

The History of the *Mary Rose* Stuart Vine BSc

The Accession of Henry VIII

Henry VIII came to the throne on the 22nd of April 1509, the unchallenged successor to his father, Henry VII. The two men were quite different in temperament: the older Henry was a cool, cautious, pragmatic man who had restored peace and stability to a country wracked by the War of the Roses. His son, only 18 years old when he took control, was vigorous, bellicose, well-educated, and determined to restore England to her former medieval glory.

The Diplomatic Background in 1509

The reign of Henry VII had seen the diplomatic map of Europe change in favour of England's ancient enemy, France. Despite the half-hearted intervention of both Henry VII and Maximilian, the Holy Roman Emperor, the Duchy of Brittany was annexed by France in 1492. The whole South Coast of Britain was now open to attack from French ships based at the port of Brest. The Bretons were renowned for their shipbuilding and seamanship and were an invaluable addition to the naval power of France.

England had lost all her continental possessions with the exception of Calais, a precarious and expensive toe-hold of dubious benefit. The ownership of Calais allowed the English to invade France with relative ease and kept alive the old dream of capturing the crown of France.

Compared to Spain and the Empire on one hand, and France on the other, England had neither the manpower nor the revenue to engage in large scale warfare on the continent. Fortunately for England, the main area of rivalry between the Hapsburgs and the Valois was Italy, with Northern Europe generally relegated to a side-show. Despite this and despite the relatively small size of the Tudor military forces, an alliance with England was of use to both France and the Empire.

If England allied with the Hapsburgs against France, the whole of the northern coast of France was open to attack. This drew French forces away from other areas and could help support an attack into France from the Hapsburg Netherlands. Alliance with France on the other hand could cut the maritime link between Spain and the Netherlands and devastate the trading prosperity of the latter area. England was more inclined to ally with the Empire and Spain than with the French; France was England's historic enemy, the Kings of England had a claim to the French crown, and England still held Calais. The tendency to ally with the Hapsburgs was strengthened by Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon in 1509, and by the fact that the Netherlands were the principal market for the important English cloth and wool trade.

The European situation on Henry VIII's accession to the throne in 1509 was, however, extremely unusual. The major European powers, France, the Empire, Spain and the

Papacy, had formed the League of Cambrai with the aim of stripping Venice of her mainland possessions. With the continental powers absorbed in Italy, England was at peace with all her neighbours.

Upon his accession in 1509, Henry VIII inherited the nucleus of a useful navy from his father in the shape of five ships, including the large carracks, the *Regent* and the *Sovereign*. These ships could be augmented by hiring or buying merchant vessels, both domestic and foreign. Such vessels were turned into lightly armed warships by equipping them with archers and a few guns. Other ships were provided by the nobility.

The Building of the *Mary Rose*

Faced with the ever present threat of the French Navy, as well as a strong, potentially hostile, Scottish fleet, Henry embarked on a programme of naval building, including the *Mary Rose* and the *Peter Pomegranate*. (N.A.M. Rodger suggests in his forthcoming book, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain Vol.1*, that the threat of the new Scottish ships, including the *Michael* and the *Margaret* were the determining factor in Henry's decision to expand and uprate his navy). From a technological point of view, these ships were a radical departure from those of his father. They were carvel rather than clinker built and equipped with heavy guns mounted near the waterline. The introduction of the carvel hull also facilitated the construction of watertight gun-ports.

While the loss of the *Mary Rose* is well documented, the construction of the ship is not. There are however a few documents that provide important clues as to where and when she was constructed. Firstly, there is a private Venetian letter dated 29/12/1509. This refers to an increase in the price of tin, as the king is making ordnance to equip four new ships being built at Southampton.¹ Unfortunately names and tonnage of the ships is not recorded. It is also unlikely, looking at further evidence, that the *Mary Rose* was constructed in that city.

There is a warrant to John Dawtry, dated 29/1/1510, authorising £700 to be spent on materials for the construction of two ships, one of 400 and the other of 300 tons. This seven hundred pounds was followed up with a further £316, 13s and 4d for...

all manner of implements and necessaries to the same two ships belonging, for sails, twine, marling (-line), ropes, cables, cablets, shrouds, hawsers, bouyropes, tacks, lifts, top armours, streamers, standard(s), compasses, running glasses, tankards, bowls, dishes, lanterns, brass sheaves and pulleys, victuals and wages of men foe setting up their masts, shrouds and other tackeling...²

John Dawtry was appointed King's customer at Southampton in 1509, along with Richard Palshide,⁵ but they do not appear to have been responsible for shipbuilding there. Along with their customs jobs, they seem to have acted as financial agents for the Navy on the South Coast. In this role they were responsible for the disbursement of money and the

purchasing and forwarding of victuals and material.

Although neither ship is mentioned by name, they have been assumed to be the *Mary Rose* and the *Peter Pomegranate* respectively. These are also the only two large new ships recorded as being built in 1510.³ Since other records indicate that these two ships were constructed either simultaneously or very nearly so it would appear likely that these are the ships in question.⁴

One of the most influential of the King's officers was Robert Brygandine, who was originally appointed Clerk of the King's Ships in 1495 by Henry VII. His position was confirmed by Henry VIII in a warrant of 1509.⁶ Throughout his period of office he appears to have been stationed mainly in Portsmouth.

The case for the ship being built in Portsmouth relies on several documents in the State Papers. In 1510, money was sent to Brygandine for the repair of the *Sovereign* in Portsmouth dock and the making of the *Regent*. Money was also paid to him for the 'same' for the *Mary Rose* and the *Peter Pomegranate*, two new barks and two new rowbarges, during a period from 29/7/1510 to 20/9/1511. A further letter sent by Brygandine to Palshide concerns money received for the 'new making' of the *Mary Rose* and the *Peter Pomegranate*.⁷ While not directly stating that these two ships were built in Portsmouth, the coupling of the repair of the *Sovereign* in Portsmouth with the 'new making' of the *Mary Rose* is rather suggestive.

