

= HMS Glowworm (H92) =

HMS Glowworm was a G class destroyer built for the Royal Navy in the mid 1930s . During the Spanish Civil War the ship spent part of 1936 and 1937 in Spanish waters , enforcing the arms blockade imposed by Britain and France on both sides of the conflict . Glowworm was transferred from the Mediterranean Fleet shortly after the beginning of World War II to the British Isles , to escort shipping in local waters . In March 1940 , she was transferred to the Home Fleet , just in time to participate in the opening stages of the Norwegian Campaign . On 8 April 1940 Glowworm encountered German destroyers transporting troops to invade Norway in Operation Weserübung . The destroyers attempted to disengage while calling for help from the heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper . Glowworm was heavily damaged by Admiral Hipper , but still attempted to torpedo the German ship . The two ships collided , which broke the bow off Glowworm , and she sank shortly afterwards .

= = Description = =

Glowworm displaced 1 ,@ 350 long tons (1 ,@ 370 t) at standard load and 1 ,@ 883 long tons (1 ,@ 913 t) at deep load . The ship had an overall length of 323 feet (98 @. 5 m) , a beam of 33 feet (10 @. 1 m) and a draught of 12 feet 5 inches (3 @. 8 m) . She was powered by Parsons geared steam turbines , driving two shafts , which developed a total of 34 ,@ 000 shaft horsepower (25 ,@ 000 kW) and gave a maximum speed of 36 knots (67 km / h ; 41 mph) . Steam for the turbines was provided by three Admiralty 3 @-@ drum water @-@ tube boilers . Glowworm carried a maximum of 470 long tons (480 t) of fuel oil that gave her a range of 5 ,@ 530 nautical miles (10 ,@ 240 km ; 6 ,@ 360 mi) at 15 knots (28 km / h ; 17 mph) . The ship's complement was 137 officers and men in peacetime .

The ship mounted four 45 @-@ calibre 4 @. 7 @-@ inch (120 mm) Mark IX guns in single mounts . For anti @-@ aircraft defence Glowworm had two quadruple Mark I mounts for the 0 @. 5 inch Vickers Mark III machine gun . She was the test ship for the new quintuple 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 .

= = Operational history = =

= = = Early career = = =

Glowworm was ordered from the yards of John I. Thornycroft and Company , at Woolston , Hampshire on 5 March 1934 under the 1933 Construction Programme . She was laid down on 15 August 1934 and launched on 22 July 1935 . She was completed on 22 January 1936 at a total cost of £ 248 ,@ 785 , excluding government @-@ furnished equipment like the armament . Upon commissioning she was assigned to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla of the Mediterranean Fleet . Glowworm patrolled Spanish waters during the Spanish Civil War enforcing the edicts of the Non @-@ Intervention Committee until she had a refit at Portsmouth between 27 May and 8 June 1937 . The ship returned to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla in the Mediterranean after her brief refit . Glowworm returned to Portsmouth for a longer overhaul between 7 June and 25 July 1938 and escorted the ocean liner SS Strathnaver between Malta and Alexandria during the Munich Crisis in September 1938 . She then escorted the light cruiser Arethusa on her voyage to Aden later that month . During night exercises on 16 May 1939 , Glowworm collided with her sister , Grenade , and was forced to put into Alexandria for temporary repairs . She received permanent repairs in Malta between 23 May and 24 June .

Glowworm was in Alexandria when World War II began in September 1939 . In October the flotilla was transferred to the Western Approaches Command and Glowworm sailed for the UK on 19 October with her sisters Gallant , Grafton , and Greyhound . They arrived at Plymouth on 22 October

and were deployed in the South Western Approaches . Glowworm carried out convoy escort duties and anti @-@ submarine patrols until 12 November when she was transferred to the 22nd Destroyer Flotilla , based at Harwich , for North Sea patrol and escort duties . On 22 February 1940 she was hit by the Swedish ship Rex in fog whilst at anchor off Outer Dowsing . Glowworm suffered significant structural damage and was under repair at a commercial dockyard in Hull until late March . On completion of the repairs , she was transferred back to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla of the Home Fleet , rejoining the flotilla at its base at Scapa Flow on 20 March .

