THE STORY BEHIND THE STAMP

Henry VIII and the *Mary Rose*

-a cationary tale -

BY HERB WIGNALL

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Henry VIII and the Mary Rose

In April 1509, Henry VIII became king. He was just 17. With a foresight perhaps belying his young years, Henry immediately made a large Royal investment in shipbuilding, which included the warship *Mary Rose*. At the time of his coronation, Harry had very few ships of consequence, and the English coast was a regular target for French raids. Because of his maritime efforts, Henry is considered one of the founders of the Royal Navy. Pictured above, this 15 1/2 pence UK stamp issued in 1982 shows Henry VIII and the *Mary Rose*, the pride of his English fleet.

The *Mary Rose* launched in 1511, and she first saw battle against the French in 1512. She remained in service for 34 years until sinking in 1545 when she capsized in a skirmish against the French. She then lay in the fine silt of the Solent Channel (between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight) until her recovery in 1982. It's possible that the ship was named for his sister Mary and the Tudor symbol, the Rose. Or, it could be that the name referenced the Virgin Mary, who was also called "the Mystic Rose." As the ship was built prior to Henry's break with the Catholic Church, either interpretation could be valid.[1] Henry likely found it expedient to allow both of them to flourish.

Recent analysis on some of the lead cannonballs recovered from the wreckage show they had an iron core.

The *Mary Rose* was a carrack, which meant that her fore and rear decks were higher than the main deck. Wanting to make the *Mary Rose* the height of technology at the time, Henry introduced cannons to the main deck. But this made the *Mary Rose* top heavy and difficult to handle; the bronze and iron guns were relatively unwieldy and they were initially difficult for naval crews to accommodate. Cannonballs were made of stone or lead, and they could easily pierce a wooden hull. However, technology marched on,

CANNONS OF THE MARY ROSE
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and newer ships were fitted with a thin armor plating, which thwarted traditional projectiles.

Excitingly, new research shows that adjustments were made on the *Mary Rose* to account for the enemy's armored hulls. Recent analysis on some of the lead cannonballs recovered from the wreckage show they had an iron

core. When shot, the soft lead would yield to the initial armor, but the iron core continued on to punch through the plating of the enemy's ship.[2] This kind of technology was previously unheard of during this era, and further demonstrates that the *Mary Rose* boasted the latest technological innovations of the day. However, as the fate of the *Mary Rose* shows, such technological refinements should be balanced against more basic practicalities.

The increase in weight due to more cannons lowered the Mary Rose's gun ports to less than 36" above the water line.

After battling the French and Spanish for 20 years, heavier cannons were mounted during an overhaul of the ship that took place between 1535-36. During this refit, it is thought that the original hull done in a "Clinker" style was replaced with one done in the "Carvel" style. The Clinker style had boards overlap, while the Carvel paneling was edge to edge. This meant that holes could be cut in the lower decks to accommodate more gunnery. The holes were plugged with watertight lids, but had to be watched lest a wave gain entry. Furthermore, the increase in weight due to more cannons lowered the *Mary Rose*'s gun ports to less than 36" above the water line; using accumulated work orders as evidence, it is estimated that the weight of the *Mary Rose* doubled from 400 to 800 tons due to the alterations and additions made over her lifetime, which could have contributed to her capsize off the coast of the Isle of Wight.[3]

CONSERVATION OF THE MARY ROSE (USING PEG)
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The exact reasons for her sudden sinking are in some dispute. Observers reported that while engaging an invading French fleet on July 19, 1545, she fired her guns on the Starboard side. Then, while attempting a sharp turn in an effort to bring her Port guns to bear, water poured though the still open gun ports. Turning over she sank almost at once, and took all but a couple dozen of her 400-person crew to their deaths. The cause of such a high death rate was thought to have been the heavy netting covering the main deck to help repel boarders, but it also tragically prevented the crew from escaping.

Recent analysis of the remains found with the wreckage of the *Mary Rose* suggests that between 30% to 60% of the crew were not native to England, and were perhaps mercenaries or "prest men,"[4] although this finding is also in dispute.[5] A common account has it that the captain of the *Mary Rose*, Sir George Carew, bellowed to the captain of a passing ship that his crew was of the "type of knaves of whom, he could not rule. " It could be that there were communication issues that contributed to the *Mary Rose*'s bizarre maneuvering and capsize.

Right after it sank, many attempts were made to recover it, but the *Mary Rose* had sunk too far into the channel silt. This silt, however, proved to be an excellent preservative. The wreck was rediscovered in 1971 and in 1982, the Mary Rose Trust salvaged the remains in one of the most complex and expensive

undertakings in Maritime archeology. The remains of the ship, along with thousands of artifacts, are housed at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Portsmouth, England.

