

= HMS Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree =

HMS Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree (Manx : " Woman of My Heart ") was a packet steamer and a Royal Navy (RN) seaplane carrier of the First World War . She was originally built in 1907 by Vickers for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and was intended for use on the England ? Isle of Man route . She was the third vessel to bear her name . To this day Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree holds the crossing speed record from Liverpool to Douglas for a steamship at under three hours .

She was chartered by the RN at the beginning of 1915 and participated in several abortive attacks on Germany in May . The ship was transferred to the Dardanelles in June to support the Gallipoli Campaign . One of her aircraft made the first ship @-@ launched aerial torpedo attack on a ship in August . After Gallipoli was evacuated at the end of the year , Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree became flagship of the East Indies and Egypt Seaplane Squadron that operated in the Eastern Mediterranean , performing reconnaissance missions and attacking Turkish facilities and troops . She was sunk by Turkish artillery while anchored at the recently occupied island of Kastellorizo in early 1917 , five members of her crew being injured . The ship was salvaged in 1920 and broken up in 1923 . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree also holds the distinction of being the only aviation vessel of either side to be sunk by enemy action during the war .

= = Description and construction = =

SS Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree had a tonnage of 2 @, @ 651 gross register tons (GRT) . The ship was 390 feet (118 @. @ 9 m) long overall and 375 feet (114 @. @ 3 m) long between perpendiculars . She had a beam of 46 feet (14 @. @ 0 m) and a depth of 18 feet 6 inches (5 @. @ 64 m) from her main deck to the top of her keel . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree had five decks and a capacity of 2 @, @ 549 passengers with a crew of 119 .

The ship was powered by three license @-@ built Parsons direct @-@ drive steam turbines , each driving one propeller shaft . They were powered by steam provided by four cylindrical boilers at a working pressure of 170 psi (1 @, @ 172 kPa ; 12 kgf / cm²) that gave her a speed of 24 @. @ 2 knots (44 @. @ 8 km / h ; 27 @. @ 8 mph) . Her engines burnt up to 95 long tons (97 t) of coal a day , which made her an expensive ship to run .

She was ordered in 1907 by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and was built at the Vickers shipyard in Barrow @-@ in @-@ Furness at a cost of GB £ 112 @, @ 000 . The ship was launched on 23 March 1908 and completed on 8 August . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree was normally laid up , because of her expense , except for the three busiest months of the year when she had a full complement of passengers .

= = Royal Navy modifications and service = =

SS Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree was chartered by the Royal Navy on 1 January 1915 and she began her conversion into a seaplane carrier at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead the following day . Part of her aft superstructure was removed and replaced by a hangar , aft of her rear funnel , that housed four to six seaplanes . The aircraft were lifted in and out of the water by derricks fore and aft . A dismountable 60 @-@ foot @-@ long (18 m) flying @-@ off platform was installed forward of her superstructure ; it was equipped with a trolley and rails to allow a seaplane to take off .

In RN service the ship displaced 3 @, @ 888 long tons (3 @, @ 950 t) , was 387 feet (118 @. @ 0 m) long overall , and had a draught of 16 feet (4 @. @ 9 m) . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree 's turbines generated 14 @, @ 500 shaft horsepower (10 @, @ 800 kW) and she was credited with a speed of 24 @. @ 5 knots (45 @. @ 4 km / h ; 28 @. @ 2 mph) although that speed was exceeded in service . The ship could carry 502 long tons (510 t) of coal . Her crew consisted of approximately 250 officers and enlisted men .

Her armament consisted of four quick @-@ firing (QF) 12 @-@ pounder 18 cwt guns , and two Vickers three @-@ pounder AA guns . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree carried 130 rounds per 12 @-@ pounder and 64 rounds for each three @-@ pounder . In May 1916 , one 12 @-@ pounder AA gun ,

a three @-@ pounder , and a 2 @-@ pounder pom @-@ pom , each on army carriages , were added .

