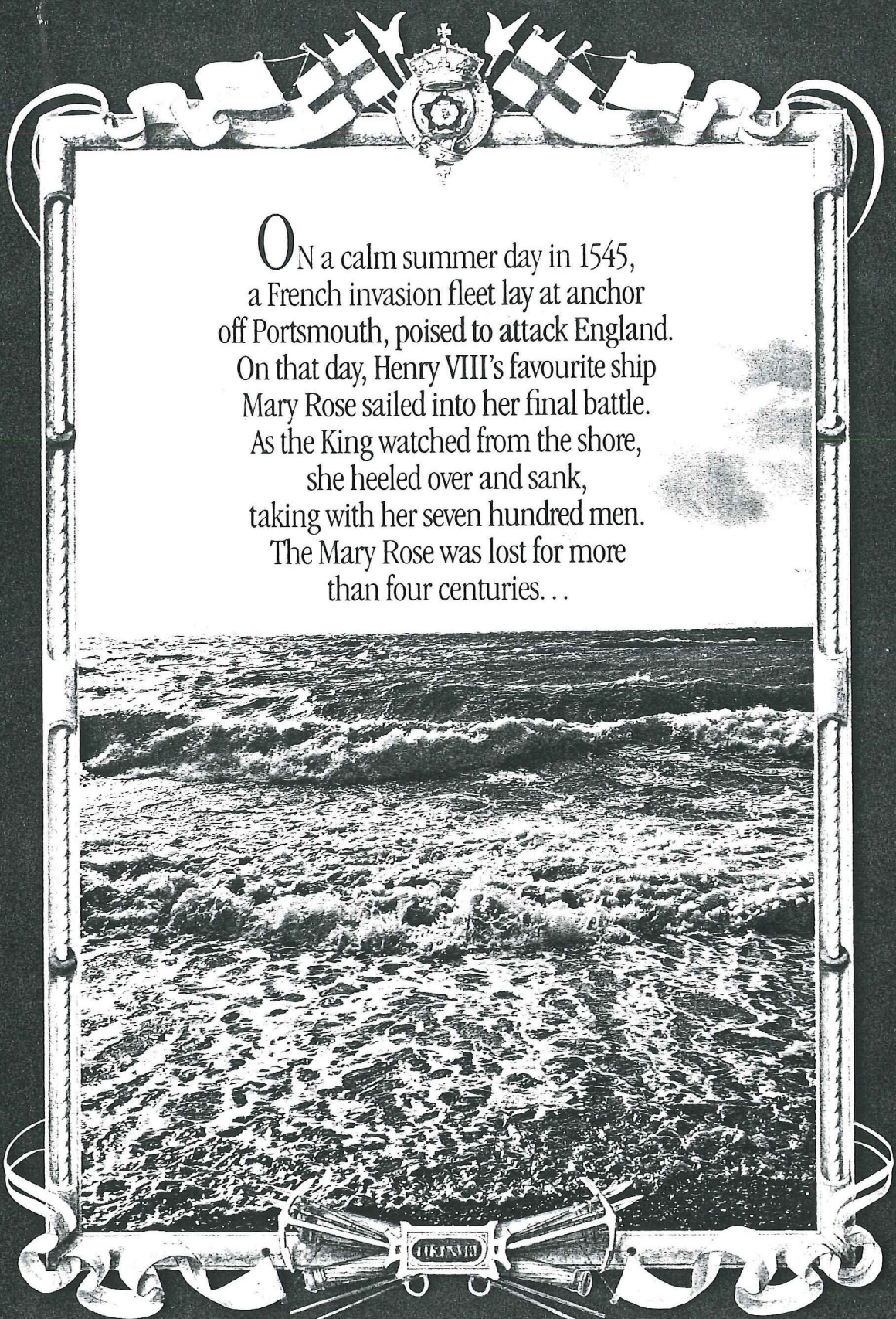


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ON a calm summer day in 1545,
a French invasion fleet lay at anchor
off Portsmouth, poised to attack England.
On that day, Henry VIII's favourite ship
Mary Rose sailed into her final battle.
As the King watched from the shore,
she heeled over and sank,
taking with her seven hundred men.
The Mary Rose was lost for more
than four centuries. . .