Perhaps the strongest evidence for the *Mary Rose* being built in Portsmouth comes from John Duance's Accounts,⁸ produced in 1514. In these, there is a payment of £120 to Robert Brygandine for conveying the *Mary Rose* and *Peter Pomegranate* from Portsmouth to the Thames. This account dates from 29/7/1511. There is another payment to Brygandine...

for the wages and victualling of the masters, mariners and soldiers, unto 26 Sept. 3 Hen. VIII., in the *Mary Rose* and the *Peter Granade*, during their conveyance from Portsmouth to the Thames, £8 2s. 2d. Also to the said Robt. Brygandyne for 35 coats of white and green for the above mentioned master and 34 of his company at 6s. 8d. a coat.

There is a further payment to...

Richard Palshidde one of the King's customers at Southampton, for 24 coats of white and green for 24 soldiers, employed for the safe conduct of The *Mary Rose* from Portsmouth to the "Temmys of London," and six similar coats of white and green for the master, 4 for the quartermasters and boatswain, at 6s. 10d. a coat; the wages of the said 24 soldiers for a month and a half, at 5s. a

man per month; the reward of the said Rich. Palshidde for his attendance on the ship, 40s., and John Clarke, master of the said ship, 20s.

Although the evidence available does not conclusively prove that the *Mary Rose* was built in either Southampton or Portsmouth, I believe that what little there is leans heavily in the direction of the latter city.

There has been some confusion regarding the construction date and even the actual existence of the *Mary Rose*. At least two recent histories of the Tudor period attribute the name *Mary Rose* to the *Great Galley*, launched at Woolwich in 1515. Even Oppenheim in his "Administration of the Royal Navy, Vol 1, 1509-1660" states that the name *Mary Rose* may have been applied to various ships at various times, the same applying to the *Great Galley*. These myths were originally contradicted by R.C. Anderson in *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol.6, in an article titled "Henry VIII's *Great Galley*"...

"It seems to me quite impossible that the *Great Galley* could have been the same ship as the *Mary Rose*, as is suggested to some extent by Mr Oppenheim and apparently accepted by Mr Williamson (Blackwoods 1914, p.211). The two ships occur together in various lists quite often enough to disprove this idea".

The *Mary Rose* is believed to have been named after the King's favourite sister, Mary, and the Tudor emblem, the Rose. Once in the Thames she was fitted out and equipped with her ordnance. There is a payment to...

Cornelius Johnson, gunmaker, towards new stocking and repairing divers pieces of ordnance in the king's ships now in the Thames, viz., The *Mary and John*, The *Anne of London*, The *Mary Rose* and The *Peter Granade*, £20. To the same, for eight loads of elm for stocking the said ordnance, at 4s. the load.

There is a further payment of £37 2s. 6d. to Johnson for similar work, and another of £66 13s. 4d to Thomas Sperte, master and David Boner, purser of the *Mary Rose*, for decking and rigging her.

A considerable amount of money was spent on equipping the King's new ships with flags, banners and streamers, as shown in a bill of the 17th December 1511...

To Willm. Botyre, of London, mercer, upon a bill signed by Sir Edward Howard for tukes, bokerams, Brussels cloth and chamletes, to make streamers and banners for The *Mary Rose* and The *Peter Pounde Garnade*, £50 19s. 2d. To John Browne, of London, painter, upon a book of parcels signed by Sir Edward

Howard, for painting and staining banners and streamers for the same, £142 4s. 6d.

While this may seem a very large amount of money for decoration these ships were the pride of the fleet, with the *Mary Rose* intended to be the flagship.⁹

Henry VIII's First War

Henry was looking for an excuse to go to war against France. To quote J. D. Mackie. "A king of England must be a foe to France and Scotland, the ally of France; he must, if possible, assert his own right to the crown of one country and the suzerainty of the other; he must, if he was to attain to full majesty, wage a successful war." The problem Henry faced was the temporary conjunction of the majority of the other European states in the League of Cambrai. Until the League was dissolved any attack on France would be inviting retaliation from virtually the whole of Europe.

Henry's desire for war was more than matched by the Venetians need to break up the League before they were annihilated. Despite Henry renewing his father's peace treaties with France and Scotland in 1510, the situation gradually changed in favour of the Venetians. Henry cemented his relationship with Spain by marrying his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, on June 11th 1509. He also pressed for his sister Mary to be married to the Archduke Charles of Burgundy to create a dynastic link with the Netherlands and the Empire.

In February 1510, the Venetians, aided by the English ambassador to the Holy See, Cardinal Bainbridge, made peace with the Pope. Julius II had discovered that inviting the French into Italy had been a grave error. Throughout 1510 and 1511, the Pope, aided by the Swiss and the Venetians, unsuccessfully attempted to expel the French from Italy. By themselves they were not strong enough to do so and their attempts to broaden the alliance were unceasing. A letter from the Venetian Senate to their ambassador in Rome illustrates the diplomatic manoeuvring...

With regard to the Pope's intention of proceeding to ecclesiastical censures against France, do not think fit to dissuade his Holiness; for such censures, as they would be justly pronounced, would avail much with the Christian powers, especially with the King of England, of whom for many days they have received no intelligence. Think it is desirable that the Pope, through the Archbishop of York, should keep urging the King of England and make him acquainted with the rapacity of the French and their evil doing.¹⁰

France and the Papacy extended the war to the ecclesiastical front, with both sides calling General Councils of the Church. The prospect of schism within the church may have helped to persuade the Emperor Maximilian to break with France. He was also grateful

for Henry's help in the Netherlands. An expedition of 1500 men led by Sir Edward Poynings was sent to aid Margaret of the Netherlands against the French client, the Duke of Gelders, in 1511.

On 13th November 1511, England joined the Holy League, initially composed of Spain, Venice and the Papacy. Henry also signed a treaty with his father-in-law, Ferdinand of Aragon, promising to attack France before the end of April 1512.

The French would have preferred to remain at peace with England, allowing them to concentrate on Italy, but seeing war was inevitable, took steps to defend themselves...

