

= HMS Duchess ( H64 ) =

HMS Duchess 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 duty station where she remained until mid @-@ 1939 . Duchess was transferred back to the Mediterranean Fleet just before the Second World War began in September 1939 . Whilst escorting the battleship HMS Barham back to the British Isles , she was accidentally rammed by the battleship in thick fog and sank with heavy loss of life on 12 December 1939 .

= = Description = =

Duchess 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 . Duchess 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 QF 4 @. @ 7 @-@ inch Mk IX guns in single mounts . For anti @-@ aircraft ( AA ) defence , Duchess had a single 12 @-@ pounder ( 3 @-@ inch ( 76 @. @ 2 mm ) ) gun and two quadruple Mk I mounts for the 0 @. @ 5 @-@ inch Vickers Mk III machine gun . 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 .

= = Service = =

Duchess was ordered on 2 February 1931 under the 1930 Naval Estimates and was laid down at the yards of the Palmers Shipbuilding and Iron Company , Jarrow on 12 June 1931 . She was launched on 19 July 1932 and commissioned on 24 January 1933 , at a total cost of £ 229 @, @ 367 , 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 . Upon her return , her superheaters were repaired at Malta between 18 December and 6 January 1934 . She was given a refit at Chatham Dockyard from 3 September to 23 October to prepare the ship for service on the China Station .

Duchess arrived in Hong Kong in January 1935 where she joined the 8th Destroyer Flotilla . The ship was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet in the Red Sea from September to November during the Abyssinian Crisis . She made a number of good @-@ will visits during her time on the station as well as conducted anti @-@ piracy patrols . During a typhoon at Hong Kong on 2 September 1937 , a merchant ship crushed Duchess 's stern when it dragged its anchors . Her repairs were not completed until 14 October .

The ship remained on the station until late August 1939 , when the imminent start of the Second World War caused the Admiralty to order her to take up her war station with the Mediterranean Fleet at Malta . Duchess arrived there on 12 October and remained in the Mediterranean for the next two months . In December the ship , along with her sisters HMS Delight , HMS Duncan and HMS Dainty , was assigned to escort the battleship HMS Barham back to the UK , and they departed Gibraltar on 6 December . During the morning of 12 December , Barham collided with Duchess off the Mull of Kintyre in heavy fog . The destroyer capsized and her depth charges exploded , killing 124 of her crew including her commanding officer , Lieutenant Commander Robin White , who was stuck in his

sea cabin when the sliding door jammed .