

= Japanese battleship Shikishima =

Shikishima (??) was the lead ship of the Shikishima class of pre @-@ dreadnought battleships built for the Imperial Japanese Navy by British shipyards in the late 1890s . During the Russo @-@ Japanese War of 1904 ? 1905 , the ship fought in the Battles of Port Arthur , the Yellow Sea and Tsushima and was lightly damaged in the latter action , although shells prematurely exploded in her main guns in the latter two engagements . Shikishima remained in home waters during World War I. The ship was reclassified as a coastal defence ship in 1921 and served as a training ship for the rest of her career . She was disarmed and hulked in 1923 and finally broken up for scrap in 1948 .

= = Description = =

Shikishima and her sister ship Hatsuse were designed in England as improved versions of the Royal Navy 's Majestic @-@ class battleships . Shikishima was 438 feet (133 @. @ 5 m) long overall and had a beam of 75 feet 6 inches (23 @. @ 0 m) . She had a full @-@ load draught of 27 feet 3 inches (8 @. @ 3 m) and normally displaced 14 @, @ 850 long tons (15 @, @ 090 t) and had a crew of 741 officers and enlisted men . The ship was powered by two Humphrys Tennant vertical triple @-@ expansion steam engines using steam generated by 25 Belleville boilers . The engines were rated at 14 @, @ 500 indicated horsepower (10 @, @ 800 kW) , using forced draught , and were designed to reach a top speed of around 18 knots (33 km / h ; 21 mph) . Shikishima , however , reached a top speed of 19 @. @ 027 knots (35 @. @ 238 km / h ; 21 @. @ 896 mph) from 14 @, @ 667 indicated horsepower (10 @, @ 937 kW) on her sea trials . She carried a maximum of 1 @, @ 700 long tons (1 @, @ 700 t) of coal which allowed her to steam for 5 @, @ 000 nautical miles (9 @, @ 300 km ; 5 @, @ 800 mi) at a speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) .

The ship 's main battery consisted of four 12 @-@ inch (305 mm) guns mounted in two twin gun turrets , one forward and one aft . The secondary battery consisted of fourteen 6 @-@ inch (152 mm) quick @-@ firing guns , mounted in casemates on the sides of the hull and in the superstructure . A number of smaller guns were carried for defence against torpedo boats . These included 20 QF 12 @-@ pounder 12 cwt guns , six 47 @-@ millimetre (1 @. @ 9 in) 3 @-@ pounder guns and six 37 @-@ millimetre (1 @. @ 5 in) 2 @. @ 5 @-@ pounder Hotchkiss guns . She was also armed with four submerged 18 @-@ inch torpedo tubes . Shikishima 's waterline armour belt consisted of Harvey armour and was 4 ? 9 inches (102 ? 229 mm) thick . The armour of her gun turrets had a maximum thickness of 10 in (254 mm) and her deck ranged from 2 @. @ 5 to 4 inches (64 to 102 mm) in thickness .

= = Operational career = =

Shikishima , a poetical name for Japan , was one of four battleships ordered from overseas shipyards as part of the 10 Year Naval Expansion Programme and paid for from the £ 30 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 indemnity paid by China after its defeat in the Sino @-@ Japanese War of 1894 ? 1895 . The ship was laid down by Thames Iron Works at their Blackwall , London shipyard on 29 March 1897 . She was launched on 1 November 1898 and completed on 26 January 1900 .

At the start of the Russo @-@ Japanese War , Shikishima , commanded by Captain Iz? Teragaki , was assigned to the 1st Division of the 1st Fleet . She participated in the Battle of Port Arthur on 9 February 1904 when Admiral T?g? Heihachir? led the 1st Fleet in an attack on the Russian ships of the Pacific Squadron anchored just outside Port Arthur . T?g? had expected his surprise night attack on the Russians by his destroyers to be much more successful than it actually was and expected to find them badly disorganized and weakened , but the Russians had recovered from their surprise and were ready for his attack . The Japanese ships were spotted by the cruiser Boyarin which was patrolling offshore and alerted the Russian defences . T?g? chose to attack the Russian coastal defences with his main armament and engage the Russian ships with his secondary guns . Splitting his fire proved to be ineffective as the Japanese 8 @-@ inch (203 mm) and six @-@ inch guns inflicted very little significant damage on the Russian ships who concentrated all their fire on the

Japanese ships with some effect . Although a large number of ships on both sides were hit , Russian casualties numbered only 17 while the Japanese suffered 60 killed and wounded before T?g? disengaged . Shikishima was hit by one six @-@ inch shell during the battle which wounded 17 crewmen .

Shikishima participated in the action of 13 April when T?g? successfully lured out a portion of the Pacific Squadron , including Vice Admiral Stepan Makarov 's flagship , the battleship Petropavlovsk . When Makarov spotted the five battleships of the 1st Division , he turned back for Port Arthur and Petropavlovsk struck a naval mine laid by the Japanese the previous night . The Russian battleship sank in less than two minutes after one of her magazines exploded ; Makarov was one of the 677 killed . Emboldened by his success , T?g? resumed long @-@ range bombardment missions , which prompted the Russians to lay more minefields .

On 14 May 1904 , Rear Admiral Nashiba Tokioki put to sea with the battleships Hatsuse (flag) , Shikishima , and Yashima , the protected cruiser Kasagi , and the dispatch boat Tatsuta to relieve the Japanese blockading force off Port Arthur . On the following morning , the squadron encountered a minefield laid by the Russian minelayer Amur . Hatsuse struck one mine that disabled her steering at 10 : 50 a.m. and Yashima struck another when moving to assist Hatsuse . At 12 : 33 p.m. , the latter drifted onto another mine that detonated one of her magazines , killing 496 of her crew and sinking the ship . Yashima 's flooding could not be controlled and she foundered about eight hours later , after her crew had abandoned ship .

Shikishima was not hit during the Battle of the Yellow Sea in August 1904 , although a shell exploded prematurely in one of her 12 @-@ inch guns , disabling it . During the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905 , she was second in the line of battle of the First Division , following T?g? 's flagship Mikasa and was one of the main targets of the Russian battleships . Shikishima was hit nine times during the battle ; the most serious of which penetrated beneath a six @-@ inch gun , killing or wounding the entire gun crew . She also had another 12 @-@ inch shell prematurely detonate in one of her forward guns , wrecking it completely . In turn , Mikasa and Shikishima concentrated their fire on the battleship Oslabya which eventually sank after two large @-@ calibre shells blew large holes in her bow at the waterline . These caused massive flooding that sank her , the first modern battleship sunk entirely by gunfire . Shikishima fired a total of 74 twelve @-@ inch , 1395 six @-@ inch and 1272 twelve @-@ pounder shells during the battle . She also fired a torpedo at the badly damaged armed merchant cruiser Ural that sank the Russian ship .

During World War I , Shikishima was based at Sasebo during 1914 ? 15 and was then assigned to the Second and Fifth Squadrons , in that order , for the rest of the war . After the Washington Naval Treaty was signed , she was reclassified as a first @-@ class coast defence ship on 1 September 1921 , and was used to train submarine crews until the ship was reclassified as a transport on 1 April 1923 . Shikishima continued to be used as a training hulk for the Sasebo Naval Barracks until she was scrapped in January 1948 at the Sasebo Naval Arsenal .