

= HMS Ajax (1880) =

HMS Ajax was the name ship of her class of ironclad battleships built for the Royal Navy during the 1870s . Completed in 1883 , she was immediately placed in reserve until 1885 when the ship was commissioned for the first time . Later that year , Ajax was assigned as a coast guard ship in Scotland and remained there for the next six years . She was reduced to reserve again in 1891 and was taken out of service a decade later . The ship was sold for scrap in 1904 and subsequently broken up .

= = Design and description = =

The Ajax class was designed as a shallow draught version of the preceding Inflexible that was also smaller and cheaper ; unfortunately the need , imposed by budgetary constraints , to produce a smaller ship produced a vessel with all of the shortcomings of Inflexible but with none of her virtues . The ships had a length between perpendiculars of 280 feet (85 @. 3 m) and were 300 feet 9 inches (91 @. 7 m) long overall , some 44 feet (13 @. 4 m) shorter than Inflexible . They had a beam of 66 feet (20 @. 1 m) , and a draught of 23 feet 6 inches (7 @. 2 m) and displaced 8 @, 510 long tons (8 @, 650 t) . Their crew consisted of 345 officers and ratings , over 3 @, 000 long tons (3 @, 048 t) less than Inflexible . The Ajax @- class ships were bad seaboats and steered very erratically , especially at high speed . More deadwood was added to their sterns in 1886 in a partially successful attempt to rectify the problem .

The Ajax class was powered by a pair of inverted , vertical , compound @- expansion steam engines . These were built by John Penn and Sons and each drove a single propeller using steam provided by 10 cylindrical boilers . The engines were designed to produce a total of 6 @, 000 indicated horsepower (4 @, 500 kW) for a speed of 13 knots (24 km / h ; 15 mph) . The ships carried a maximum of 970 long tons (986 t) of coal , enough to steam 2 @, 100 nautical miles (3 @, 900 km ; 2 @, 400 mi) at 9 knots (17 km / h ; 10 mph) .

They copied the main armament layout of Inflexible with their turrets arranged en echelon so that both turrets could directly ahead and to each side , although this was more theoretical than practical due to damage from muzzle blast . Each turret mounted a pair of rifled muzzle @- loading RML 12 @. 5 @- inch (318 mm) guns . Their shells weighed 809 pounds (367 @. 0 kg) while the gun itself weighed 38 long tons (39 t) . The guns had a muzzle velocity of 1 @, 575 ft / s (480 m / s) and were credited with the ability to penetrate a nominal 18 @. 4 inches (470 mm) of wrought iron armour at the muzzle . To attack the unarmoured portion of their opponents , the Ajax class was fitted with a pair of rifled breech @- loading BL 6 @- inch (152 mm) , 80 @- pounder guns . For defence against torpedo boats , they carried six quick @- firing QF 6 @- pdr (2 @. 2 in (57 mm)) Nordenfelt guns . The ships also mounted a pair of above @- water 14 @- inch (356 mm) torpedo launchers and could carry a 60 @- foot (18 @. 3 m) torpedo boat .

The Ajax class copied Inflexible 's armour scheme of a heavily armoured citadel with unarmoured ends and sides . But unlike their predecessor , they lacked enough buoyancy to remain afloat if their ends were flooded . The citadel was 104 feet (32 m) and the armour was composed of wrought iron plates 10 inches (254 mm) and 8 inches (203 mm) thick , separated and backed by 10 inches of teak at the waterline , reducing above and below the waterline to an armoured thickness of 15 inches (381 @. 0 mm) in a similar sandwich . The citadel was closed off by fore and aft transverse bulkheads that were 16 @. 5 inches (419 mm) thick above water and 13 @. 5 inches (343 mm) below . The armoured deck was 3 inches (76 mm) thick from bow to stern . The turrets were protected by compound armour plates 16 to 14 inches (406 to 356 mm) thick and 12 @- inch (305 mm) plates defended the conning tower .

= = Construction and career = =

Ajax , the fourth ship of her name to serve in the Royal Navy , was named for the mythological hero

. The ship was laid down on 21 March 1876 in No. 4 Slipway , Pembroke Dockyard , Wales , and was launched on 10 March 1880 by Mrs. George Parkin , wife of the dockyard 's Captain @-@ Superintendent . She was completed on 30 March 1883 at a cost of £ 548 @, @ 393 .

Ajax was not commissioned until 30 April 1885 and was assigned to the Particular Service Squadron commanded by Admiral Geoffrey Hornby . That summer , the squadron evaluated the weapons and defences of a fortified harbour , Berehaven (now Castletownbere) , Ireland , against torpedo boats and other threats . In August 1885 , when tensions with Russia had subsided , she was posted as guard ship at Greenock . Ajax accidentally collided with the turret ship Devastation in 1887 off Portland . The latter had one compartment below water holed , but Ajax only received two holes in her bow . The ship participated in the annual manoeuvres in August 1889 and a shell exploded in one of her 12 @. @ 5 @-@ inch gun barrels on 2 September , wounding one man . The ship was reduced to reserve at Chatham Dockyard in 1891 . Her BL six @-@ inch , 80 @-@ pounder guns were replaced by QF six @-@ inch guns in 1897 . She was further reduced to Dockyard Reserve in November 1901 , and was sold to Castles for scrap in March 1904 and subsequently broken up at Charlton .