, and Bermuda rigged. The schooner is fast, sails closer to the wind, and requires less crew than a square-rigged vessel.



Gaff Ketch

The ketch has a taller foremast than the mainmast. She can be square rigged or rigged similar to a schooner. Ketches were common in Baltic waters and across northern Europe. Over time the brig took over much of the cargo business from the ketches.



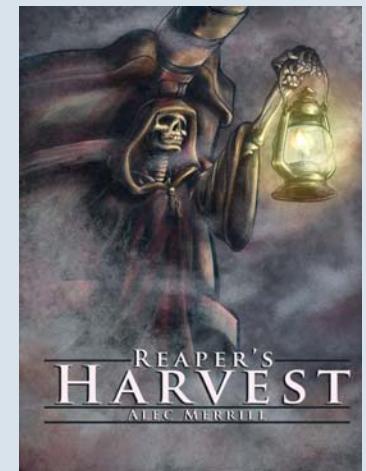
Xebec

The Xebec, found in the Mediterranean, was a small, fast commonly used trading vessel. She had an extended bowsprit and a small aft mizzen mast set well to the aft of the ship. She used both lateen sails and oars for propulsion.

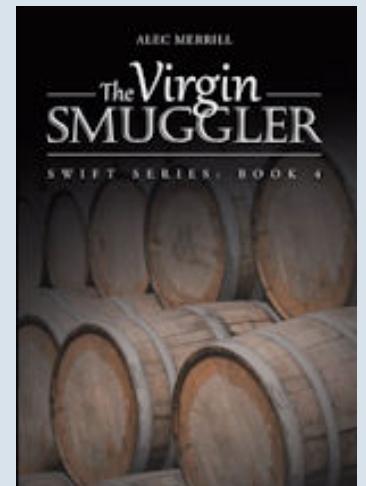


Brigantine

A brigantine is similar in construction to a brig, but carries a different rigging on the mainmast where she might carry both a fore-and-aft mainsail (a gaff sail) and square topsails and possibly topgallant sails. The brigantine was the second most popular rig for ships (after the sloop) built in the American colonies before the Revolutionary war.



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