

= HMS Amphion (1911) =

HMS Amphion was an Active A-class scout cruiser built for the Royal Navy before the First World War . Completed in 1913 , she was initially assigned to the First Fleet and became a destroyer flotilla leader in mid A- 1914 . When the war began , her flotilla was assigned to the Harwich Force . While patrolling on the first full day of the war , Amphion and her destroyers encountered and sank a German minelayer , SMS Königin Luise , but not before she had laid many of her mines . While returning from patrolling the following morning , Amphion accidentally struck a mine on 6 August 1914 off the Thames Estuary and sank with the loss of 132 crewmen killed . She was the first ship of the Royal Navy to be sunk in the First World War . The wreck site is protected and may not be dived upon without permission from the Ministry of Defence .

= = Design and description = =

The Active A-class ships were the last class of turbine A- powered scout cruisers ordered by the Admiralty . These ships were intended to work with destroyer flotillas , leading their torpedo attacks and backing them up when attacked by other destroyers , although they quickly became less useful as destroyer speeds increased before the First World War . Amphion had a length between perpendiculars of 405 feet (123 A. 4 m) , a beam of 41 feet (12 A. 5 m) and a draught of 14 feet 6 inches (4 A. 4 m) . She displaced 3 A, 340 long tons (3 A, 394 t) at normal load and 3 A, 945 long tons (4 A, 008 t) at deep load . Her crew consisted of 289 officers and other ranks .

The main armament of the Active class consisted of ten breech A- loading (BL) 4 A- inch (102 mm) Mk VII guns . The forward pair of guns were mounted side by side on a platform on the forecastle , six were amidships , three on each broadside , and the two remaining guns were on the centreline of the quarterdeck , one ahead of the other . The guns fired their 31 A- pound (14 kg) shells to a range of about 11 A, 400 yards (10 A, 400 m) . Her secondary armament was four quick A- firing (QF) three A- pounder (1 A. 9 in (47 mm)) Vickers Mk I guns and two submerged 18 A- inch (450 mm) torpedo tubes .

As scout cruisers , the ships were only lightly protected to maximise their speed . They had a curved protective deck that was one inch (25 mm) thick on the slope and 0 A. 5 inches (13 mm) on the flat . Their conning tower was protected by four inches of armour .

= = Construction and career = =

Ordered as part of the 1910 Naval Programme , Amphion was laid down at Pembroke Dockyard 's No. 5 Slipway on 15 March 1911 and launched on 4 December by Mrs. Mundy , wife of the dockyard 's Captain A- Superintendent , Captain Geoffrey Mundy . She was completed in March 1913 and her first commander was Captain Frederic Dreyer with Lieutenant John Tovey as his First Lieutenant . Amphion was commissioned on 2 April and assigned to the 4th Battle Squadron of the First Fleet . A month later , the ship was assigned to the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron by 18 May . She remained with the squadron for nearly a year and was serving as the flotilla leader of the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla by 18 June 1914 .

By the start of the First World War in August , Amphion and her flotilla was assigned to the Harwich Force , defending the eastern approaches to the English Channel , under the command of Captain Cecil H. Fox . In the morning of 5 August , Amphion and the 3rd Flotilla sortied into the North Sea to patrol the area between Harwich and the Dutch island of Terschelling for German activity . At 10 : 15 a ship in the black , buff , and yellow colours of the Great Eastern Railway 's steamers that plied between Harwich and the Hook of Holland was spotted . Fox sent the destroyers Lance and Landrail to investigate and shortly afterwards another destroyer reported that a trawler had seen a suspicious ship , ' throwing things overboard , presumably mines ' . Amphion led the flotilla to investigate and observed that the fleeing ship was deploying mines even then . At 10 : 45 , Lance opened fire at a range of 4 A, 400 yards (4 A, 000 m) .

The target was SMS Königin Luise , a former Hamburg @-@ Heligoland excursion boat that had been converted to an auxiliary minelayer by the Germans . They had planned to mount a pair of 8 @. @ 8 @-@ centimetre (3 @. @ 5 in) guns on board , but they did not have the time to do so ; her only armament was a pair of lighter guns and 180 mines . On the night of 4 August , she had departed Emden and headed into the North Sea to lay mines off the Thames Estuary , which she began at to do at dawn .

The fire from the destroyers was ineffective until Amphion closed to a range of 7 @, @ 000 yards (6 @, @ 400 m) and began hitting the German ship at about 11 : 15 . By noon , Königin Luise was sinking and the three British ships rescued 5 officers and 70 ratings . The flotilla proceeded onwards with their patrol until they reached the Dutch coast around 21 : 00 and turned for home . Fox was uncertain as to the locations of the mines laid by Königin Luise and laid a course that was seven nautical miles (13 km ; 8 @. @ 1 mi) west of where he thought the mines were . He guessed wrongly and led his flotilla over the danger area .

At 06 : 35 , Amphion struck a mine that detonated underneath her bridge . The explosion set her forecastle on fire and broke the ship 's keel . The destroyer Linnet attempted to tow the cruiser , but a deep crack across her upper deck showed that she was hogging badly and Fox ordered his crew to abandon ship . Shortly afterwards , her forward magazine exploded , throwing one 4 @-@ inch gun into the air that narrowly missed Linnet . One of Amphion 's shells burst on the deck of the destroyer Lark , killing two of her men and the only German prisoner rescued from the cruiser . Amphion then rapidly sank within 15 minutes of the explosion losing 1 officer and 131 ratings killed in the sinking , plus an unknown number of the crew rescued from Königin Luise . The wreck is a protected site under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986 .