

Theory 1: Human error

This was the first time Sir George Carew had been in command so maybe he was not familiar with how capable his new vessel (ships) was and he gave the order that put the ship in danger. Or perhaps the crew ignored orders or were even unable to understand them which might have led to disaster.

It is claimed that the admiral (Sir George Carew) called out that he had 'a group of men' that he 'could not rule'. This means that he had no control over his men and that they wouldn't listen to him. However, we know this from his cousin who might have been saying this to protect his family name.

It has also been suggested that many of the crew were from overseas, which means they may not have been able to understand instructions given to them.

BUT would one of the largest ships in Henry VIII's fleet be given and unruly (not listening and being out of control) crew?



Theory 2: The weather

Did a gust of wind hit the sails at an important moment making the ship unstable? Eye witness accounts described a sudden breeze as the Mary Rose made a turn causing her to capsize (turn over).

With the gunports opened for battle, the ship could have flooded and begun to sink very quickly. Why hadn't she ever flooded before? Is it because she had become too heavy after a refit which had added extra guns onboard?



Theory 3: The French

A French officer who was there at the battle said that the Mary Rose had been sunk by French guns. A cannonball hole in the hull (the main part of the ship) would allow water to flood in, making the ship unstable and causing her to sink.

Perhaps that is why the ship turned so suddenly, trying to get back to the shallower water at Spitbank (a fort) which was only a few hundred metres away.

A cannonball made of granite (which the French used) was found in the Mary Rose. However, it could have been an English cannonball as they used granite too. Were the French trying to make themselves look better by telling people they had sunk Henry's greatest ship?



Theory 4: Overloading

Was the Mary Rose overloaded (too heavy) with heavy guns or extra soldiers? If so, a strong gust of wind could have pushed her over into the sea.

The guns had been put aboard in London, so she managed to travel the English Channel without any problems so why did she sink in the Solent River? She'd also carried large numbers of soldiers before; in 1513 she had been able to carry 1,000 soldiers to Flodden Field in Northumberland, so why would 500 (or even 700) make her more likely to sink?

