

= Nino Bixio @-@ class cruiser =

The Nino Bixio class was a pair of protected cruisers built for the Italian Regia Marina ( Royal Navy ) in the 1910s . The two ships , Nino Bixio , and Marsala , were built in Castellammare between 1911 and 1914 . They were intended to serve as scouts for the main Italian fleet , and as such required a high top speed . They were overweight as built , which prevented them from reaching their intended maximum speed . They were a disappointment in service , especially compared to the earlier ? and faster ? cruiser Quarto , which cut their careers short .

Both ships saw limited action during World War I , largely a result of the cautious strategies employed by the Regia Marina and its opponent , the Austro @-@ Hungarian Navy . Nino Bixio was involved in the pursuit of a group of Austro @-@ Hungarian raiders in December 1915 , but did not engage them before they escaped . Marsala briefly battled Austro @-@ Hungarian cruisers during the Battle of the Otranto Straits in May 1917 . Both ships were sold for scrapping in the late 1920s , the victims of very tight naval budgets and their own poor performance .

= = Design = =

= = = General characteristics = = =

The ships of the Nino Bixio class were designed as fleet scouts by Engineering Captain Giuseppe Rota , along similar lines to the cruiser Quarto . The ships were 131 @.@ 4 meters ( 431 ft ) long at the waterline and 140 @.@ 3 m ( 460 ft ) long overall . They had a beam of 13 m ( 43 ft ) and a draft of 4 @.@ 1 m ( 13 ft ) . The ships displaced 3 @, @ 575 metric tons ( 3 @, @ 519 long tons ; 3 @, @ 941 short tons ) and up to 4 @, @ 141 t ( 4 @, @ 076 long tons ; 4 @, @ 565 short tons ) at full load . The ships were fitted with a pair of pole masts equipped with spotting tops located at the forward and aft conning tower . Their crew consisted 13 officers and 283 enlisted men . The Nino Bixio @-@ class ships were only lightly armored , with a 38 mm ( 1 @.@ 5 in ) thick deck , and 100 mm ( 3 @.@ 9 in ) thick plating on their forward conning tower .

= = = Propulsion system = = =

The ships ' propulsion system consisted of three Curtiss steam turbines , each driving a screw propeller . Steam was provided by fourteen mixed coal and oil firing Blechynden boilers that were trunked into four funnels ; the first two were closely spaced just aft of the foremast and the other two were farther spaced further aft . The engines were rated for 22 @, @ 500 shaft horsepower ( 16 @, @ 800 kW ) which should have given the ships a top speed of 29 knots ( 54 km / h ; 33 mph ) , but neither ship reached that speed in service owing to their being overweight . Nino Bixio 's engines reached 23 @, @ 000 shp ( 17 @, @ 000 kW ) for a top speed of 26 @.@ 82 kn ( 49 @.@ 67 km / h ; 30 @.@ 86 mph ) , while Marsala was slightly faster at 27 @.@ 66 kn ( 51 @.@ 23 km / h ; 31 @.@ 83 mph ) at the same horsepower ; both ships were a disappointment , especially compared to the older but faster Quarto . The Nino Bixio @-@ class ships had a range of 1 @, @ 400 nautical miles ( 2 @, @ 600 km ; 1 @, @ 600 mi ) at a cruising speed of 13 kn ( 24 km / h ; 15 mph ) .

= = = Armament = = =

The ships were armed with a main battery of six 120 mm ( 4 @.@ 7 in ) L / 50 guns mounted singly . Two were placed side by side forward , with the other four located on the centerline , two amidships and two in a superfiring pair aft of the mainmast . The guns were the Pattern EE type , the same type employed as secondary guns on the dreadnought battleships of the Dante Alighieri and Conte di Cavour classes , and were manufactured by Armstrong Whitworth . They were 3 @.@ 35 @-@ metric @-@ ton ( 3 @.@ 30 @-@ long @-@ ton ; 3 @.@ 69 @-@ short @-@ ton ) guns that fired a 22 @.@ 5 @-@ kilogram ( 50 lb ) projectile at a muzzle velocity of 860 meters per

second ( 2 @, @ 800 ft / s ) , at a rate of 6 shots per minute . The ships were also equipped with six 76 mm ( 3 @. @ 0 in ) L / 50 guns , the same Pattern ZZI type guns used on the Italian dreadnoughts , which provided close range defense . These guns weighed 1 @. @ 14 t ( 1 @. @ 12 long tons ; 1 @. @ 26 short tons ) and fired 5 @. @ 6 kg ( 12 lb ) and 7 kg ( 15 lb ) shells at 815 m / s ( 2 @, @ 670 ft / s ) . They had a rate of fire of 15 shells per minute . They were also armed with two 450 mm ( 18 in ) torpedo tubes submerged in the hull . The ships were also fitted with equipment to store and launch 200 naval mines .

= = Ships = =

= = Service history = =

Italy had initially declared neutrality at the start of World War I , despite having been allied to Germany and Austria @-@ Hungary . By May 1915 , the Triple Entente had convinced the Italian government to enter the war against their erstwhile allies . The main Italian fleet was kept at the southern end of the Adriatic , at Brindisi , and in the Mediterranean , at Taranto , where it would be safe from Austro @-@ Hungarian U @-@ boats . The Austro @-@ Hungarians , meanwhile , employed a fleet in being strategy while conducting raids with small craft and U @-@ boats . For the duration of the war , Nino Bixio and Marsala were stationed at Brindisi , where they could quickly respond to Austro @-@ Hungarian raids . In December 1915 , Nino Bixio and several other warships , including British cruisers , sortied in response to an Austro @-@ Hungarian attack on transports supplying the Serbian Army through Albania . Nino Bixio pursued the cruiser SMS Helgoland before the latter escaped under cover of darkness .

Marsala saw action during the Battle of the Otranto Straits in May 1917 , though Nino Bixio did not have steam up in her boilers when the Austro @-@ Hungarians attacked , so she was unable to join her sister ship . Marsala briefly clashed with the Austro @-@ Hungarian cruisers before Rear Admiral Alfredo Acton , the Italian commander , broke off the engagement following the arrival of the powerful Austro @-@ Hungarian armored cruiser SMS Sankt Georg . The demobilizations and funding cuts that followed the end of the war in 1918 continued into the 1920s for the Regia Marina , and disposing of the two Nino Bixio class ships , which had never met design expectations , was an easy means to trim the naval budget . Nino Bixio and Marsala were stricken from the naval register in March 1929 and November 1927 , respectively , and were subsequently sold for scrap .