

= HMS Campania (1914) =

HMS Campania was a seaplane tender and aircraft carrier , converted from an elderly ocean liner by the Royal Navy early in the First World War . After her conversion was completed in mid @-@ 1915 the ship spent her time conducting trials and exercises with the Grand Fleet . These revealed the need for a longer flight deck to allow larger aircraft to take off , and she was modified accordingly . Campania missed the Battle of Jutland in May 1916 , but made a number of patrols with elements of the Grand Fleet . She never saw combat and was soon relegated to a training role because of her elderly machinery . In November 1918 Campania was anchored with the capital ships of the Grand Fleet when a sudden storm caused her anchors to drag . She hit several of the ships and the collisions punctured her hull ; she slowly sank , with no loss of life .

= = Early career = =

Originally built as a passenger liner for Cunard Line 's service between Liverpool and New York in 1893 , RMS Campania was the holder of the Blue Riband award for speed early in her career . In October 1914 , she was sold to the shipbreakers T. W. Ward as she was wearing out .

= = Purchase and conversion = =

The Royal Navy purchased Campania from the shipbreakers on 27 November 1914 for £ 32 @, @ 500 , initially for conversion to an armed merchant cruiser equipped with eight quick @-@ firing 4 @.@ 7 @-@ inch (120 mm) guns . The ship was converted by Cammell Laird to an aircraft carrier instead and the two forward 4 @.@ 7 @-@ inch guns were deleted in favour of a 160 @-@ foot (48 @.@ 8 m) flying @-@ off deck . Two derricks were fitted on each side to transfer seaplanes between the water and the two holds . The amidships hold had the capacity for seven large seaplanes . The forward hold , underneath the flight deck , could fit four small seaplanes , but the flight deck had to be lifted off the hold to access the airplanes . HMS Campania was commissioned on 17 April 1915 .

The first takeoff from the flight deck did not occur until 6 August 1915 when a Sopwith Schneider floatplane , mounted on a wheeled trolley , used 130 feet (39 @.@ 6 m) of the flight deck while the ship was steaming into the wind at 17 knots (31 km / h ; 20 mph) . The Sopwith aircraft was the lightest and highest @-@ powered aircraft in service with the Royal Naval Air Service , and the close call in a favourable wind demonstrated that heavier aircraft could not be launched from the flight deck .

By October 1915 Campania had exercised with the Grand Fleet seven times , but had only flown off aircraft three times as the North Sea was often too rough for her seaplanes to use . Her captain recommended that the flying @-@ off deck be lengthened and given a steeper slope to allow gravity to boost the aircraft 's acceleration and the ship was accordingly modified at Cammell Laird between November 1915 and early April 1916 . The forward funnel was split into two funnels and the flight deck was extended between them and over the bridge to a length of 245 feet (74 @.@ 7 m) , so that aircraft from both holds could use the flight deck . A canvas windscreen was provided to allow the aircraft to unfold their wings out of the wind , and a kite balloon and all of its supporting equipment were added in the aft hold . Campania now carried seven Short Type 184 torpedo bombers and three or four smaller fighters or scouts ; a Type 184 made its first takeoff from the flight deck on 3 June 1916 , also using a wheeled trolley . This success prompted the Admiralty to order the world 's first aircraft designed for carrier operations , the Fairey Campania . The ship received the first of these aircraft in late 1917 where they joined smaller Sopwith 1 ½ Strutter scouts . At various times Campania also carried the Sopwith Baby and Sopwith Pup .

Campania failed to receive the signal to deploy when the Grand Fleet departed Scapa Flow on 30 May 1916 en route to the Battle of Jutland , but she sailed two hours and fifteen minutes later . Even though she was slowly overtaking the fleet early in the morning of 31 May , she was ordered to return to Scapa Flow as she lacked an escort and German submarines had been reported in the

area . The ship participated in some anti @-@ submarine and anti @-@ Zeppelin patrols , but she was later declared unfit for fleet duty because of her defective machinery and became a seaplane training and balloon depot ship . In April 1918 Campania , along with the Grand Fleet , was transferred from Scapa Flow to Rosyth .

On the morning of 5 November 1918 , Campania was lying at anchor off Burntisland in the Firth of Forth . A sudden Force 10 squall caused the ship to drag anchor . She collided first with the bow of the nearby battleship Royal Oak , and then scraped along the side of the battlecruiser Glorious . Campania 's hull was breached by the initial collision with Royal Oak , flooding her engine room and shutting off all main electrical power . The ship then started to settle by the stern , and sank some five hours after breaking free . The ship 's crew were all rescued by neighbouring vessels . A Naval Board of Inquiry into the incident held Campania 's watch officer largely responsible for her loss , citing specifically the failure to drop a second anchor once the ship started to drift .

The wreck of HMS Campania was designated in 2001 under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 as a site of historic importance , making it an offence to dive it without a licence . The remains of the four Campania aircraft and seven 1 ½ Strutters that she had on board when she sank are still entombed in her wreck .