

= HMS Esk (H15) =

HMS Esk was an E-class destroyer built for the Royal Navy in the early 1930s . She was designed to be easily converted into a fast minelayer by removing some guns and her torpedo tubes . Although assigned to the Home Fleet upon completion , the ship was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet in 1935 , during the Abyssinia Crisis . During the Spanish Civil War of 1936 - 1939 , she spent considerable time in Spanish waters , enforcing the arms blockade imposed by Britain and France on both sides of the conflict . Esk was converted to a minelayer when World War II began in September 1939 , and spent most of her time laying mines . During the Norwegian Campaign of April - June 1940 , the ship laid mines in Norwegian territorial waters before the Germans invaded , but was recalled to home waters to resume her minelaying duties in early May . During one such sortie , Esk was sunk during the Texel Disaster on the night of 31 August 1940 , when she ran into a newly laid German minefield .

= = Description = =

The E-class ships were slightly improved versions of the preceding D class . They displaced 1,405 long tons (1,428 t) at standard load and 1,940 long tons (1,970 t) at deep load . The ships had an overall length of 329 feet (100 .3 m) , a beam of 33 feet 3 inches (10 .1 m) and a draught of 12 feet 6 inches (3 .8 m) . They were powered by two Parsons geared steam turbines , each driving one propeller shaft , using steam provided by three Admiralty three-drum boilers . The turbines developed a total of 36,000 shaft horsepower (27,000 kW) and gave a maximum speed of 35 .5 knots (65 .7 km / h ; 40 .9 mph) . Esk carried a maximum of 480 long tons (490 t) of fuel oil that gave her a range of 6,350 nautical miles (11,760 km ; 7,310 mi) at 15 knots (28 km / h ; 17 mph) . The ships ' complement was 145 officers and ratings .

The ships mounted four 45-calibre 4 .7-inch (120 mm) Mark IX guns in single mounts . For anti-aircraft (AA) defence , they had two quadruple Mark I mounts for the 0 .5-inch Vickers Mark III machine gun . The E class was fitted with two above-water quadruple torpedo tube mounts for 21-inch (533 mm) torpedoes . One depth charge rail and two throwers were fitted ; 20 depth charges were originally carried , but this increased to 35 shortly after the war began . To compensate for the weight of her 60 Mark XIV mines and their rails , two of Esk 's 4 .7-inch guns , their ammunition , both sets of torpedo tubes , her whalers and their davits had to be removed . She was given small sponsons at the stern to ensure smooth delivery of her mines .

= = Construction and career = =

The ship was ordered 1 November 1932 , from Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson at Wallsend under the 1931 Naval Programme , for use as a destroyer that could quickly be converted for use as a minelayer when required . She was laid down on 24 March 1933 , and launched on 19 March 1934 . The ship was commissioned on 28 September 1934 , at a total cost of £ 247 ,279 , excluding government-furnished equipment like the armament . The ship accompanied the Home Fleet during its West Indies cruise between January and March 1935 . Esk was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet from September 1935 to March 1936 , during the Abyssinian Crisis . The ship patrolled Spanish waters during the Spanish Civil War , enforcing the edicts of the Non-Intervention Committee until March 1939 , when she returned to the United Kingdom . During the Munich Crisis , Esk and her sister ship HMS Express were temporarily attached to the 9th Destroyer Flotilla at the Nore , and practiced minelaying on 3 October 1938 . Esk was reduced to reserve on 24 June 1939 , and was not recommissioned until 2 August . She attended the Reserve Fleet Review on the 15th , and then began conversion as a minelayer beginning on 28 August .

The conversion was completed on 7 September 1939 , and the ship was assigned to the 20th Destroyer Flotilla the next day . Esk laid mines in the Heligoland Bight with her sister Express on the

night of 9 / 10 September . She escorted the battleship Royal Sovereign from Scapa Flow to Portsmouth from 23 ? 26 September , and then conducted minelaying operations from Milford Haven and Portsmouth through December . On 17 ? 18 December , Esk , Express , HMS Intrepid and Ivanhoe laid 240 mines off the mouth of the Ems . She was refitted at Portsmouth from 29 December to 26 January 1940 .

After the completion of her refit , Esk escorted the auxiliary minelayers HMS Princess Victoria and HMS Teviot Bank for the next six months , as they laid mines in the East Coast Barrier , as well as making occasional minelaying sorties of her own . On 3 March , Esk , Express , HMS Icarus and HMS Impulsive laid mines near Horns Reef in the Heligoland Bight , that sank the German submarine U @-@ 44 about 13 March . The ship was assigned to the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow at the beginning of April , and was allocated to " Force WV " with the ships of the 20th Flotilla for Operation Wilfred , an operation to lay mines in the Vestfjord to prevent the transport of Swedish iron ore from Narvik to Germany . On 5 April , " Force WV " sailed from Scapa Flow , escorted by the destroyers HMS Hardy , HMS Havock , HMS Hotspur and HMS Hunter of the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla . The ships of the 20th Destroyer Flotilla laid 234 mines in Vestfjord on the morning of 8 April , and later rendezvoused with the battlecruiser HMS Renown . On the 15th , she returned to Scapa Flow , escorting the battleship Rodney .

On 10 May , Esk , Express , Intrepid and Princess Victoria laid 236 mines off Bergen , North Holland , and on 15 May , she joined with Express and Ivanhoe to lay 164 mines off the Hook of Holland . Three German minesweepers , M 61 , M 89 , and M 136 , were sunk by this minefield on 26 July . The ship joined the evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk on 29 May . Esk evacuated 3904 troops between 29 May and 3 June , including over 1 @,@ 000 French troops rescued from the TSS Scotia , which was sinking after German air attacks . After repairs to the minor damage suffered by the ship during the evacuation , she resumed her previous duties .

On 31 August 1940 , she sailed with Intrepid , Icarus , Ivanhoe and Express to lay a minefield off the Dutch coast , north of Texel . Express hit a mine in a newly @-@ laid German field that night and had her bow blown off . Esk closed to assist her and almost immediately struck another mine . Some 15 minutes later , there was another explosion amidships which caused Esk to break in two , and she quickly sank in position 53 ° 26 ? 36 ? N 03 ° 48 ? 00 ? E. Ivanhoe rescued some survivors , but 127 of the ship 's company were killed .