

= HMS Royal Oak (1892) =

HMS Royal Oak was one of seven Royal Sovereign class pre dreadnought battleships built for the Royal Navy during the 1890s . Upon her completion in 1894 , she was initially placed in reserve until mobilised in 1896 for service with the Flying Squadron . After returning briefly to reserve , the ship was assigned the following year to the Mediterranean Fleet . Royal Oak remained there until 1902 when she returned home ; after a refit , the ship was assigned to the Home Fleet , where she served as the flagship of the fleet 's second in command in 1904 ? 05 . Royal Oak was then reduced to reserve until she was taken out of service in 1911 . The ship was sold for scrap in early 1914 .

= = 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 ,000 long tons (14 ,000 t) at normal load and 15 ,000 long tons (15 ,000 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) . Their crew consisted of 670 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 engines were designed to produce a total of 11 ,000 indicated horsepower (8 ,000 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 .2 in (57 mm)) and a dozen QF 3 pounder (1 .9 in (47 mm)) Hotchkiss guns were fitted for defence against torpedo boats . The two 3 pounders in the upper fighting top were removed in 1899 ? 1902 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 18 inch (450 mm) torpedo tubes , although Royal Oak 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 was 238 feet (72 .@ 5 m) long and had a total height of 8 feet 8 inches (2 .@ 6 m) of which 5 feet (1 .@ 5 m) was below water . 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 were protected by armour equally thick . The thicknesses of the deck armour 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 = =

The Royal Sovereign class was ordered as part of the Naval Defence Act 1889 that was a

supplement to the normal naval estimates . Royal Oak , named after the tree in which King Charles II hid after the Battle of Worcester , was the sixth ship of her name to serve in the Royal Navy . The ship was laid down by Cammell Laird at their shipyard in Birkenhead on 29 May 1890 and floated out of the drydock on 5 November 1892 . She arrived at Portsmouth Dockyard on 29 October 1893 for fitting out , completed her sea trials in June 1894 , and cost £ 977 @, @ 996 . Upon completion , Royal Oak was placed in reserve at Portsmouth . Almost two years later , she mobilised there on 14 January 1896 for service in the Particular Service Squadron , which was formed in response to rising tensions in Europe following the Jameson Raid and Germany 's Kaiser Wilhelm II 's telegram of support to the Boer government . When the squadron disbanded on 25 November , the ship returned to reserve at Portsmouth .

Royal Oak was recommissioned on 9 March 1897 for service with the Mediterranean Fleet , where she was to relieve the battleship Collingwood . She departed Portsmouth on 24 March 1897 , and arrived at Malta on 5 April . Royal Oak was relieved by the battleship Bulwark and departed the Mediterranean in May 1902 . She arrived at Plymouth on 16 May , and at Portsmouth the following day , and paid off there on 6 June 1902 . She soon moved to Chatham Dockyard for a refit , during which casemates were provided for her six @-@ inch upper deck guns . On 16 February 1903 , Royal Oak recommissioned at Portsmouth for service in the Home Fleet using part of the battleship Nile 's crew as a nucleus . In the summer of 1903 , she participated in combined exercises in the Atlantic involving the Home Fleet , Mediterranean , and Channel Fleets , as well as the Cruiser Squadron .

In April 1904 , while operating with the Home Fleet off the Scilly Isles , Royal Oak and her sister ship Revenge had their bottoms lightly damaged when they struck a sunken wreck . On 9 May 1904 , Royal Oak became flagship of the Home Fleet 's second @-@ in @-@ command , relieving her sister Empress of India , and took part in annual maneuvers in July and August . On 7 March 1905 , Royal Oak paid off at Portsmouth into the Chatham Reserve , and her crew transferred to the battleship Caesar . The following day the ship recommissioned with a skeleton crew for service with the Sheerness @-@ Chatham Division of the newly formed Fleet in Commission in Reserve at Home . While she was under refit at Chatham , an explosion in her small @-@ arms magazine on 11 May killed one workman and injured three others . In July , Royal Oak participated in Reserve Fleet manoeuvres . Her crew was then transferred to the battleship Ocean , and Royal Oak recommissioned with a new nucleus crew to serve as an emergency reserve ship at Chatham .

As a unit of the First Division of the Blue Fleet , Royal Oak took part in annual maneuvers off the coast of Portugal and in the eastern Atlantic from 12 June to 2 July 1906 . On 1 January 1907 , she recommissioned in reserve at Devonport with a nucleus crew . In April 1909 , Royal Oak and the other reserve ships with nucleus crews at Devonport were formed into the 4th Division of the Home Fleet . She relieved her sister Ramillies as the parent ship of the division in June 1911 , and was in turn relieved of this duty by her sister Empress of India in November . The ship was taken out of service in December 1911 and towed to the Motherbank by the battleship Bellerophon in August 1912 . She was sold to Thomas W. Ward on 14 January 1914 for £ 36 @, @ 450 and subsequently broken up at Briton Ferry .