Mary Rose

LIFESTYLES IN A TUDOR SHIP

Life on the Mary Rose was a matter of contrasts, differences in lifestyle between the small number of senior officers assigned to the Mary Rose and that of the ship's regular mariners.

Evidence of these differing lifestyles survives not so much in the construction of what would necessarily have been spartan accommodation offered by the ship itself, more in the hundreds of objects which would have been in everyday use.

Many of the objects went on display in 1984 when the Mary Rose Exhibition was opened by H. R.H. the Prince of Wales.

Typifying the social gulf: the elegant wine flagons used by officers by comparison with the workaday wooden tankards from which most of the crew drank their ale.

One of the fine pewter plates found in the Mary Rose carried the family arms of Viscount Lisle, High Admiral of England, whose flagship was the larger Henry Grace à Dieu. A keepsake of some formal meal on the eve of battle?

No such luxury outside the senior officers' quarters. There, a series of crudely scratched marks may have been the only

identification on the crude wooden tableware.

For a small privileged section of the ship's company, there were fashionably-cut clothes, trimmed with silk braids; elegant shoes and thigh-length boots, meals of chicken or venison served on pewterware; books for study in spare time – and bunks for the hours of sleep.

For the majority, there were clothes made of linen, leather and wool, the simplest of footwear (if any) meals eaten from wooden platters and the discomfort of lice, fleas and dirt. As for sleep, this would have amounted to a few hours of discomfort on the decks of the ship, cushioned by, at best, little more than a mattress of straw.

As for wages, few records survive. But the gold 'angel' (example pictured) was significant among the coins recovered from the Mary Rose. It was worth 6s 8d in an era of relatively stable monetary values.

By comparison, an angel would have represented a month's pay for a sailor, while some years earlier it had been quoted as the *daily* rate for a vice-admiral.

Two virtually-intact cabins discovered on the main deck belonged to the ship's barber-surgeon.

In Tudor times, barbers and surgeons belonged to the same guild. At sea, a surgeon and his mate would cope with everything from a haircut to an amputation. The surgeon also had to be skilled in pharmacy.



Syringe and bowl from the barber-surgeon's cabin.

In his cramped quarters, the Mary Rose barber-surgeon contended with the disease and infection which broke out from time to time in the crowded and unhygienic conditions. In battle, with a two-ton bronze gun pounding on the deck above, he would also have to deal with horrific wounds.

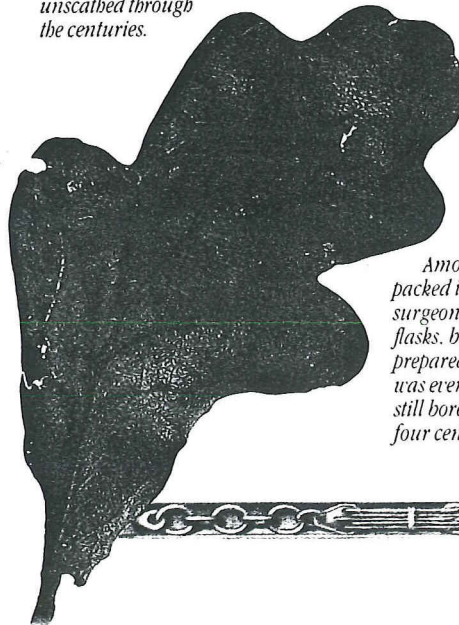
His steel surgical tools have not survived, but wooden handles indicate the presence of cauterising tools for sterilising wounds. A six-inch turned handle probably belonged to an amputation knife or saw.

Other implements include a massive mallet, razors, a whetstone – and three syringes probably used to treat venereal disease.



These angels, delicately carved in bone, were found in a chest on the main deck. They may have formed part of the spine of a book.

More than 437 autumns have passed since this fragile oak leaf found its way onto the Mary Rose. The gentle cocoon of silt has preserved it unscathed through the centuries.