The King is going to keep Easter here, and will not leave till he knows the determination of the English, whether they will carry the war into Normandy or Guienne. If into Normandy he will retire into Normandy, whither he is now sending a band of artillery; if into Guienne he will retire thither and has already sent Mons. de Longueville, who is at present at Bordeaux, and a band of artillery. The Queen has made a vow to Our Lady of Follagonum, in Basse Bretagne; and will start as soon as she is well recovered, to protect her Duchy of Brittany against the English and collect troops for the use of the King. The English will regret their rashness.¹¹

A two pronged attack was planned on France, the fleet would harass the north coast of France and an expeditionary force would land in Northern Spain to jointly invade Guienne with Ferdinand's army. In 1512 the King made Sir Edward Howard "Admiral of the Sea during this voyage and enterprise to be made against the French King in Guyen". Sir Edward Howard was admiral on board the *Mary Rose*, with Thomas Wyndham filling the post of captain. These articles also contain directions against "frays" between the mariners and the sailors, as well as the playing of dice and cards, etc.¹² Some things never change.

The preparations for the war were recorded by the Bishop of Durham in a letter to Lord Darcy...

Is so busy setting forth of the King's army to the sea that he cannot write often. 10,000 men are being sent into Guienne under my Lord Marquis. Preparations are being made for their landing at Fontarabia. John Stile writes that they will be met by 10,000 men provided by the King of Aragon, of whom half are to be horse. Sir Edward Howard is gone to sea with 5,000 men very well appointed. My Lord Marquis is to be at Hampton to embark with all the army on 4th May; and the French King makes great preparation against them.¹³

The first task of the fleet was to obtain naval superiority in the English Channel and Henry notes in a letter to Cardinal Bainbridge dated 6th May... Has a fleet of 6,000 men at sea, who have already taken 12 Breton and French ships...(Sanuto, xiv., 267) The Venetians also noted the activities of the fleet... Thirty heavily armed ships keep the Channel, so that no French ship dare leave port¹⁴

The troop ships bound for Spain sailed with the fleet acting as escort...

After leaving the Isle of Wight, on the 3 June, followed by Sir Edw. Howard to sea, to the coast of the Trade. Some of the company were separated from the Marquis 30 or 40 miles, in consequence of the ungodly manners of the seamen, robbing the King's victuals when the soldiers were sea-sick.¹⁵

This expedition ended in farce; short of supplies, suffering from sickness and with discipline collapsing, the troops returned home in October. By using the English troops to menace Guienne, Ferdinand invaded Navarre without the threat of outside interference. A letter from Knight to Wolsey of the 5th of August captures the mood in the English camp well...

The army is idle; a large band has refused to serve under 8d a day. The mutiny was pacified; but one man suffered death. Many bands now declare that they will go home at Michaelmas, if they should die for it. All this comes from inaction. Martial exercises are not kept up. The army is "unlearned and hath not seen the feats of war." They never muster for payment. Many are slain; others have died; some have deserted. They neglect their instructions and "many of our council may suffer no counsel."

With Navarre in his hands, Ferdinand called a truce with the French on this front. Howard was more successful: returning from escort duties, he burned Conquet in Brittany...

The King's fleet under Lord Howard has recently distinguished itself by taking many of the enemy ships and invading his lands. For four days the English remained in Brittany, won several battles, slew many enemies, captured many knights and other gentlemen, burnt the towns and villages for thirty miles around and with their small force of 5,000 challenged 15,000 French and Bretons. The latter declined; saying that it was only by compulsion that they were defending the French King against the Pope. Since then Lord Howard was with the King at Hampton, where he is said to remain in consultation, retaining the fleet. He

took many ships with wealth of various kinds and artillery sent by the French King to the Duke of Guelders, for an invasion of Flanders.¹⁶

After refitting he sailed to attack the French fleet at Brest. He took them by surprise on the 10th of August, initiating a ferocious battle, possibly the first in the Channel involving ships carrying heavy guns firing through ports. The French cut their anchor cables and attempted to escape, but Howard in the *Mary Rose* attacked the French flagship, forcing her out of the battle with 300 dead and injured, apparently with a single shot disabling her mast. The climax of the battle came when the "400 ton ship", probably the *Peter Pomegranate*, disabled a ship variously known as *The Carrack of Brest*, the *Queen* and the *Marie la Cordeliere*, (she was also recorded as weighing from 400 to 1,500 tons), with shots from six large "cortos", leaving her in a sinking condition. The *Regent* followed up this attack by grappling and boarding the carrack. Both caught fire after the English had boarded, with around two thousand men being killed. Among those killed on the English side were Sir Thomas Knevet (the captain), and Sir John Carew.¹⁷

The destruction of the ships was splendidly elaborated in another entry in the Sanuto Diaries... the French were losing when one of them, who preferred to die a heretic, set fire to the gunpowder. All the French who escaped death were brought to the King. Another French ship, the *Admiralde* was sunk. (A similar story is told about the explosion on board the *San Salvador* during the Armada campaign of 1588).

The French fleet retired into Brest, while the English spent the next two days capturing or destroying 32 French vessels, as well as recovering the valuable anchors the French had cut free in their haste to escape. The victorious fleet then sailed for Dartmouth and Southampton to refit.

Neither the English or the French were idle during the winter...

Parliament has sanctioned the King's determination to cross in person against France in the spring. He will send to Venice for bastard galleys because because Prejan, the King of France's captain, came to Brittany some time ago with galleys, 2 bastard and 4 subtle, passing by Spain, Gallicia and Biscay.... The King has sent to Rouen to make galleys. In place of the great ship *Regent* which was burnt the King of England is making a greater. Parliament has provided £600,000 for the enterprise.¹⁸

Prior to the campaign of 1513, the King reviewed the fleet at Greenwich, after which Howard sailed for the Straits of Dover. The ships were ordered to set all sail and race against each other. Howard was full of praise for the *Mary Rose*, which outsailed the rest. Writing to the King afterwards from the *Mary Rose* he described her as...

