

= HMS Diamond (H22) =

HMS Diamond was a D class destroyer built for the Royal Navy in the early 1930s . The ship spent the bulk of her career on the China Station . She was briefly assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet in 1939 before she was transferred to West Africa for convoy escort duties . Diamond returned to the Mediterranean Fleet in early 1940 where she generally escorted convoys to and from Malta . The ship participated in the Battle of Cape Spartivento in November . Diamond was sunk by German aircraft on 27 April 1941 whilst evacuating Allied troops from Greece .

= = Description = =

Diamond displaced 1,375 long tons (1,397 t) at standard load and 1,890 long tons (1,920 t) at deep load . The ship had an overall length of 329 feet (100 m) , a beam of 33 feet (10 m) and a draught of 12 feet 6 inches (3.8 m) . She was powered by Parsons geared steam turbines , driving two shafts , which developed a total of 36,000 shaft horsepower (27,000 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 boilers . Diamond carried a maximum of 473 long tons (481 t) of fuel oil that gave her a range of 5,870 nautical miles (10,870 km ; 6,760 mi) at 15 knots (28 km / h ; 17 mph) . The ship 's complement was 145 officers and men .

The ship mounted four 45 calibre 4.7 inch Mark IX guns in single mounts . For anti aircraft (AA) defence , Diamond had a single 12 pounder (3 inch (76 mm)) gun between her funnels and two 40 millimetre (1.6 in) QF 2 pounder Mark II guns mounted on the side of her bridge . She was fitted with two above water quadruple torpedo tube mounts for 21 inch 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 .

= = Career = =

Diamond was ordered on 2 February 1931 under the 1930 Naval Estimates , and was laid down at Vickers Armstrong 's yard at Barrow in Furness on 29 September 1931 . She was launched on 8 April 1932 and completed on 3 November 1933 , at a total cost of £ 223,509 , excluding equipment supplied by the Admiralty , such as weapons , ammunition and wireless equipment . The ship was initially assigned to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla in the Mediterranean and made a brief deployment to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea in September - November 1933 . Diamond was refitted at Devonport Dockyard between 3 September and 27 October 1934 for service on the China Station with the 8th (later the 21st) Destroyer Flotilla and arrived there in January 1935 , where she remained for the next four years .

The ship began a refit at Singapore on 7 August 1939 and she was transferred to the Mediterranean Fleet after it was completed in November . Diamond arrived at Malta on 19 December , but she was transferred to the South Atlantic Station the following month . She departed Malta on 8 January 1940 , bound for Freetown where she joined the 20th Destroyer Division for escort duties . In April the ship returned to the Mediterranean where Diamond was assigned to the newly formed 10th Destroyer Flotilla after a short refit at Malta .

She was slightly damaged by air attacks on 11 and 17 June near Malta after the Italians declared war on the Allies on 10 June . Together with her sisters Dainty , Defender , the Australian destroyer Stuart , and the light cruisers Capetown and Liverpool , she escorted Convoy AN.2 from Egypt to various ports in the Aegean Sea in late July . Diamond bombarded the Italian seaplane base at Bomba , Libya on 23 August . A week later she escorted four transports to Malta with Dainty and the destroyers Jervis and Juno as part of Operation Hats . The ship escorted Convoy MB.8 during Operation Collar . After reaching Malta on 26 November , Diamond joined Force D and sailed to rendezvous with Force H , coming from Gibraltar . The next day , after the British forces had

combined , they were spotted by the Italians and the inconclusive Battle of Cape Spartivento was fought .

During Operation Excess , Diamond and Defender escorted Convoy MW.5 to Malta in January 1941 . In mid @-@ April she escorted a convoy of four freighters from Malta to Alexandria .

= = Loss = =

On the evening of 26 April , Diamond was in the Argolic Gulf with three light cruisers , three other destroyers and two troopships . The force began evacuating British , Australian and New Zealand troops from Nauplia . The cruisers HMS Calcutta and HMS Orion and destroyers HMS Hotspur and HMS Isis embarked nearly 2 @,@ 500 troops and , at 03 : 00 the next morning , Calcutta ordered the evacuation force to sail . One of the troop ships , the Dutch ocean liner Slammat , disobeyed and continued to embark troops . Slammat embarked 500 troops before she eventually obeyed orders at 04 : 15 , and the convoy sailed for Crete .

Near the mouth of the Argolic Gulf a Staffel of nine Luftwaffe Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive @-@ bombers from Jagdgeschwader 77 attacked the convoy at either 06 : 45 or 07 : 15 . Slammat was hit , set afire and began to abandon ship . Calcutta ordered Diamond to go alongside Slammat to rescue survivors while the rest of the convoy continued to try to reach Souda Bay in Crete . At 08 : 15 Diamond reported that she was still rescuing survivors and still under air attack . By then three destroyers had reinforced the convoy so Calcutta sent one of them , HMS Wryneck , to assist Diamond . Slammat was afire from stem to stern when Diamond fired a torpedo that sank her in a coup de grâce . Diamond reported at 09 : 25 that she had rescued most of the survivors and was proceeding to Souda Bay . An hour later Wryneck signalled a request for aircraft cover .

At about 13 : 15 , an air attack by German Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighters and Junkers Ju 88 bombers sank both destroyers within minutes . Wryneck launched her whaler , and each destroyer launched her three Carley floats . Survivors in the whaler set off east past Cape Maleas , towing two Carley floats and their occupants . In the evening the wind increased , causing the floats to strike the boat , so Waldron reluctantly cast them adrift .

After 1900 hrs on 27 April the Vice Admiral , Light Forces , Henry Pridham @-@ Wippell , became concerned that Diamond had not returned to Souda Bay and was not answering radio signals . Wryneck had been ordered to keep radio silence so no attempt was made to radio her . Pridham @-@ Wippell sent the destroyer HMS Griffin to the position where Slammat had been lost . She found 14 survivors in two Carley floats that night , more floats and another four survivors in the morning , and took the survivors to Crete .

The last living survivor from Slammat , Royal Army Service Corps veteran George Dexter , states that after Wryneck was sunk he and three other men were rescued by the cruiser HMS Orion .

Survivors in Wryneck 's whaler reached Crete in three stages . On 28 April they aimed for the island of Milos in the Aegean Sea , but were too exhausted so they landed at Ananes Rock , about 13 nautical miles (24 km) southeast of Milos . There they met a caique full of Greek refugees and British soldiers evacuated from Piraeus , who were sheltering by day and sailing only by night to avoid detection . In the evening everyone left Ananes and headed south for Crete , with most people in the caique and five being towed in the whaler . On 29 April the caique sighted a small landing craft that had left Porto Rafti near Athens . She took aboard everyone from the caique and whaler , and the next day they reached Souda Bay .