Among the 64 items packed into the barber-surgeon's chest were jars, jugs, flasks, bowls and dressings prepared for battle casualties. There was even a jar in which the ointment still bore fingerprints 'fresh' after four centuries.





The elegance of pewter wine flagons, shown individually (above) and as part of a collection of domestic items recovered from the Mary Rose (below).

FOOD at sea has had a bad reputation: ship's biscuit crawling with weevils; maggots in the meat and shortages of fresh fruit and vegetables.

In 1513, Sir Edward Howard wrote from the Mary Rose: "The victuals are bad and scantie." This may have been true at the time, but the men seem to have fared better on their last, fateful sortie from port.

Fresh food was plentiful: pork carcasses, plumstones and a basket of trimmed and prepared fish have been found. There were also bones of pork, beef, mutton and a haunch of venison. The ship was unlikely to have been provisioned for a long voyage, but some barrels of preserved food were included in the stores. Meat and fish preserved in salt could keep for 40 years in ideal conditions!

Rations for the men were monotonous, but ample and likely to have been similar to those listed in the State Papers of James I half a century later: "On Sundays and Tuesdays, one pound of biscuit, one gallon of beer and two pounds of beef with salt for each of the said days. On Mondays and Thursdays, one pound of biscuit, one gallon of beer, one pound of pork with salt and one pint of peas. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, one pound of biscuit, one gallon of beer, one eight part of a sized fish, half a quarter pound of butter and a

quarter of a pound of cheese."

Luckily for crew discipline, the beer drunk by the men was low-alcohol 'small beer', described scathingly by a Frenchman in Shakespeare's *Henry V* as "... sodden water. A drench for sun-rein'd jades, their barley broth."

In the eyes of the French, the English were the creatures of their climate, suffering "agues and coughs and rheumatic distempers."

The English were also regarded as a robust, energetic race, positively enthusiastic about warfare.

Evidence of both these aspects is emerging from the Mary Rose research programme. There is indeed evidence of dietary deficiencies in youth, but also of the formidable power of men trained since childhood in the use of the longbow.

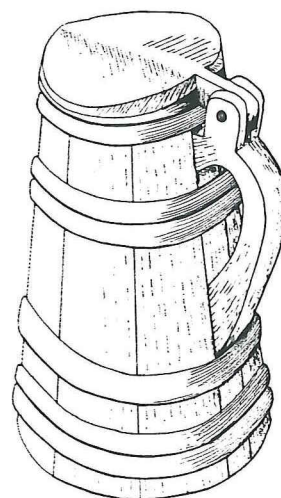
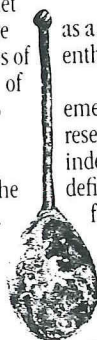
Cooking facilities on the Mary Rose are represented by the remains of the 'kychen', which was found collapsed. The 4,000 bricks that supported the two large cauldrons were scattered. The fire was fuelled by logs. A pair of bellows, a hand broom and two wooden ash boxes were found nearby.

It seems some of the crew sought to supplement a monotonous diet by fishing. Chests were found containing lines, floats and weights.

Tudor seamen were devout – and for practical purposes still Catholics. Although Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1533, religious