On 5 April Glowworm was part of the escort of the battlecruiser Renown , along with her sisters Greyhound , Hero , and Hyperion . The ships covered the minelaying operation in Norwegian waters , Operation Wilfred . On 7 April , Glowworm was detached from the task force to search for a man lost overboard .

= = = Final battle = = =

On the morning of 8 April 1940 Glowworm was on her way to rejoin Renown when she encountered the German destroyers Z11 Bernd von Arnim and Z18 Hans Lüdemann in the heavy fog before 8 : 00 a.m. The destroyers were part of a German naval detachment , led by the heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper , on its way to land troops at Trondheim as part of the German invasion of Norway (Operation Weserübung) . Glowworm opened fire and the German destroyers attempted to disengage , signalling for help . The request was soon answered by Admiral Hipper which spotted Glowworm at 09 : 50 . Hipper initially had difficulty in distinguishing Glowworm from von Arnim , but opened fire eight minutes later at a range of 8 @,@ 400 metres (9 @,@ 200 yd) with her 20 @.@ 3 @-@ centimetre (8 @.@ 0 in) main guns . Glowworm was hit by Hipper 's fourth salvo and she started making smoke . She turned into her own smoke in an attempt to break visual contact with Hipper , but the cruiser 's radar @-@ directed guns were not affected by the smoke . When the destroyer emerged from her smoke the range was now short enough that the cruiser 's 10 @.@ 5 @-@ centimetre (4 @.@ 1 in) guns could fire . Glowworm 's radio room , bridge , and forward 4 @.@ 7 @-@ inch gun were all destroyed , and she received additional hits in the engine room , the captain 's day cabin , and finally the mast . As this crashed down , it caused a short circuit of the wiring , causing the ship 's siren to start a banshee wail . At 10 : 10 Lieutenant Commander Gerard Broadmead Roope , fired five torpedoes from one mounting at a range of 800 metres (870 yd) , but all missed because Captain Hellmuth Heye had kept Hipper 's bow pointed at Glowworm throughout the battle to minimize his risk from torpedoes . The destroyer fell back through her smoke screen to buy time to get her second torpedo mount working , but Heye followed Glowworm through the smoke to finish her off before she could fire the rest of her torpedoes . The two ships were very close when Hipper emerged from the smoke and Roope ordered a hard turn to starboard to reduce the range and possibly ram the destroyer . Hipper was slow to answer her helm and Glowworm struck the cruiser just abaft the anchor . The collision broke off Glowworm 's bow and the rest of the ship scraped along Hipper 's side , gouging open several holes in the latter 's hull and destroying her forward starboard torpedo mounting . One German sailor was knocked overboard by the collision . Hipper took on some 500 tonnes (490 long tons) of water before the leaks could be isolated , but was not seriously damaged . Glowworm was on fire when she drifted clear and her boilers exploded at 10 : 24 , taking 109 of her crew with her .

Admiral Hipper hove to in order to rescue her man overboard and Glowworm 's survivors . The German sailor was not found , but 40 British sailors were recovered , although at least six later died of their wounds . Lieutenant Ramsay , the senior surviving officer , told his rescuers that neither the helm nor the emergency rudder were manned when the ships collided so the destroyer 's turn towards Hipper was probably accidental . German accounts only mention four torpedoes fired by Glowworm , but British accounts say all ten were fired . This was confirmed by photographic evidence taken after the collision showing all of her torpedo tubes empty .

Roope , who drowned when he could no longer hang on to a rope whilst being pulled up the side of the cruiser , was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross , thus becoming the first VC recipient of the Second World War . The award was justified , in part , by the recommendation of Heye , who

wrote to the British authorities via the Red Cross , giving a statement of the valiant courage Roope had shown when engaging a much superior ship in close battle . Ramsay was also awarded the DSO . Both awards were made after the end of the war .