What happened to the ‘Vasa’ almost immediately after she was launched?

From the seventeenth-century empire of Sweden, the story of a galleon that sank at the start of her maiden voyage in 1628 must be one of the strangest tales of the sea.

For nearly three and a half centuries, she lay at the bottom of Stockholm harbor until her discovery in 1956.

This was the Vasa, the royal flagship of the great imperial fleet.

King Gustavus Adolphus, ‘The Northern Hurricane’, then at the height of his military success in the Thirty Years’ War, had dictated her measurements and armament.

Triple gun decks mounted sixty-four bronze cannons.

She was intended to play a leading role in the growing might of Sweden.

As she was prepared for her maiden voyage on August 10, 1628, Stockholm was in a ferment.

From the Skeppsbron and surrounding islands, the people watched this thing of beauty begin to spread her sails and catch the wind.

They had labored for three years to produce this floating work of art; she was more richly carved and ornamented than any previous ship.

The high stern castle was a riot of carved gods, demons, knights, kings, warriors, mermaids, cherubs, and zoomorphic animal shapes ablaze with red gold and blue, symbols of courage, power, and cruelty, which were portrayed to stir the imaginations of the superstitious sailors of the day.

Then the cannons of the anchored warships thundered a salute to which the Vasa fired in reply.

As she emerged from her drifting cloud of gun smoke with the water churned to foam beneath her bow, her flags flying, pennants waving, sails filling in the breeze, and the red and gold of her superstructure ablaze with color, she presented a more majestic spectacle than Stockholmers had ever seen before.

All gun ports were open, and the muzzles peeped wickedly from them.

As the wind freshened, there came a sudden squall, and the ship made a strange movement, listing to port.

The Ordnance Officer ordered all the port cannons to be heaved to starboard to counteract the list, but the steepening angle of the decks increased.

Then the sound of rumbling thunder reached the watchers on the shore, as cargo, ballast, ammunition, and 400 people went sliding and crashing down to the port side of the steeply listing ship.

The lower gun ports were now below water, and the inrush sealed the ship’s fate.

In that first glorious hour, the mighty Vasa, which was intended to rule the Baltic, sank with all flags flying—in the harbor of her birth.

The Vasa was regarded as an important ship when she was built because she had been designed by Gustavus Adolphus and she had been decorated more richly than any other ship.

It took three years to build the Vasa.

She is described as a ‘floating work of art’ because she was almost covered with carvings and ornaments.

The galleon they made for the film was a replica of one of the large wooden sailing ships that came from Spain in the seventeenth century.

The woman didn’t do any of the cooking herself, but she dictated the kinds of menu that she wanted the chef to prepare.

Very few countries could resist the might of the Roman army at the height of the Roman Empire.

Like the *Vasa*, the English ship, the *Mary Rose*, also sank on her maiden voyage.

The week before the coronation, the whole city was in a ferment of excitement.

Modern cartoons make great use of zoomorphic animal figures—pigs that can speak, lions that wear royal clothes, snakes that are evil robbers, and so on.

As we came up the road, we recognized the house we were looking for; it was ablaze with lights.

In British history, King Richard III is usually portrayed as a wicked man.

The large wheels of the ferry boat churned up the water so much that small boats were in danger of being swamped.

As we sailed out of the enclosed harbor into the open sea, the wind freshened a great deal.

The weather had been beautiful, so we were surprised when a sudden squall blew up from the south, bringing some rain with it.

The men unloaded the ballast of rock from the boat before filling it with grain.

As they threw open the large doors, there was a great inrush of bitterly cold air.

The cruiser had already been hit badly by two torpedoes, but a third torpedo which hit her right in the engine room sealed the ship’s fate.

As the people of Stockholm watched the Vasa spread her sails, she looked magnificent, her high stern castle carved with figures and animal shapes in bright colors.

The cannon of anchored warships thundered a salute which the Vasa’s guns answered, and as she emerged from the gun smoke, she looked even more majestic.

Suddenly, the ship was hit by a squall and stopped at port.

As she did, the watchers on shore heard the noise as cargo, ballast, and people crashed to the port side.

The moment the lower gunports went below water, the sea rushed in, and she sank.

When a ship sank in the past, there were extreme difficulties in salvaging the wreck.

Quite clearly, that was true of a ship that sank in very deep water—and indeed it still is.

But even if a ship sank in relatively shallow water, in a harbor, for example, there was very little hope of recovering any lost treasure or indeed of recovering anything else from the wreck.

In most cases, even the bodies of men who went down with the ship would remain in it.

Modern diving techniques, of course, have made salvaging far less difficult.

A shipwreck can be discovered and investigated by sonar, and skin divers can go down and investigate the wreck before any serious salvage work is begun.

The same modern diving techniques have also meant that hunting for treasure can be carried out not only by experts but also by amateurs.

So, quite a lot of amateur divers spend their weekends and holidays diving for ‘treasure’.

What kinds of treasure can be recovered?

And where from?

Not surprisingly, there are shipwrecks all around the coast of Great Britain and other islands in the world.

The Mediterranean Sea, too, is an excellent hunting ground for salvagers and treasure hunters.

Many of the Roman and Greek ships at the bottom of the sea are full of works of art.

The sea off the coast of Florida and around the Bahamas is another hunting ground, this time for gold from Spanish galleons.

Many shipwrecks, of course, do not contain treasure in terms of gold, silver, jewels, or works of art.

But they all contain another kind of ‘treasure’: they contain the weapons used on ships (the cannon, swords, and so on), everyday articles of clothing (shoes, leather belts, etc.) and items of everyday use (plates, bottles, etc.).

All of these ‘treasures’ teach us a great deal about the history of the time.

I heard him open the door and step into the room.

I noticed someone turn away from the crowd and take out a mobile phone.

Did you see anyone leave by the back door?

They had labored for three years...

Since 1628, few attempts have been made to salvage the *Vasa*.

In the deep, dark forest, st there lived an old man who was said to be a hundred years old.

There seemed little point in speaking to him because he was not going to change his mind.

We all went shopping last Saturday.

Shall we go swimming this afternoon?

We won’t go sailing again until next July.

The people watched this thing of beauty begin to spread her sails.

You should know better than to spread such rumors.

Spread some jam on your bread.

Help me spread the tablecloth.

They had labored for three years to produce this floating work of art.

The inspector asked me to produce my ticket.

Who produced this play?

This country does not produce enough wheat for its needs.

All gun ports were open, and the muzzles peeped wickedly from them.

I opened the door and peered into the darkness.

I’ve been so busy, I haven’t even glanced at today’s newspapers.

I just caught a glimpse of a face at the window.

The loss of the Vasa had been known for centuries.

At the launch of the Vasa, the people of Stockholm must have been very impressed by the spectacle.

The Vasa was listed to one side because the cannon made one side of the ship too heavy.

Once the propellers were no longer above the surface, it was impossible to prevent the Vasa from sinking.

How long has the Vasa lain at the bottom of Stockholm harbor?

First, they labored. Then they produced this floating work of art.

The cannons thundered a salute which the Vasa replied to.

The mighty Vasa sank in the harbor where she was born.

This must be one of the strangest stories of the sea.

She was intended to play a leading role in the growing power of Sweden.

As she prepared for her maiden voyage, Stockholm was in a state of high excitement.

The Ordnance Officer ordered all the port cannons to be pulled to starboard.