"Your good ship, the flower, I trow, of all ships that ever sailed"...
Such a fleet was never seen in Christendom. Excuses the length
of his letter, but the King commanded him to send word how
every ship did sail.¹⁹

Howard's accounts for 1512 give an interesting picture of the expense of running a major warship, with a crew of 411 men.

"The *Mary Roose*:- Fyrst to Syr Edward Haward, knyght, chief captain and admyral of the Flete for his wages and vitayle at 10s. a day by the seid iij mounthes amountyng to £42. Also to Sir Thomas Wyndeham knight for his vitayle and wages at 18d. by the day by the seid iij mounthes, £6 6s. Also for the wages and vitayle of 2 lodesmen alias pylottes ych of thiem at 20s. a month by the seid iij mounthes £6. Also for the vitayle of 411 souldiours, 206 maryners, 120, gonners 20, and servitours 20, in the same ship, every man at 5s. a month by the seid tyme £308 5s. Also for wages of the same 411 persons every man at 5s. a month by the seid tyme £308 5s. Also for 34 deddeshares demi at 5s. a share by the seid tyme £25 17s. 6d. Also for toundage aftyr 3d a ton a weke by the seid tyme 500ton, nil quia navis Regis."

Howard was in Plymouth in April, apparently waiting for a possible French attack and bemoaning the lack of victuals, a perennial problem.

"I pray Godde that we lynger no longer, for I assure you was never army so falselie vitailed. They that received their proportion for 2 monthes flesche can not bring about for 5 weeks, for the barrells are full of salt... many came oute of Themys with a monthe's bere, trustyng that the vittellers shulde bringe the rest, a here commyth none... Sir for Godd's sake, sende by post all along the coste that they brew bere and make biskets that we may have some refresshyng to kepe us together uppon this cost". The weather was also very bad, the fleet losing a galley in the storms.²⁰

By the 12th of April, Brest was blockaded. Ideally Howard would have liked to capture the port but hadn't the forces to do so. This didn't stop him landing 1500 men to burn and pillage, although the French had 10,000 troops in the area. Howard had two worries, as usual, victuals were in short supply, and the French galleys could return from St Malo at any time. He plainly states that if they do appear, he will attack them with boats and small vessels.²¹ His worst fears were soon realised, the galleys, led by Pregent de Bidoux, cut through part of the fleet, sinking master Compton's ship and crippling one of the

King's new barks, possibly the *Lesse Bark*. The galleys retired to what the English called Whitsand Bay, near Conquet, and fortified the narrow entrance. The English attempted to land troops to take the galleys in the rear, but were deterred by a feint from the main French fleet.

Howard then decided to lead a small boat attack on the galleys in their defended position, the water being too shallow for the *Mary Rose* and the other large vessels. The ensuing engagement was described in a letter from Edward Echyngham to Wolsey.

"On St Mark's day, 25 April, the Admiral appointed four captains and himself to board the [galleys]. The Admiral himself, with 160 men, went in [the one galley] and in the other [my lord F]erris; and in one of two small crayers [went Thomas Cheyne and Wa]llop and in the other went Sir Henry [Shirborne] and [Sir] William Sidnaye. These enterprised to win the French galleys with the help of boats, the water being too shallow for ships. The galleys were protected on both sides by bulwarks planted so thick with guns and crossbows that the quarrels and gonstons came together as thick as hailstones. For all this the Admiral boarded the galley that Preyer John was in, and Charran the Spaniard with him and 16 others. By advice of the Admiral and Charran they had cast anchor into... of the French galley, and had fastened the cable to the capstan, that if any of the galleys had been on fire they might have veered the cable and fallen off; but the French hewed asunder the cable, or some of our mariners let it slip. And so they left this [noble Admiral in the] hands of his enemies. There was a mariner, wounded in eighteen places, who by adventure recovered unto the buoy of the galley, so that the galley's boat took him up. He said he saw my lord Admiral thrust against the rails of the galley with morris pikes. Charran's boy tells a like tale, for when his master and the Admiral had entered, Charran sent him for his hand gun, which before he could deliver, the one galley was gone off from the other, and he saw my lord Admiral waving his hands, and crying to the galleys, "Come aboard again! Come aboard again!" which when my lord saw they could not, he took his whistle from about his neck, wrapped it together and threw it into the sea".²²

The French recovered his body and sent Howard's golden whistle, his badge of rank, to their Queen.²³ With the death of their Admiral, the fleet abandoned the blockade and returned to Plymouth, they were short of supplies, suffering from disease and with morale at rock bottom.²⁴

Thomas Lord Howard was sent by Henry to take command of the *Mary Rose* and the

fleet. His first task was to inquire into the fleets desertion of its post and the death of his brother. The assembled captains pointed out that the fleet was low on supplies and the victualling ships trapped in English ports by the wind. They were also terrified that the galleys would attack them during a calm, or they would be trapped against a heavily defended lee shore by a change of wind direction. As to his brothers death, Howard considered that the attack had failed not through want of bravery on the survivors part, but more through the suicidal nature of the action, to quote. "As far as the writer can understand by report, it was the most dangerous enterprise he had ever heard of, and the most manly handled". He goes on to tell the King that he intends to sail again for the Trade and, if the King wishes it, the coast of Brittany.²⁵

Howard wrote a far less sanguine letter to Wolsey on the same day,(May 7th) complaining about mass desertion and the dreadful fear the galleys had inspired. He also states that the captains had been "greatly discouraged by the King's letters", and asks if the King might send them some favourable ones.²⁶ It would be interesting to know the contents of the King's original letters.

On the 13th of May, Howard received the King's orders for another attack on Brittany.²⁷ This attack never took place, initially Howard was windbound in Plymouth and could not link up with the army in Southampton. The whole campaign then seems to have been quietly forgotten, possibly because the French fleet at Brest had dispersed. In May, Howard reported some intelligence to Wolsey.