And that's the story behind the stamp----

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For more information and supporting material for much of this article, please go to the Mary Rose Trust online resource:
www.maryrose.org

1)David Childs, *The Warship Mary Rose: The Life and Times of King Henry VII's Flagship* (Barnsly: Seaforth Publishing, 2007), 17-19. (Go to www.obscurehistories.com for direct links.)

2) http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/environment/archaeology/9991936/Mary-Rose-reveals-armour-piercing-cannonball-secret.html (Accessed 6/1/2015.)

3) Childs, *Warship*, 150.

4) L.S. Bella, J.A. Lee Thorpb, A. Elkertond, "The sinking of the Mary Rose warship: a medieval mystery solved?" *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 36/1 (January 2009): 166-173.

5) Andrew R. Millard and Hannes Schroeder, "'True British sailors': a comment on the origin of the men of the Mary Rose," *Journal of Archaeological Science,* 37/4 (April 2010): 680–682.

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

Nautical Archaeology and Sites of Human Habitation

Digging up the past becomes a lot more complicated if you have several fathoms of ocean between a breathable environment and the excavation site. Many kinds of cutting-edge technologies are employed to recover submerged artifacts, including the use of sonar and submersibles to assist the trained archaeologist divers.

Preservation techniques of submerged artifacts are equally complicated. When artifacts have been submerged for a long time, they immediately begin to deteriorate when they come in contact with surface air due to swelling and microbial activity. To counter there effects, the *Mary Rose* was treated with polyethylene glycol (PEG), which gradually replaced the water in the structure of the wood.

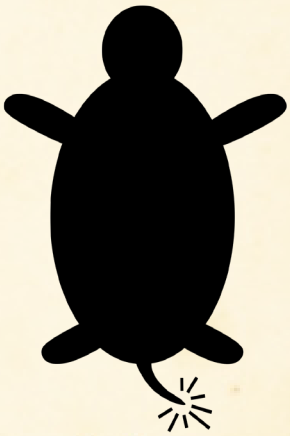
Maritime, Nautical, or Underwater Archaeology is not just looking for shipwrecks and sunken treasure, but also for sites that were locations of human habitation, but became submerged with the sea levels abruptly rose between 4000-6000 years ago. One major site that has revealed a great deal about Neolithic agriculture is in the Solent, the same aquatic Channel that hosted the *Mary Rose*. The site in question was coastal at the time and analysis revealed continued habitation at around 8000 years ago. Intrigingly, the submerged site yielded a rich patch of DNA from einkorn, which was a kind of cultivated wheat vated wheat known to grow only in southern Italy and France. This find increases the scope of trade in the region, and pushes up the timetable of Neolithic culture in Britain by nearly 2000 years.

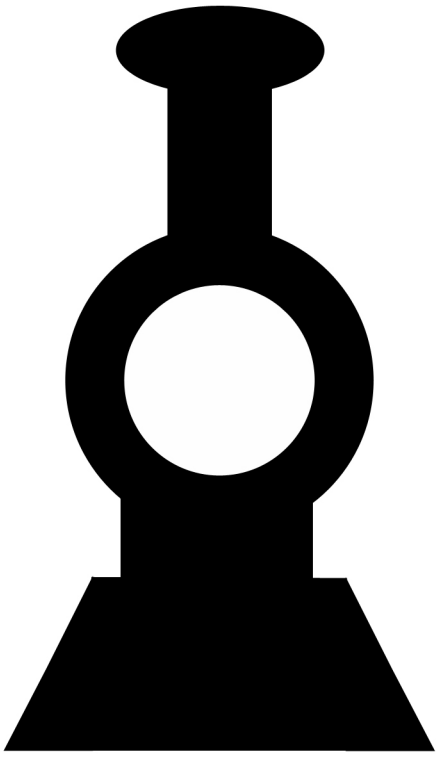
Further Reading

David Keys, "The remarkable archaeological underwater discovery that could open up a new chapter in the study of European and British prehistory," *Independent* (26 February 2015).

Oliver Smith, Garry Momber, Richard Bates, Paul Garwood, Simon Fitch, Mark Pallen, Vincent Gaffney, and Robin G. Allaby, "Sedimentary DNA from a submerged site reveals wheat in the British Isles 8000 years ago," *Science* (27 February 2015): 998-1001.

Alexis Catsambis, Ben Ford, Donny L. Hamilton, *The Oxford Handbook of Maritime Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, 2011).





July 6th marked the 134th anniversary of Kate Shelley's Train Rescue!

Read her story at www.obscurehistories.com