

= HMS Blanche ( H47 ) =

HMS Blanche ( H47 ) was a B-class destroyer built for the Royal Navy around 1930 . During the Spanish Civil War of 1936 ? 1939 , the ship spent considerable time in Spanish waters , enforcing the non-intervention measures agreed by Britain and France . She was attacked , but not damaged , by Nationalist bombers in early 1938 and was subsequently transferred to the Home Fleet . Blanche was sunk by a mine in November 1939 , becoming the first British destroyer lost to enemy action in World War II .

= = Description = =

Blanche displaced 1,360 long tons ( 1,380 t ) at standard load and 1,790 long tons ( 1,820 t ) at deep load . The ship had an overall length of 323 feet ( 98 m ) , a beam of 32 feet 3 inches ( 9.8 m ) and a draught of 12 feet 3 inches ( 3.7 m ) . She was powered by Parsons geared steam turbines , driving two shafts , which developed a total of 34,000 shaft horsepower ( 25,000 kW ) and gave a maximum speed of 35 knots ( 65 km / h ; 40 mph ) . Steam for the turbines was provided by three Admiralty 3-drum boilers . Blanche carried a maximum of 390 long tons ( 400 t ) of fuel oil that gave her a range of 4,800 nautical miles ( 8,900 km ; 5,500 mi ) at 15 knots ( 28 km / h ; 17 mph ) . The ship 's complement was 134 officers and men , although it increased to 142 during wartime .

The ship mounted four 45-calibre QF 4.7-inch Mk IX guns in single mounts . For anti-aircraft ( AA ) defence , Blanche had two 40-millimetre ( 1.6 in ) QF 2-pounder Mk II AA guns mounted on a platform between her funnels . She was fitted with two above-water quadruple torpedo tube mounts for 21-inch ( 533 mm ) 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 = =

The ship was ordered on 4 March 1929 from Hawthorn Leslie of Hebburn , under the 1928 Naval Programme . She was laid down on 29 July 1929 , and launched on 29 May 1930 , as the tenth RN ship to carry this name . Blanche was completed on 14 February 1931 at a cost of £ 225,195 , excluding items supplied by the Admiralty such as guns , ammunition and communications equipment . After her commissioning , she was assigned to the 4th Destroyer Flotilla with the Mediterranean Fleet until 1936 . The ship was refitted that year and reassigned , with her flotilla , to Home Fleet , after its completion . Blanche spent six months deployed off the southern Spanish coast during the Spanish Civil War , based in Gibraltar . She was attacked by five Nationalist bombers on 6 March 1938 , but they all missed . The ship received a brief overhaul at Portsmouth between 1 April and 11 June 1938 and was then assigned to the anti-submarine flotilla based at the Isle of Portland . During the Munich Crisis , Blanche was one of the destroyers that escorted the ocean liner RMS Aquitania and the battleship HMS Revenge in the English Channel on 30 September . She was given a more thorough refit in Sheerness Dockyard between 1 April and 15 July 1939 and became the emergency destroyer at the Nore upon its completion .

Blanche was assigned to the 19th Destroyer Flotilla when World War II began and spent the next two months escorting convoys and patrolling in the Channel and North Sea . The ship and her sister Basilisk were escorting the minelayer Adventure on the morning of 13 November in the Thames Estuary when they entered a minefield laid the night before by several German destroyers . Adventure and Blanche both struck mines ; the latter lost all power and capsized at 0950 . One man was killed and twelve more were wounded . She was the first British destroyer sunk by the Germans during the war .