A Breton who came with English prisoners, 7 May, from Saint Poul de Lion, says he heard from the mariners who stole away from Brest "the ships of war were come forth fro the castle and would return to their countries, and that the hulks that were at Brest said they would go homeward and convey the Admiral to Hownflew, where he intended to lay up his ship for this year". He says the French could not be victualled to come forth in the two months and that "ships of Britaigne that be at home be hauled up into creeks and digged in pits not thinking to come to the sea this year". The council should debate these things, for if the French navy have dispersed from Brest the "enterprise pretended there" should be of small profit.²⁸

The *Mary Rose* next appears in Newcastle, having transported Howard and his retinue there to aid in the war against the Scots.²⁹ Scotland was the only potentially hostile country to share a land border with England, and was a constant irritation to the Tudor monarchy. Henry VII and James IV had concluded the Treaty of Ayton in 1502, the first peace treaty between the two countries in 174 years. This treaty was strengthened by the marriage of Henry VII's daughter, Margaret, to James in 1503. Unfortunately, the Scots never abandoned the 'Auld Alliance' with France, so were still bound in a mutual defence treaty.

After Henry VIII's accession, relationships with Scotland became strained, partially because of a naval action. In August 1511, Lord Thomas Howard and his brother Sir Edward, attacked and captured the Scottish ships, the *Lion* and the *Jenett of Purwyn*, killing Andrew Barton, one of James's captains. These ships had been operating under Letters of Marque against the Portugese and should not have been treated as pirates.

James was furious, receiving no satisfaction from diplomatic protests to Henry, he wrote to the Pope on the 5th of December accusing Henry of making war on him. Despite the provocation, James was not yet prepared to make war on England. Even after Henry had declared war on France, James prevaricated despite renewing the alliance with France in March 1512 and signing an updated version in July. Despite this, James only initiated limited naval action against the English until Henry was besieging Therouanne. James sent Henry an ultimatum, withdraw from France or face the consequences. No such undertaking being received, the Scots invaded England on August the 22nd 1513, only to have their army destroyed and their king killed at the Battle of Flodden.

James hand had been forced by Henry's invasion of France. With some very limited help from the Emperor Maximillian, Henry's campaign in France had been relatively successful, leading to the capture of the towns of Therouanne and Tournai. Henry sailed home in triumph from Calais on the 21st of October, escorted by the *Mary Rose*.

Petition to the Council by John Wodlas, of Harwich, for his reasonable expenses in the following service. He conveyed the *Maryrose* over "a danger in the sea called the Nase," and upon countermand, brought her back to Harwich. Then within five days, he was commanded to convey her through " a place in the sea called the Slade," to meet the King coming from Calais, and so did, and then conveyed her out of the Downes, through the Blake Depes, into Tamys. He "now last" brought the *Mary Rose* from Blake Wale to Portsmouth...³⁰

Thomas, Earl of Surrey, was appointed Admiral of England in 1514, again using the *Mary Rose* as his flagship. His first recorded action was to attack the French galleys near Boulogne, who very sensibly withdrew.³¹ The next major action was the burning of the area west of Cherbourg, on 13th June, in retaliation for the French attack on Brighton.³²

Henry made peace with France in 1514, keeping Tournai and doubling the French pension originally promised to his father under the terms of the peace of Etaples. He cemented this alliance by marrying his young sister Mary to the ageing Louis XII. From Henry's point of view, the war had been a success, he had defeated the French and Scots and made his reputation at home and abroad.

1514-1522

After the end of the war the next mention of the *Mary Rose* is in the Navy accounts for 1518. Along with a number of other ships, she was caulked between 5th August and 26th November of that year.

The diplomatic dance soon started up again, with new players arriving on the scene. December 31st 1514 saw the death of Louis XII of France, reportedly danced to death by his new queen. His successor, Francis I was young and energetic, and events soon swung his way. In 1515 the French invaded Italy, crushing the Swiss at Marignano. In Scotland, the French client, the Duke of Albany, took over as regent, driving Margaret out of the country.

In January 1516, Henry's father-in-law, Ferdinand, died, leaving Spain and his holdings in Spain and America to his grandson Charles of Burgundy. Both Charles and Maximilian made peace with France, bringing a temporary peace to Europe.

The situation in Scotland improved when Francis recalled the Duke of Albany back to France in 1517, and a year later Cardinal Wolsey negotiated a new treaty with France. Tournai was returned to the French in exchange for 600,000 crowns, to be paid in installments and Henry's little daughter Mary was promised as a bride to the equally youthful Dauphin. Wolsey even managed to persuade all the European powers to unite in friendship against the Turks.

Unfortunately, the death of the Emperor Maximilian and the election of Charles as Holy Roman Emperor upset the balance of power again. Charles now ruled Spain, the Empire and the Netherlands, virtually surrounding France and presenting a threat Francis could not ignore. In the forthcoming struggle England would be a valuable ally for either side and Henry met both protagonists. Charles visited England in May 1520, and in June the *Mary Rose* was ordered to guard the passage of Henry's flotilla when he crossed the Channel to Calais to meet the French king, Francis I, at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.³³ This early summit meeting in 1520 was so successful that war broke out two years later. There is an account from October 1520 for the caulking of the *Mary Rose* as well as for wages of the men who helped "plump" her.³⁴

The Second French War

The war of 1522-1525 was the offspring of a secret treaty between the new Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and Henry. The plan was for a two-pronged attack on Paris, with the English attacking from the north and the Spanish from the south, in support of a rebellion by the Duke of Bourbon. Although the English troops, commanded by Suffolk, got within 50 miles of Paris, lack of support from Charles's forces, the failure of Bourbon's revolt and a breakdown of discipline in the army scuppered the campaign. Despite the crushing of the French army at Pavia in February 1525 and the capture of Francis by Charles, England had run out of resources to prosecute the war. The English dream of capturing the crown of France had been lost for ever.

