

= Italian ironclad Affondatore =

Affondatore was an armoured ram of the Regia Marina (Italian Royal Navy) , built in the 1860s by Harrison , Millwall , London . Construction commenced in 1863 ; the ship , despite being incomplete , was brought to Italy during the Third Italian War of Independence . Affondatore , which translates as " Sinker " , was initially designed to rely on her ram her only weapon , but during construction she was also equipped with two 300 @-@ pounder guns .

The ship arrived off the island of Lissa shortly before the eponymous battle in July 1866 . There , she served as the flagship of Admiral Carlo Pellion di Persano . During the action , she was involved in a melee with Austrian warships and was hit many times by Austrian guns . She sank in a storm in August , potentially as a result of the damage she incurred at Lissa , but was refloated and rebuilt between 1867 and 1873 . She thereafter served with the main Italian fleet . She served as a guard ship in Venice from 1904 to 1907 , and then as a depot ship in Taranto . The ultimate fate of the ship is unknown .

= = Design = =

On 11 October 1862 , the Italian Navy placed an order with the British shipyard Mare of Millwall , London , for an armoured steam ram , to a design by the Italian naval officer Simone Antonio Saint @-@ Bon , but financial problems resulted in the order being transferred to the shipyard Harrison , also of Millwall . Saint @-@ Bon had originally intended the ship to be unarmed , relying only on its ram to sink enemy ships , but an engineer at Harrison revised the plan to include two large @-@ caliber guns .

= = General characteristics and machinery = =

Affondatore had a length of 89 @.@ 56 metres (293 ft 10 in) between perpendiculars and 93 @.@ 89 metres (308 ft 0 in) overall , with a beam of 12 @.@ 20 metres (40 ft 0 in) and a draught of 6 @.@ 35 metres (20 ft 10 in) . She displaced 4 @,@ 006 metric tons (3 @,@ 943 long tons ; 4 @,@ 416 short tons) normally and up to 4 @,@ 307 t (4 @,@ 239 long tons ; 4 @,@ 748 short tons) at full load . As built , the ship had a very minimal superstructure , with only a small conning tower . She had a crew of 309 officers and enlisted , which later increased to 356 .

The ship was powered by one single @-@ expansion steam engine that drove a single propeller shaft . Steam was provided by eight rectangular boilers , which were trunked into two funnels placed amidships . The engines generated 2 @,@ 717 indicated horsepower (2 @,@ 026 kW) , giving a top speed of 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . Sufficient coal was carried to give a range of 1 @,@ 647 nautical miles (3 @,@ 050 km ; 1 @,@ 895 mi) at 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . To supplement the steam engine on long @-@ range voyages , Affondatore was fitted with a two @-@ masted schooner rig .

= = Armament and armour = =

As built , Affondatore carried a main gun armament of two 300 @-@ pounder Armstrong guns in single turrets fore and aft . The exact diameter of the guns is unknown , but they were either 220 mm (8 @.@ 7 in) or 228 mm (9 @.@ 0 in) . She also carried two 80 mm (3 @.@ 1 in) guns to be used in landings . A 2 @.@ 5 metres (8 @.@ 2 ft) long ram was fitted . The ship had an iron hull , with sides and turrets protected by 127 millimetres (5 @.@ 0 in) of wrought iron armour , with a 50 mm (2 @.@ 0 in) thick armoured deck .

= = Service history = =

Affondatore was laid down on 11 April 1863 and launched on 3 November 1865 . With Italy preparing to declare war against Austria in June 1866 , the Italian government ordered Affondatore

's crew to move the incomplete ship from British waters to Cherbourg for fitting out , in order to avoid the threat of the ship being confiscated by the British . Affondatore left Cherbourg on 20 June , the day Italy declared war , sailing to join the main Italian fleet which was operating in the Adriatic Sea . The Third Italian War of Independence was fought concurrently with the Austro - Prussian War . The Italian fleet commander , Admiral Carlo Pellion di Persano , initially adopted a cautious course of action ; he was unwilling to risk battle with the Austrian Navy , despite the fact that the Austrian fleet was much weaker than his own . Persano claimed he was simply waiting for Affondatore to arrive , but his inaction weakened morale in the fleet , with many of his subordinates openly accusing him of cowardice . The ship passed through Gibraltar on 28 June , making her way into the Mediterranean .

= = = Battle of Lissa = = =

On 16 July , Persano took the Italian fleet out of Ancona , bound for Lissa , where they arrived on the 18th . With them , they brought troop transports carrying 3 000 soldiers ; the Italian warships began bombarding the Austrian forts on the island , with the intention of landing the soldiers once the fortresses had been silenced . In response , the Austrian Navy sent the fleet under Tegetthoff to attack the Italian ships . After arriving off Lissa on the 18th , Persano spent two days unsuccessfully trying to suppress the Austrian gun batteries on the island so he could land the soldiers . This resulted in a significant expenditure of ammunition , which would affect the outcome of the coming battle . Affondatore joined the fleet after it had arrived off Lissa on 19 July , but her crew were not fully worked up and had struggled to handle the ship while sailing to Italy and the Adriatic . Persano decided to make a third attempt to force a landing on the 20th , but before the Italians could begin the attack , the dispatch boat Esploratore arrived , bringing news of Tegetthoff 's approach . Persano 's fleet was in disarray ; the three ships of Admiral Giovanni Vacca 's 1st Division were three miles to the northeast from Persano 's main force , and three other ironclads were further away to the west .