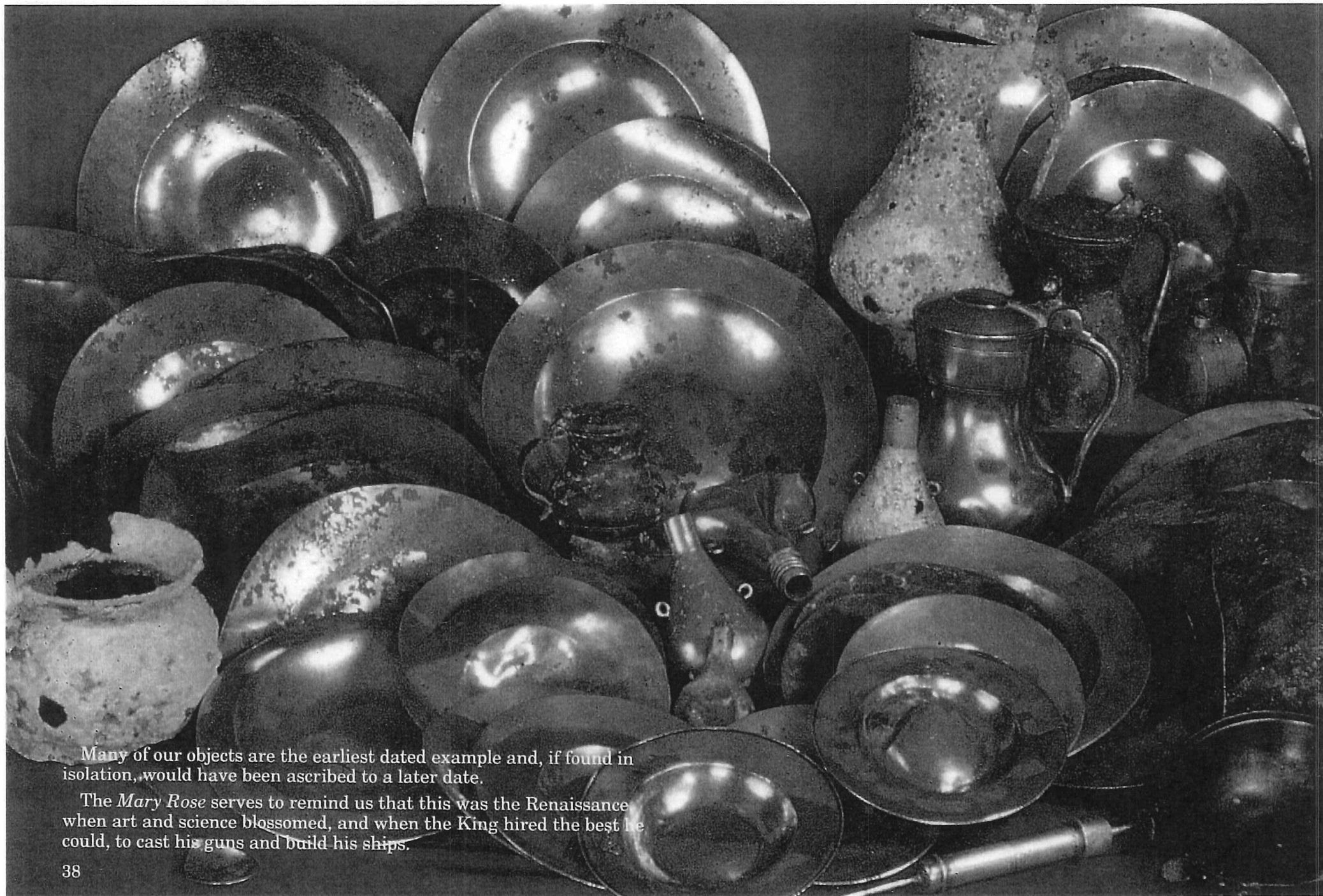
practices did not change until the next century. As early as 1513 priests are recorded as having been paid for ministering at sea and long before that, clerics had combined shipboard and military duties.

Several rosaries have been found – but a more vivid reminder of the everyday importance of religion are the inscriptions discovered on such commonplace objects as drinking vessels. A motif of a gun and carriage scratched on one staved tankard indicates it probably belonged to a gunner. On the lid is inscribed the encouraging motto: "If God is with us, who can stand against us."



The collection includes: (back row, left to right) a wooden bucket, a flagon, a candlestick and a tigg (wooden tankard); (centre) a spice mill; (front row, left to right) a wooden dish, a wooden stoppered bottle, a plate with pewter spoon and wooden knife, a ceramic pot.





Many of our objects are the earliest dated example and, if found in isolation, would have been ascribed to a later date.

The *Mary Rose* serves to remind us that this was the Renaissance when art and science blossomed, and when the King hired the best he could, to cast his guns and build his ships.