The war saw Thomas, Earl of Surrey, renew his relationship with the *Mary Rose*, still the flagship of the fleet. In June 1522, the vice admiral, Fitzwilliam, noted that she still outsailed all the ships in the fleet, with the *Henry Grace Dieu* a close second.³⁵

The fleet was bedevilled by the usual shortage of victuals. Surrey's letter to Henry, dated 27th June 1522, is typical of a number mentioning the subject.³⁶ The main action of the war, from a naval point of view, was the capture of the French town of Morles, and again Surrey mentions the lack of victuals, with a strong emphasis on beer.³⁷

On the 4th of August, Fitzwilliam sent a letter to Wolsey asking whether or not he wanted the *Mary Rose* and *Peter Pomegranate* "laid up to keep the sea"³⁸ This letter was written aboard the *Mary Rose*, suggesting that it was now the vice-admirals flagship. The *Mary Rose* may have been taken out of service shortly after this, as Fitzwilliam is recorded as being in command of the *Maglory*, a 300 ton ship.³⁹ The *Mary Rose* is not recorded as taking any further part in this war, probably being in reserve in Portsmouth during 1524.⁴⁰

In October 1525, the *Mary Rose* was in Deptford, requiring caulking "from the keel up, both inside and out". She is recorded as being 14 years old and weighing 600 tons.⁴¹ In 1526 the ship is recorded as being, "good for the wars or else for the King's pleasure", as long as her decks and castles were caulked first.⁴²

1528 Refit

The *Mary Rose* and several other ships underwent a major refit in Portsmouth between June and July 1528. This operation required the construction of a new dock. The ship was "wound" ashore by "vices" and held upright by elm shores. The construction crew being paid 2d per man each tide. In total, nine acres of land were added to the existing dockyard. A new storehouse, the "Long House" was built at the same time. The whole area was surrounded by a ditch and thorn hedge, equipped with wooden gates.

There is an account for the cost of the materials used for the repair of the *Mary Rose*.

Hereafter followeth all such stuff with other necessaries provided by me Thomas Jermyn, Clerk of our sovereign lord the King's ships for the reparation of the *Mary Roose* and for caulking of her overlop & decks fore and aft within board and likewise for searching and caulking from the keel upward without board and trimming of her boat the 5th day of June in the year of the reign of our sovereign lord King Henry the viiith.

First paid for 37 feet of plankboard 5 inches at 9s the hundred the sum monteth --- 3s

Item more for 120 feet of overlop board 2 inches thick at 3s.4d

the hundred, sum --- 4s
 Item more for 46 feet of square timber at 3s.4d the ton --- 4s
 Item more for 6 cloven boards at 4d a board --- 2s
 Item for 55lb of carvel spikes at 1.5d the lb --- 6s.10.5d
 Item for 150 of overlop nails at 3s per hundred --- 4s.6d
 Item more for 150 of overlop nails at 2s per hundred --- 3s.
 Item for 150 of overlop nails at 16d per hundred --- 2s.
 Item more for 600 of 6d nails --- 3s.
 Item more for 100 of 5d nails --- 5d.
 Item for 400 of 4d nails --- 16d
 Item for 100 of 3d nails --- 3s.
 Item for 600 of scupper nails --- 2s.
 Item for two loads of burning --- 2s. (Reeds burnt under the hull
 to soften the old caulking material before re-caulking).
 Item for 6.75 hundredweight of oakum at 7s.8d the
 hundredweight --- 51s.9d.
 Item for 6 dozen? of thrums --- 12d. (Sheepskins used in
 caulking).
 Item for 2 hoses --- 15d.
 Item more spent in pitch --- 8 barrels
 Item in tar --- 2 barrels
 Sum of the page £4 13s. 3¹/₂d.⁴³

The repair docks for the ships were only temporary structures. Pits were dug in the mud during low tides and the ships winched in at high tide. During further low tides the dock would be dammed with clay and eventually any remaining water pumped out. It was not unknown for the dams to collapse and have to be rebuilt.

iii. Payments of laborers at the dock where the *Henry Grace de Dieu* lies, at divers times when the water broke into the dock, beginning 28 March 18 Hen. VIII. Others, 4 June 19 Hen. VIII. Laborers making dock for the *Mary Rose*, and c., beginning 28 Feb. 18 Hen. VIII., 2d. a man each tide. And again, from 3 June 19 Hen. VIII.⁴⁴

Dendrochronology dating of a number of the timbers from the *Mary Rose* appears to support the historical evidence for both this refit and the one in 1536. These timbers include major structural elements such as the transom knees and a number of the braces and riders.

The Break with the Papacy

Henry had become enamoured with Anne Boleyn, as well as obsessed with the need to produce a male heir, something the ageing Catherine was incapable of, and started seeking a divorce. Unfortunately, to do this he needed to free the Pope from the influence

of Catherine's nephew, Charles V. This required a French invasion of Italy, and to that end a treaty was signed on April 30th, 1527. The allies demanded Charles pay his debts to England from the previous war and release his two hostages, the French princes. Francis in his turn would pay an extra 15,000 crowns per annum towards Henry's pension. Princess Mary was promised to a new suitor, Francis's second son, Henry. England had no money to fight a war, and despite declaring war on Charles in January 1528, a full truce was declared in June. The French were expelled from Italy after some initial successes in 1529.

Henry made peace with Charles in August and carried on with his plans to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn, which he did in 1533. By having Archbishop Cranmer annul his marriage and parliament deny the Pope's jurisdiction over the matter he effectively broke with Rome. The Pope responded by excommunicating Henry.

Between 1527 and 1536 the *Mary Rose* appears to have been laid up again, until rebuilt and rearmed between 1536 and 1538.⁴⁵ In January of the latter year, the ship is described as being "new made, standing in the docks there, (the Thames) masts ready but not set up".⁴⁶ This was a period of high political tension owing to Henry's break with the papacy. Fortunately for England, the jealous rivalry between France and the Empire prevented any serious invasion attempts and allowed Henry to go unpunished. The only real scare occurred when Charles and Francis concluded a truce at Nice and the Pope published a bull deposing Henry and urged Francis, Charles and James V of Scotland to overthrow him. By the end of June 1539, the war scare was over and the fleet was stood down.⁴⁷ Any thoughts of aggression may have been tempered by the mobilisation of the fleet and Henry's fortification programme.

