

= HMS Empress of India =

HMS Empress of India was one of seven Royal Sovereign class pre dreadnought battleships built for the Royal Navy during the 1890s . The ship was commissioned in 1893 and served as the flagship of the second in command of the Channel Fleet for two years . She was transferred to the Mediterranean Fleet in 1897 , during which time Empress of India was assigned to the International Squadron blockading Crete during the uprising there . She returned home in 1901 and was briefly assigned as a coast guard ship in Ireland before she became the second flagship of the Home Fleet . The ship was reduced to reserve in 1905 and accidentally collided with the submarine HMS A10 the following year . Empress of India was taken out of service in early 1912 and accidentally struck a German sailing ship while under tow . She was sunk as a target ship in 1913 .

= Design and description =

The design of the Royal Sovereign class ships was derived from that of the Admiral class ironclad battleships , greatly enlarged to improve seakeeping and to provide space for a secondary armament as in the preceding Trafalgar class ironclad battleships . The ships displaced 14,150 long tons (14,380 t) at normal load and 15,580 long tons (15,830 t) at deep load . They had a length between perpendiculars of 380 feet (115.8 m) and an overall length of 410 feet 6 inches (125.1 m) , a beam of 75 feet (22.9 m) , and a draught of 27 feet 6 inches (8.4 m) . As a flagship , Empress of India 's crew consisted of 692 officers and ratings in 1903 .

The Royal Sovereigns were powered by a pair of three cylinder , vertical triple expansion steam engines , each driving one shaft . Their Humphrys & Tennant engines were designed to produce a total of 11,000 indicated horsepower (8,200 kW) and a maximum speed of 17.5 knots (32.4 km / h ; 20.1 mph) using steam provided by eight cylindrical boilers with forced draught . The ships carried a maximum of 1,420 long tons (1,443 t) of coal which gave them a range of 4,720 nautical miles (8,740 km ; 5,430 mi) at a speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) .

Their main armament consisted of four breech loading (BL) 13.5 inch (343 mm) guns mounted in two twin gun barbettes , one each fore and aft of the superstructure . Each gun was provided with 80 rounds . Their secondary armament consisted of ten quick firing (QF) 6 inch (152 mm) guns . 200 rounds per gun were carried by the ships . Sixteen QF 6 pounder (2 in (57 mm)) and a dozen QF 3 pounder (1 in (47 mm)) Hotchkiss guns were fitted for defence against torpedo boats . The two 3 pounders in the upper fighting top were removed in 1903 ? 04 and all of the remaining light guns from the lower fighting tops and main deck followed in 1905 ? 09 . The Royal Sovereign class ships mounted seven 14 inch (356 mm) torpedo tubes , although Empress of India had four of hers removed in 1902 .

The Royal Sovereigns ' armour scheme was similar to that of the Trafalgars , as the waterline belt of compound armour only protected the area between the barbettes . The 14 ? 18 inch (356 ? 457 mm) belt and transverse bulkheads 14 ? 16 inches (356 ? 406 mm) thick closed off the ends of the belt . Above the belt was a strake of 4 inch (102 mm) nickel steel armour closed off by 3 inch (76 mm) transverse bulkheads . The barbettes were protected by compound armour , ranging in thickness from 11 to 17 inches (279 to 432 mm) and the casemates for the 6 inch guns had a thickness equal to their diameter . The thicknesses of the armour deck ranged from 2.5 to 3 inches (64 to 76 mm) . The walls of the forward conning tower were 12 ? 14 inches (305 ? 356 mm) thick and the aft conning tower was protected by 3 inch plates .

= Construction and career =

HMS Empress of India , named after a regnal title of Queen Victoria , was the first ship of her name

to serve in the Royal Navy . She was ordered under the Naval Defence Act Programme of 1889 with the name of Renown and was laid down on 9 July 1889 at Pembroke Dockyard . The ship was renamed before she was launched on 7 May 1891 by Louise Margaret , Duchess of Connaught and Strathearn . One man was killed when a cable snapped the following day . The ship was then transferred to Chatham Dockyard , where she was completed in August 1893 , at a cost of £ 912 @, @ 612 .

