

= HMS Empress (1914) =

HMS Empress was a seaplane carrier of the Royal Navy (RN) that served during World War I. Converted from the Cross Channel packet ship Empress , the ship 's aircraft conducted aerial reconnaissance , observation and bombing missions in the North Sea and Eastern Mediterranean . During the last year of the war , she conducted anti submarine patrols in the Mediterranean . Empress was returned to her owners in 1919 and was then sold to a French company in 1923 . She was scrapped in 1933 .

= = Description = =

Empress had an overall length of 323 feet (98 m) , a beam of 41 feet (12 m) , and a draught of 15 feet (4 m) . She displaced 2 ,540 long tons (2 ,580 t) and was rated at 1 ,694 gross register tons (GRT) . Each of the ship 's three sets of direct drive steam turbines drove one propeller shaft . The ship 's six boilers generated enough steam to produce 8 ,800 shaft horsepower (6 ,600 kW) from the turbines . The ship had a designed speed of 18 knots (33 km / h ; 21 mph) , but she made a speed of 22 to 26 knots (41 to 48 km / h ; 25 to 62 mph) during her sea trials with 8 ,872 shaft horsepower (6 ,616 kW) . Empress carried 425 tonnes (418 long tons) of coal , enough to give her a range of 1 ,355 nautical miles (2 ,509 km ; 1 ,559 mi) at 15 knots (28 km / h ; 17 mph) .

= = Service = =

Built as a fast packet for the South East and Chatham Railway Co . , Empress was requisitioned for service during World War I by the Admiralty on 11 August 1914 , and was commissioned on 25 August . During that month , the ship transported equipment for the Eastchurch Squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service to Ostend , Belgium . Beginning on 30 August , she was converted by Chatham Dockyard to carry and operate three seaplanes . One aircraft was stowed forward and two aft , housed in canvas hangars , and handled with newly fitted cargo booms . During her career with the RN , the ship operated Fairey Hamble Baby , Short Admiralty Type 74 , Short Type 184 , Sopwith Schneider and Baby floatplanes . Two or three quick firing (QF) two pounder guns also were fitted at this time . Upon completion of the modifications on 30 September , Empress was assigned to the Harwich Force along with Engadine and Riviera . On Christmas Day 1914 , nine aircraft from all three ships took part in the Cuxhaven Raid on hangars housing Zeppelin airships . Seven of the nine seaplanes successfully took off for the attack , but they inflicted little damage . Only three of the aircraft returned to be recovered , but the crews of the other three ditched safely and were recovered by a British submarine and the Dutch trawler Marta van Hattem .

From 9 May to 18 July 1915 , the ship was modified by Cunard at Liverpool with a permanent , four aircraft , hangar in the rear superstructure and a pair of cranes were mounted at the rear of the hangar to hoist the seaplanes in and out of the water . The 2 pounders were apparently removed during this refit and four QF 12 pounder 12 cwt guns , each with 130 rounds , and two Vickers QF 3 pounder anti aircraft guns , each with 65 rounds , were fitted . Empress was transferred afterwards to Queenstown for the rest of the year , before moving to the Mediterranean . She arrived there in January 1916 and was assigned to the East Indies and Egypt Seaplane Squadron with the carriers Raven II , Anne , and Ben my Chree . The squadron was under the command of the General Officer Commanding , Egypt and its primary duty was watch and to attack Turkish positions and movements in southern Palestine and the Sinai in early 1916 . In April , Empress was detached from the squadron to support operations off the Aegean coast of Bulgaria , where her aircraft observed for several naval bombardments . After a refit at Genoa , the ship rejoined the squadron and supported operations off the Syrian and Palestinian coasts until November . In January 1918 , she was assigned anti submarine duties , first at Port Said and later at Gibraltar .

She was returned to her owners in November 1919 and was sold to the Société Anonyme de

Gérance et d 'Armament of France in 1923 . On 12 January 1926 , Empress collided with the British schooner John Gibson in the English Channel and sank her . Empress was scrapped in France in 1933 .