In 1540, Marillac, the French ambassador, was asked about the state of the English fleet. He reported that Henry had three ships larger than the rest, the *Great Harry*, of 1500 tons, and the *Marie Roze* and *Pomme Grenade* of 900 or 1000 tons each.⁴⁸ This was a slight exaggeration, the Anthony Roll gives a weight of 700 tons for the *Mary Rose* in 1545. Marillac kept a careful eye on the fleet, noting on April 4th 1542 that the King's ships of war had all been launched and were being prepared for sea. He was uncertain about the reasoning behind this action, whether it was an attempt to impress Francis and the Emperor, or for repair, or to be used in war. These naval preparations appear to have been discontinued in May, but renewed with increased vigour in June.⁴⁹

The Loss of the *Mary Rose*

The main body of the fleet was preparing for war against the Scots, while others attacked French shipping, although England was not officially at war with France.⁵⁰ On the 19th of September, Marillac notes that all the King's ships, bar six, have sailed, it is not recorded which group the *Mary Rose* was in. With the King's ships and those of his lords, Marillac reckons the fleet to consist of 25 ships of 200 tons and over and 40 of over 100 tons. He does not mention any of the "Great Ships" by name, perhaps this is because they stayed in the Thames. They certainly seem to have been in port in July 1543, as the *Great*

Harry and the *Mary Rose* were being equipped with ordnance in that month.⁵¹ In January of that year, Henry appointed Viscount Lisle to the post of High Admiral of England. Henry was now fighting a war on two fronts, having allied himself with the Emperor Charles V against France.

The land army sent to the Borders was a failure and bedevilled by lack of supplies it was broken up without achieving anything. The Scottish counter-offensive was a disaster, their army was crushed at Solway Moss and King James died shortly afterwards, allegedly of shame. Part of English fleet based themselves in the Firth of Forth, burning Aberdolles. The naval war degenerated into privateering, with the French aiding and supplying the Scots. There appears to be no hard evidence for the *Mary Rose* taking part in the Scottish campaign, she is not named amongst the ships for either the 1543 campaign or in 1544 for, "The Expedition into Scotland".⁵² This was a rather successful combined operation, ending with the sack of Leith and the burning of Edinburgh.

Not only was there success to report from Scotland, the King himself took to the field in France. In September, Boulogne fell, but this victory was immediately undermined by the withdrawal of the Emperor from the alliance. Henry was left to face France single-handed. Meanwhile, the French were slowly gathering a formidable armada in Normandy.⁵³

In October 1544, the fleet was ordered to escort reinforcements to Boulogne, and then to concentrate in the Solent, enabling them to intercept any French attempt to interfere with the sea passage between Dover and Calais/Boulogne.⁵⁴ According to the Imperial Ambassador, the French were planning a three pronged attack in 1545. This was intended to retake Boulogne, to aid the Scots, and to mount a direct attack upon England. He also mentions that the English have disrupted the French plans by capturing a large number of their ships.⁵⁵

Lisle gathered the fleet in order to take the war to the French. The start of the campaign was dogged by bad weather and an attempted escape on the 21st of June by some of the merchantmen drafted into service.⁵⁶ This document also contains a reference to the *Mary Rose* joining the fleet. During the campaign the fleet met up with 21 of the French galleys off Alderney, according to an English source. As the conditions were calm, the galleys decided to attack, but were said to have come off the worst.⁵⁷ A further spoiling attack on the French fleet at Le Havre caused a considerable amount of alarm, but little damage. Apparently the King of France had his baggage packed and was ready to flee.⁵⁸

In July 1545 the French fleet entered the Solent with the intention of invading the Isle of Wight and destroying the English fleet. The French voyage started in farce. On July 6th Francis I dined on the flagship *Carraquon*, after he left it was destroyed by fire. Admiral D'Annebault shifted his flag to *La Maistresse*, which promptly ran aground on leaving port. Patching up the leaks, the fleet sailed for the Isle of Wight.

The French fleet was huge, with 200 sail, including 23 of the galleys that had proved so

effective in 1513.⁵⁹ The English fleet that met them consisted of around 80 ships, gathered in Portsmouth, with more expected from the west Country. The English aimed to fight a defensive battle, they were outnumbered, but had a positional advantage. The first day of the battle consisted of a long range cannonade between the French galleys and the English fleet in which neither side suffered any real loss. The French had also invaded the Isle of Wight, tangling with the local militia. At about this time the French Admiral had to move his flag again, *La Maistresse* was sinking from the damage incurred by running aground, although she was later repaired.

That night, Henry dined on the flagship, *Henry Grace a Dieu*, with the admiral, Viscount Lisle, as well as Sir George Carew, the newly appointed vice-admiral, and his senior captains. Interestingly, among the artefacts recovered from the *Mary Rose* were two pewter plates from Lisle's dinner service. These plates were marked with his shield of arms encircled with the Garter. (John Dudley, Viscount Lisle was created a Knight of the Garter in 1543). Quite how these plates found their way onto the *Mary Rose* is a matter for speculation, perhaps Lisle gave them to his guests as a souvenir of the dinner and forthcoming battle.⁶⁰

There are several versions of what happened on the 19th of July 1545. According to the French, at dawn their galleys took up the battle, trying to lure the English within range of their main fleet. The flat calm allowed them to pound the English ships with relative impunity. Suddenly, much to their delight the *Mary Rose* heeled over and sank. The French naturally believed they had sunk her.⁶¹

The Imperial ambassador, Van Der Delft, tells a rather different story. According to him, the French fleet appeared while the King was at dinner on the flagship. Henry went ashore and the English fleet was engaged by five galleys. He records that the *Mary Rose* sank towards evening, drowning all the 500 men aboard save about 25 or 30. Interestingly, he received a survivors account.