Persano immediately ordered his ships to form up with Vacca 's , first in line abreast formation , and then in line ahead formation ; Affondatore was initially located on the disengaged side of the Italian line . Shortly before the action began , Persano decided to leave his flagship , Re d 'Italia , and transfer to Affondatore , though none of his subordinates on the other ships were aware of the change . Persano used Affondatore to steam up and down the Italian line , issuing various orders to the individual ships , but as the ship captains were not aware that he was aboard Affondatore , they ignored his signals . The Italians were thus left to fight as individuals without direction . More dangerously , by stopping Re d 'Italia , he allowed a significant gap to open up between Vacca 's three ships and the rest of the fleet . Tegetthoff took his fleet through the gap between Vacca 's and Persano 's ships , though he failed to ram any Italian vessels on the first pass . The Austrians then turned back toward Persano 's ships , and took the leading ships under heavy fire . Persano initially kept his ship out of the action , until after Re d 'Italia had been rammed and sunk by the Austrian flagship , Erzherzog Ferdinand Max .

After the Austrians began targeting the ironclad Re di Portogallo , Persano decided to finally commit his ship to the battle , by attempting to ram the Austrian wooden ship of the line Kaiser , though he failed to make a direct strike . Kaiser then rammed Re di Portogallo , before Affondatore made a second , unsuccessful attempt to ram her . Affondatore did , however , score a hit with one of her guns , badly damaging Kaiser , killing or wounding twenty of her crew . By this time , the Austrian ironclads disengaged from the melee to protect their wooden ships . Persano made an attempt to follow them with Affondatore , but he broke off the attempt when only one of his other ironclads followed him . His crews were badly demoralized by the battle , and his ships were low on ammunition and coal . The Italian fleet began to withdraw , followed by the Austrians ; as night began to fall , the opposing fleets disengaged completely , heading for Ancona and Pola , respectively . In the course of the battle , she had been hit by 22 Austrian shells .

= = = Later career = = =

Affondatore sank in a storm in Ancona harbour on 6 August 1866 , which may have been due to damage received during the Battle of Lissa . According to naval historians Greene and Massignani , however , Affondatore merely took on too much water due to her low freeboard ; the damage sustained at Lissa had nothing to do with her sinking . After refloating , Affondatore was rebuilt at La Spezia from 1867 to 1873 . The ship 's masts and sails were removed , with a single mast carrying a fighting top fitted in their place . In 1883 ? 1885 , she was fitted with new boilers and engines , rated at 3 @, @ 240 indicated horsepower (2 @, @ 420 kW) , and giving a speed of 13 knots (24 km / h ; 15 mph) . During the annual fleet maneuvers held in 1885 , Affondatore served in the 2nd Division of the " Western Squadron " ; she was joined by the ironclad Roma and five torpedo boats . The " Western Squadron " attacked the defending " Eastern Squadron " , simulating a Franco @-@ Italian conflict , with operations conducted off Sardinia .

Affondatore was present during a naval review held for the German Kaiser Wilhelm II during a visit to Italy in 1888 . From 1888 to 1889 , Affondatore was significantly modernized . Her main battery guns were replaced with two 10 in (250 mm) guns in new turrets . A new , larger superstructure was built to house a new secondary armament , and a second military mast was fitted . Her new secondary battery consisted of six 4 @. @ 7 in (120 mm) guns in single mounts , one 75 mm (3 @. @ 0 in) QF gun , eight 57 mm (2 @. @ 2 in) QF guns , and four 37 mm (1 @. @ 5 in) Hotchkiss revolver cannon . In 1891 , Affondatore became a torpedo training ship , and was fitted with two torpedo tubes .

The ship served in the 3rd Division of the Active Squadron during the 1893 fleet maneuvers , along with the ironclad Enrico Dandolo , the torpedo cruiser Goito , and four torpedo boats . During the maneuvers , which lasted from 6 August to 5 September , the ships of the Active Squadron simulated a French attack on the Italian fleet . As of 1899 , By 1899 , Affondatore was in service with the 2nd Division , which also included the ironclads Sicilia and Castelfidardo , and the torpedo cruisers Partenope and Urania . In 1904 , she was assigned to the defence of Venice , serving as a guard ship until 1907 . She was stricken on 11 October 1907 , and thereafter served as a floating ammunition depot at Taranto . Her ultimate fate is unknown .