She was initially assigned to the Harwich Force , under the command of Commander Cecil L 'Estrange Malone , where on 3 May she took part in an abortive air raid on Norddeich that had to be abandoned because of thick fog . On 6 May , while on another unsuccessful mission to attack Norddeich , she was accidentally rammed by the destroyer Lennox in thick fog , although damage was slight . Another attempt was made on 11 May , but was again abandoned because of heavy fog . During this raid , Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree attempted to launch her Sopwith Schneider from a trolley off the fore deck , but the engine backfired , wrecking its starter , and breaking the pilot 's wrist as the starter handle was in the cockpit .

= = = To the Dardanelles = = =

In May 1915 , she sailed for the Dardanelles , carrying two Short Type 184 torpedo bombers , and arrived at Lesbos on 10 June . Her aircraft were mainly involved in spotting for ships providing naval gunfire support for troops ashore , although they also conducted reconnaissance missions of the area . On 11 August , one of these missions had spotted a Turkish ship off the north coast of the Sea of Marmora and , on the following day , Flight Commander Charles Edmonds attacked it flying a Short 184 seaplane . He left his observer behind and flew with a reduced fuel load to lighten his aircraft enough to carry a 14 @-@ inch (356 mm) , 810 @-@ pound (370 kg) torpedo . He successfully dropped his aerial torpedo at a distance of about 800 yards (730 m) and an altitude of 15 feet (4 @-@ 6 m) . It turned out that his target had been beached after having been torpedoed by the British submarine E14 . This was followed by a successful attack on 17 August against a 5 @-@ 000 @-@ long @-@ ton (5 @-@ 100 t) ship by Edmonds . Flight Lieutenant George Dacre accompanied Edmonds on his flight in his own aircraft , but suffered engine troubles and had to land in the Dardanelles . He was taxiing on the water when he encountered a large steam tugboat , which he promptly torpedoed . After taxiing for several miles he was able to get airborne again and was within gliding distance of Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree when his engine failed permanently .

On 2 September , she helped to rescue Australian troops from the torpedoed troopship HMT Southland off Lemnos . The ship was transferred to Port Said , Egypt after the end of the Gallipoli Campaign . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree became the flagship of the East Indies and Egypt Seaplane Squadron when it was formed in January 1916 . The squadron was under the command of the General Officer Commanding , Egypt and its primary duty was to watch Turkish positions and movements in southern Palestine and the Sinai . SS Uganda collided with her on 11 February and badly damaged the ship 's bow . Permanent repairs took were made at Suez from 13 March to 25 April . Commander Charles Samson replaced L 'Estrange Malone as captain on 14 May . A few days later , Lieutenant William Benn joined the ship as an observer . Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree was based at Aden later in 1916 .

= = = Loss = = =

French troops occupied the Greek island of Kastellorizo , off the southwest coast of Turkey , on 20 December 1916 to use it as an advance base against the Turks . Not pleased at the presence of the French , the Turks secretly deployed an artillery battery of four 155 @-@ millimeter (6 @-@ 1 in) and twelve 77 @-@ millimeter (3 @-@ 0 in) guns within range of the island . The French commander requested a seaplane carrier to conduct reconnaissance in the area and Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree was sent in response . She arrived on 11 January 1917 and anchored in the harbor which faced the mainland . The Turkish guns opened fire about two hours later , hitting the carrier with their third shot . Subsequent shells disabled her steering and started a fire in her hangar that spread across her upper deck .

The crew was ordered to abandon ship after about forty minutes of the bombardment using the only remaining operable motor lifeboat of the three stowed on board . One officer and four enlisted men were injured , but no one was killed . The Turks continued their bombardment for five hours until

Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree listed to starboard and sank in shallow water . Later in the day , the captain and the chief engineer returned to the ship to rescue the ship 's mascots , a cat and dog which had both survived the attack .

Ben @-@ my @-@ Chree 's wreck remained in place until 1920 when it was refloated by the salvage ship Vallette and towed to the port of Piraeus . The ship proved to be a constructive total loss and was broken up in Venice , Italy in 1923 .

During her short career she operated Sopwith Type 860 , Schneider , and Baby , as well as Short Type 830 and Type 184 floatplanes .