"Was told by a Fleming among the survivors that when she heeled over with the wind the water entered by the lowest row of gun ports which had been left open after firing."⁶²

Sir Peter Carew, brother of Sir George Carew, newly appointed Vice Admiral in the *Mary Rose*, gave his biographer, John Hooker, another eyewitness account. He states that the *Mary Rose* began to heel as soon as the sails were raised. When their uncle, Sir Gawain Carew, sailed past and asked Sir George what the problem was, he answered that "he had the sort of knaves whom he could not rule". Hooker further tells us that

"this gentleman...had in his ship a hundred mariners, the worst of them being able to be a master in the best ship in the realm; and these so maligned and disdained one another, that refusing to do

that which they should do, were careless to do that which was most needful and necessary, and so contending in envy, perished in forwardness".

Owing to this indiscipline, he records that the *Mary Rose* sank with the loss of nearly 700 men.⁶³ This figure for the complement is extremely unlikely, no other reference gives such a number, and it seems very likely that the *Mary Rose* was carrying her normal crew of between four and five hundred men when she sank. Neither the vice-admiral, or the captain, Roger Grenville, were among the survivors. Poor Carew got a rather cursory obituary in a letter from Harvel to Paget in September.

"Although th'infortunable case of Sir George Carow is by negligence so miserablye successid," it is a fortune of war and hitherto the King has had prosperous success.

There have been a number of attempts to explain the loss of the *Mary Rose*, none of them entirely satisfactory. Burchet (*Naval History*, I, p.340) and Sir Walter Raleigh (*Maxims of State*, p133) both attributed her loss to the gunports being too close to the water line, indeed, Burchet gave a height of only 16 inches. If this had been the case the *Mary Rose* would never have left port, her scuppers would have been submerged! The archaeological evidence indicates that the gunports must have had close to the four feet clearance recommended by Raleigh.

Peter Carew's account is at variance with that of the Flemish survivor and Van der Delft, stating that the *Mary Rose* started heeling immediately after his brother went aboard and her sails were set. There is no mention of her being engaged with the French galleys, contradicting the French account as well. Both Hall's and Hollingshed's *Chronicles* lay the blame on low gunports and heavy ordnance, further adding that the guns were unbreached. While this was undoubtedly the case, the guns were still held in position by their recoil ropes, there is evidence for only one gun (on the upper deck) having fallen from the port to the starboard side.

Perhaps the most likely reason for the loss of the *Mary Rose* is the most mundane, a simple handling error in the heat of the skirmish with the galleys. Any such problem may have been compounded by confusion or a lack of discipline amongst the crew. The excavation of the ship also revealed that the ballast had shifted to the starboard side, although whether this was a cause or as a result of the ship sinking is uncertain. Once the angle of heel was sufficient for water to enter the gunports the fate of the ship was sealed.

After the battle, attempts were made to raise the *Mary Rose*. A letter from Suffolk to Paget on the 1st of August, notes.

"A remembrance of things necessary for the recovery with the help of God of the *Mary Roose*."

"First, two of the greatest hulks that may be gotten, more the hulk that rideth within the haven," 4 of "the greatest hoys within the haven," 5 of the "greatest cables that may be had," etc., including 30 Venetian mariners and one Venetian carpenter.⁶⁴ [It is important to remember that hulks are a class of vessel, usually from the Hanseatic ports, not disused ships].

A follow-up letter of the same day reports...

trusts that by Monday or Tuesday the *Mary Rose* shall be weighed up and saved. Two hulks, cables, "pulleces," etc., are ready for the weighing of her.⁶⁵ The next day, Lisle reports that the *Jesus* (of Lubeck) and the *Sampson* are to attempt to lift the *Mary Rose*.⁶⁶ On the 5th it was reported that... The *Mary Rose's* sails and sail yards are laid on land "and to her masts there is tied three cables with other ingens to weigh her up, and on every side of her a hulk to set her upright" tomorrow; and, that done, she shall be discharged of water and ordnance, and gradually brought nearer the shore.⁶⁷

The attempt to raise her failed...

This day the Italians who had the weighing of the *Mary Roos* signify that, by the method they have followed they cannot recover her and have broken her foremast. They came to my lord Great Master, but he had already departed hence. Now they ask for six days' proof to try dragging her into "shallow ground." The great hulks which have been occupied about weighing her cannot be well spared out of the army; and, yet, considering the importance of the ship and the goodly ordnance that is in her, the lord Admiral has appointed the two hulks which were stayed to go forth with the fleet to serve towards recovering her, for, to be of use in the army, they "must have sparre deckes and wast nettyng with pourtes cut," to finish which will take longer than thought.⁶⁸

In December, the Privy Council authorised the payment of 40 marks to Peter de Andreas and Symone de Maryne, Venetians, for their work in attempting to raise the *Mary Rose*.

The *Mary Rose* lay on her starboard side at an angle of approximately 60 degrees. She had sunk through the soft upper sediments and had come to rest on the clay below. The hull acted as a silt trap for the Solent currents, and the surviving portion of the hull filled rapidly, leaving the port side to be eroded by marine organisms and mechanical

degradation. Because of the way the ship sank, nearly the whole starboard side survived intact, excluding the bow and a portion of the aftercastle. Internally between half and one third of the orlop, main and upper decks, along with a fragment of the castle deck were intact, as were ancillary structures such as the companionways, stanchions and cabin partitioning. During the 17th and 18th centuries the entire site was covered with a layer of hard grey shelly clay, which minimised further erosion.

The wreck of the *Mary Rose* gradually faded into obscurity until the 16th of June 1836 when a local fisherman snagged his gear. By chance, John Deane was diving on the wreck of the Royal George nearby, and the fishermen asked him to free their gear in return for a half share of whatever it was caught on. (John Deane and his brother invented the first practical diving helmet, an invention usually ascribed to their collaborator, Siebe). Using this primitive apparatus, John Deane dived down to the place where the fishermen's gear was caught and found it snagged on a timber protruding slightly from the sea bed. Exploring further, he found several other timbers and then a bronze gun. The *Mary Rose* had been rediscovered.

Deane continued diving sporadically on the site until 1840, recovering four bronze and a number of iron guns as well as two bows, various timbers, including part of a pump, and some small finds. The *Mary Rose* faded into obscurity again and there it may have languished, but for the dedication of one man, Alexander McKee. But that is another story.

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