

The Mary Rose and Henry Grâce à Dieu leaving Portsmouth Harbour 1545

Considered as probably the most extensively researched and technically authentic painting of the occasion in existence at this time. Corrective detail having been completed as a result of information obtained from the actual raising of the Mary Rose. Historical research was carried out with dedication not only with regard to the ship, but also in connection with landmarks, history of Portsmouth Harbour (England's first Dry Dock, indicated by smoke to the left of the Round House), weather conditions and tidal currents.

The Mary Rose (600 tons) was built in Portsmouth in 1509. She was the finest ship in Henry VIII Navy and remained so even after the building of Henry Grâce à Dieu (1,000 tons) at Erith in 1514, as was recorded in a letter written to the King on June 4th, 1522 by Vice-Admiral Sir William Fitzwilliam when commenting on Henry Grâce à Dieu reported that "she sailed as well as, and rather better than, any ship in the fleet, weathering all save the Mary Rose." The Mary Rose was rebuilt (700 tons capacity) in 1536 - probably becoming, as a result, the first true ocean-going ship of war mounting broadside guns 'Tween Decks. A purpose built fighting ship.

When Mary Rose sank on 19th July 1545 she had on board some three hundred armed soldiers above the normal complement which created confusion, and in all probability reduced the stability of the ship. Whilst leaving Portsmouth Harbour Mary Rose heeled considerably upon which Sir George Carewe, Vice-Admiral, enquired of the master what it meant and was informed "that if she did heel she was like to be cast away." Shortly afterwards Mary Rose was seen to heel more and more and a few moments later sank with seven hundred men on board. Of the crew it is said that one hundred were so competent that the worst was "able to be master of the best ship in the realm" but through overcrowding and lack of understanding between seamen and military, they did, by neglect, bring upon themselves a common destruction.

On August 25th 1553 Henry Grâce à Dieu was destroyed by fire caused as the result of an accident.

Painted in 1982