Empress of India was commissioned at Chatham on 11 September 1893 to relieve the ironclad battleship Anson as the flagship of the second @-@ in @-@ command of the Channel Fleet . She participated in annual manoeuvres in the Irish Sea and English Channel as a unit of the " Blue Fleet " , 2 ? 5 August 1894 . Sometime during the year , the ship was fitted with bilge keels to reduce her rolling . In June 1895 , Empress of India was among the ships representing the Royal Navy at the opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal in Germany . That summer , the ship again took part in annual manoeuvres , held from 24 July to 30 August 1895 . She became a private ship in December 1895 and was paid off at Chatham on 7 June 1897 . The following day , Empress of India recommissioned for service with the Mediterranean Fleet . Before departing , she took part in the Fleet Review for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria at Spithead on 26 June .

The ship arrived at Malta to begin her Mediterranean service in August . In August and September 1898 , she was part of the International Squadron blockading Crete during the Greco @-@ Turkish uprising there . The ship was relieved by the battleship Implacable on 14 September 1901 and departed Gibraltar homebound on 3 October . On 12 October , Empress of India paid off at Devonport , but she recommissioned the next day under the command of Captain Henry Louis Fleet , to relieve the ironclad battleship Howe at Queenstown , Ireland , as both the coast guard ship there and as flagship to Rear @-@ Admiral Edmund Jeffreys , Senior Naval Officer , Coast of Ireland Station . The ship began an extensive refit at Plymouth in early March 1902 . During this refit her upper deck six @-@ inch guns received casemates to improve their protection .

Empress of India was assigned to the Home Fleet on 7 May 1902 , in which she served as flagship in port and as flagship of the second @-@ in @-@ command when the fleet was at sea . The ship participated in the Coronation Fleet Review of King Edward VII in August . Empress of India served as flagship of " B Fleet " during combined manoeuvres of the Home Fleet , Mediterranean Fleet , and Channel Fleets off Portugal from 5 August to 9 August 1903 , but her port engine broke down for 14 hours and the fleet had to leave her behind . Her sister ship Royal Oak relieved her as flagship of the second @-@ in @-@ command of the Home Fleet on 1 June 1904 , and she became a private ship . The battleship Hannibal relieved her on 22 February 1905 , and the ship paid off the next day .

That same day , Empress of India recommissioned in reserve at Devonport and relieved the battleship Barfleur as flagship of the new Fleet in Commission in Reserve at Home . In July 1905 she participated in Reserve Fleet manoeuvres . In September 1905 , the protected cruiser Aeolus relieved her of her duties , but she recommissioned on 31 October 1905 with a new nucleus crew to resume her Reserve Fleet duties . She then underwent a refit that lasted into 1906 . Empress of India collided with the submarine A10 in Plymouth Sound on 30 April 1906 .

When the Reserve Fleet was abolished in February 1907 and became the Home Fleet , Empress of India continued her service as flagship , but now for the Rear @-@ Admiral , Devonport Division . On 25 May she was relieved as flagship by the protected cruiser Niobe . Three days later , the ship recommissioned as a special service vessel . Empress of India relieved her sister ship Royal Oak as parent ship of the special service vessels in November 1911 . On 2 March , the ship left Portsmouth under tow by the armoured cruiser Warrior , en route to the Motherbank , where she was to be laid up , but she collided with the German barque Winderhudder en route and had to return to Portsmouth for repairs . She finally arrived at the Motherbank two months later and was laid up , awaiting disposal .

= = Sinking = =

On 4 November 1913 , Empress of India was used as a target ship in firing trials in Lyme Bay that

were primarily intended to give officers and men an idea of the effect of live shell against a real target . A secondary objective was to look at the problems caused by several ships firing at the same target at the same time . The first ship to engage the stationary Empress of India was the light cruiser Liverpool , this was followed by two dreadnought battleships (Thunderer and Orion) and the pre - dreadnought battleship King Edward VII , and finally four dreadnought battleships (Neptune , King George V , Thunderer , and Vanguard) . By 16 : 45 , " Empress of India was blazing furiously and down by the stern , sinking at " 18 : 30 . She had received forty 4 12 inch (305 mm) and 13 5 inch (343 mm) hits and " it is not surprising that an elderly ship sank , " though the intention had been to repeat the firing at longer range before she did .

When Empress of India sank , she settled upside down on the seabed , and some salvage was soon carried out by a Jersey company which owned the rights to the vessel . A big hole in her side was made not by a shell , but by salvage divers removing a condenser . " The wreck is accessible and is a deep dive for recreational divers .

Details of the firing are given in the table below .