

= HMT Royal Edward =

RMS ( later HMT ) Royal Edward was a passenger ship belonging to the Canadian Northern Steamship Company that was sunk during the First World War with a large loss of life while transporting Commonwealth troops . She was launched in 1907 as RMS Cairo for a British mail service to Egypt .

= = Design and construction = =

Cairo and sister ship Heliopolis were built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company of Govan , Scotland . Cairo was launched in July 1907 and entered service in January 1908 . As built , she was 160 @. @ 3 metres ( 525 ft 11 in ) long ( overall ) and 18 @. @ 4 metres ( 60 ft 4 in ) abeam . She was powered by three steam turbines that drove three propeller shafts , at up to 19 knots ( 35 km / h ) . She could accommodate up to 1 @, @ 114 passengers in three classes : 344 in first class , 210 in second class , and 560 in third .

= = Prewar career = =

Cairo entered service for the Egyptian Mail Steamship Company , a British @-@ owned company that provided a fast mail service between Marseilles and Alexandria . The service was not successful and Cairo and sister ship Heliopolis were laid up in 1909 when the service ended .

Both ships were sold to the newly established Toronto @-@ based Canadian Northern Steamship Company , a subsidiary of the Canadian Northern Railway , in 1910 , operating under its Royal Line brand . Cairo was renamed Royal Edward , Heliopolis Royal George , and they were refitted for the North Atlantic . Royal Edward sailed from Avonmouth to Montreal in the summer and to Halifax in the winter . At the outbreak of World War I Royal Edward and Royal George were requisitioned for use as troopships .

= = World War I = =

Royal Edward was used to bring Canadian troops to Europe before being used as an internment ship anchored off Southend @-@ on @-@ Sea .

On 28 July 1915 , Royal Edward embarked 1 @, @ 367 officers and men at Avonmouth . The majority were reinforcements for the British 29th Infantry , with members of the Royal Army Medical Corps . All were destined for Gallipoli . Royal Edward was reported off the Lizard on the evening of the 28th , and had arrived at Alexandria on 10 August , a day after sister ship Royal George had sailed from Devonport . Royal Edward sailed for Mudros on the island of Lemnos , a staging point for the Dardanelles .

On the morning of 13 August , Royal Edward passed the British hospital ship Soudan , heading in the opposite direction . Oberleutnant zur See Heino von Heimburg in the German submarine UB @-@ 14 was off the island of Kandeloussa and saw both ships . He allowed Soudan to pass unmolested , and focused his attention on the unescorted Royal Edward some 6 nautical miles ( 11 km ) off Kandeloussa . He launched one of UB @-@ 14 's two torpedoes from about a mile ( 2 km ) away and hit Royal Edward in the stern . She sank by the stern within six minutes .

Royal Edward was able to get off an SOS before losing power , and Soudan arrived on the scene at 10 : 00 after making a 180 ° turn and rescued 440 men in six hours . Two French destroyers and some trawlers rescued another 221 . According to authors James Wise and Scott Baron , Royal Edward 's death toll was 935 and was high because Royal Edward had just completed a boat drill and the majority of the men were below decks re @-@ stowing their equipment . Other sources report different numbers of casualties , from 132 to 1 @, @ 386 or 1 @, @ 865 . An admiralty casualty list , published in The Times in September 1915 , named 13 officers and 851 troops as missing believed drowned , a total of 864 lost .