

= HMS Escort (H66) =

HMS Escort was an E class destroyer built for the Royal Navy in the early 1930s . Although assigned to the Home Fleet upon completion , the ship was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet in 1935 ? 36 , during the Abyssinia Crisis . During the Spanish Civil War of 1936 ? 1939 , she spent considerable time in Spanish waters , enforcing the arms blockade imposed by Britain and France on both sides of the conflict . Escort was assigned to convoy escort and anti submarine patrol duties in the Western Approaches , when World War II began in September 1939 . During the Norwegian Campaign , the ship escorted ships of the Home Fleet , although she did tow her sister HMS Eclipse after the latter ship had been badly damaged by German air attack . Escort was assigned to Force H in late June , and participated in the Attack on Mers el Kébir in early July . She was torpedoed a few days later , by an Italian submarine , but was towed for three days towards Gibraltar before she foundered .

= = Description = =

The E class ships were slightly improved versions of the preceding D class . They displaced 1 ,405 long tons (1 ,428 t) at standard load and 1 ,940 long tons (1 ,970 t) at deep load . The ships had an overall length of 329 feet (100 .3 m) , a beam of 33 feet 3 inches (10 .1 m) and a draught of 12 feet 6 inches (3 .8 m) . They were powered by two Parsons geared steam turbines , each driving one propeller shaft , using steam provided by three Admiralty three drum boilers . The turbines developed a total of 36 ,000 shaft horsepower (27 ,000 kW) and gave a maximum speed of 35 .5 knots (65 .7 km / h ; 40 .9 mph) . Escort carried a maximum of 470 long tons (480 t) of fuel oil that gave her a range of 6 ,350 nautical miles (11 ,760 km ; 7 ,310 mi) at 15 knots (28 km / h ; 17 mph) . The ships ' complement was 145 officers and ratings .

The ships mounted four 45 calibre 4 .7 inch (120 mm) Mark IX guns in single mounts . For anti aircraft (AA) defence , they had two quadruple Mark I mounts for the 0 .5 inch Vickers Mark III machine gun . The E class 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 = =

Escort was ordered from Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Company , at Greenock , Scotland on 1 November 1932 , under the 1931 Construction Programme . She was laid down on 30 March 1933 , and launched on 29 March 1934 . She was commissioned on 30 October 1934 , at a total cost of £ 249 ,587 , excluding government furnished equipment like the armament . Upon commissioning the ship was assigned to the 5th Destroyer Flotilla of the Home Fleet , aside from a brief deployment in the West Indies between January and March 1935 . Afterwards , she was refitted in Sheerness from 27 March to 30 April . Escort was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet from September 1935 to March 1936 , during the Abyssinian Crisis . She struck a lock while at Sheerness and required seven weeks of repairs that were not completed until 5 September . The ship patrolled Spanish waters during the Spanish Civil War , enforcing the edicts of the Non Intervention Committee until 24 March 1939 , when she returned to the United Kingdom . Escort became tender to the light cruiser HMS Caledon of the Reserve Fleet upon her return , and was not recommissioned until 2 August , when she was assigned to the 12th Destroyer Flotilla .

On 3 September , Escort and her sister HMS Electra rescued some 300 odd survivors from the ocean liner SS Athenia , which had been torpedoed by the German submarine U 30 . The ship was assigned to convoy escort and anti submarine duties in the Western Approaches Command . She was transferred to Rosyth in December , for similar duties in the North Sea . Escort was refitted at Falmouth between 10 January and 12 February 1940 , and resumed her duties

afterwards . Together with the destroyers HMS Inglefield and HMS Imogen , she sank the German submarine U @-@ 63 on 25 February , after the German vessel had been spotted by the submarine HMS Narwhal some 90 miles (140 km) east of the Orkney Islands .

When the Norwegian Campaign began in early April , Escort was transferred to the Home Fleet , and was screening the capital ships when they sortied into the North Sea looking for the German ship on 9 April . After her sister Eclipse was damaged by air attack on 11 April , Escort towed her to Sullom Voe . The ship escorted the aircraft carriers HMS Glorious and HMS Ark Royal from 25 April , as their aircraft attacked German targets in Norway . She accompanied Glorious when that ship returned to Scapa Flow to refuel and replenish her aircraft on 27 April . The ship was slightly damaged in a collision with the Polish ocean liner Chrobry on 11 May . Escort was based in Scapa Flow as part of the Home Fleet until 26 June , when she sailed for Gibraltar to join Force H. It is uncertain if her rear set of torpedo tubes were replaced by a 3 @-@ inch (76 @.@ 2 mm) (12 @-@ pounder) AA gun at this time . She arrived on 2 July , and joined Force H in attacking ships of the French Navy at Mers @-@ el @-@ Kébir the next day . During Operation MA 5 , a planned air attack on Italian airfields in Sardinia , Escort was torpedoed by the Italian submarine Guglielmo Marconi on 11 July after the attack had been cancelled due to lack of surprise . The torpedo blew a hole 20 feet (6 @.@ 1 m) wide between the two boiler rooms , but only killed two members of the crew . Later that morning she foundered .