

= HMS Defender (H07) =

HMS Defender was a D @-@ class destroyer built for the Royal Navy in the early 1930s . The ship was initially assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet before she was transferred to the China Station in early 1935 . She was temporarily deployed in the Red Sea during late 1935 during the Abyssinia Crisis , before returning to her assigned station where she remained until mid @-@ 1939 . Defender was transferred back to the Mediterranean Fleet just before World War II began in September 1939 . She briefly was assigned to West Africa for convoy escort duties in 1940 before returning to the Mediterranean . The ship participated in the Battles of Calabria , Cape Spartivento , and Cape Matapan over the next year without damage . Defender assisted in the evacuations from Greece and Crete in April ? May 1941 , before she began running supply missions to Tobruk , Libya in June . The ship was badly damaged by a German bomber on one of those missions and had to be scuttled by her consort on 11 July 1941 .

= = Description = =

Defender 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 @.@ 3 m) , a beam of 33 feet (10 @.@ 1 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 water @-@ tube boilers . Defender 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 @.@ 2 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 = =

Ordered on 2 February 1932 under the 1930 Naval Programme , Defender was laid down at the Vickers Armstrongs yard in Barrow as Yard Number 674 on 22 June 1931 , and launched on 7 April 1932 . She was completed on 31 October 1932 having cost a total of £ 223 @,@ 979 , excluding the Admiralty supplied equipment such as guns , ammunition and wireless outfits . 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 .

Defender was refitted at Devonport Dockyard between 3 September and 23 October 1934 for service on the China Station with the 8th (later the 21st) Destroyer Flotilla and arrived at Hong Kong in January 1935 . The ship was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet in the Red Sea from November 1935 to June 1936 during the Abyssinian Crisis and then visited ports in East Africa for a month before returning to the China Station . Her boilers had to be retubed at Singapore between 5 November 1938 and 26 January 1939 and her superheaters were repaired at Hong Kong from 31 January to 14 March .

With the outbreak of war , Defender was assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet and arrived in Alexandria on 19 September . She was assigned to contraband control duties until she was transferred to Gibraltar in January 1940 . The ship patrolled the Portuguese coast until she was transferred to Freetown in mid @-@ February to escort convoys off the West African coast . Defender was transferred back to Gibraltar in April , escorting the light cruiser Neptune en route ,

and arrived there on 23 April 1940 . The next month , she joined the 10th Destroyer Flotilla of the Mediterranean Fleet and escorted Convoy US @-@ 2 carrying Australian and New Zealand troops to the Middle East through the Red Sea from 12 to 17 May .

On 27 June , together with the destroyers Dainty and Ilex , she sank the Italian submarine Console Generale Liuzzi south east of Crete . Defender participated in the Battle of Calabria on 9 July as an escort for the heavy ships of Force C and unsuccessfully engaged Italian destroyers without suffering any damage . Together with her sisters Dainty and Diamond , 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 .

On 6 November , Defender , together with the destroyers Decoy , Hasty , Havock , Hereward , Hero , Hyperion , Ilex , Janus , Jervis , Mohawk , and Nubian screened the capital ships of the Mediterranean Fleet , which provided distant cover for the passage of Convoy MW3 from Egypt to Malta and Convoy ME3 from Malta as part of Operation MB8 . During Operation Collar in late November , Defender , the anti @-@ aircraft cruiser Coventry and four other destroyers sailed from Alexandria to rendezvous with a convoy coming from Gibraltar . After reaching Malta on 26 November , the destroyers joined the battleship Ramillies , and the light cruisers Berwick and Newcastle of Force D and sailed to rendezvous with Force H , also 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 .

On 7 January 1941 , Defender escorted Convoy MW.5 with her sister Diamond and the anti @-@ aircraft cruiser Calcutta from Alexandria to Malta during Operation Excess . The ship was refitted in Malta from 4 February to 19 March and participated in the Battle of Cape Matapan on 27 ? 29 March . During Operation Demon , the evacuation of Allied troops from Greece , she escorted Convoy GA15 on 29 ? 30 April from Souda Bay , Crete , to Alexandria . An Italian destroyer and two torpedo boats attacked the convoy at night as it was transiting Kaso Strait east of Crete , but were rebuffed by the defenders without inflicting any damage . The following month Defender assisted in the evacuation of troops from Crete to Egypt after the Germans invaded on 22 May (Operation Merkur) .

On 10 June , Defender , and the other three ships of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla , arrived off the Lebanese coast to reinforce Royal Navy forces supporting Operation Exporter , the invasion of Vichy French @-@ controlled Syria and Lebanon , but the ship was not engaged during her time off Lebanon and Syria . Later that month , she began escorting convoys to and from Tobruk and on 29 June the Australian destroyer Waterhen was badly damaged by Italian Junkers Ju 87 " Stuka " dive bombers off Tobruk . Defender took Waterhen in tow , but the next day she capsized and sank .

= = = Loss = = =

On 11 July 1941 , Defender was returning from Tobruk in company with the Australian destroyer Vendetta . They were attacked by a single Junkers Ju 88 bomber of I. / Lehrgeschwader 1 piloted by Gerhard Stamp on a reconnaissance flight along the coast before dawn . The bomber scored a near @-@ miss on Defender which detonated under the ship , just forward of the engine room . The shock broke the ship 's back and flooded the engine room , although there were no casualties among her crew or passengers . Vendetta took Defender in tow , leaving a skeleton crew aboard the damaged ship , but she started to break up and Vendetta was forced to scuttle her with a torpedo and gunfire off Sidi Barrani about five hours later .