

= HMS Essex (1901) =

HMS Essex was one of 10 Monmouth class armoured cruisers built for the Royal Navy in the first decade of the 20th century . Upon completion in 1904 she was assigned to the 2nd Cruiser Squadron of the Channel Fleet . The ship was placed in reserve in March 1906 and recommissioned in 1909 for service with the 4th Cruiser Squadron on the North America and West Indies Station . In 1912 , Essex returned home and was assigned to the Training Squadron of the Home Fleet . After a refit the following year , she rejoined the 4th Cruiser Squadron in early 1914 .

After the beginning of World War I in August , the ship captured a German merchantman the following month . Essex spent most of the first half of the war in the Atlantic Ocean , escorting convoys and searching for German commerce raiders . The ship captured another German merchantman in mid 1916 and was reduced to second line roles such as depot ship and accommodation ship a few months later . She was paid off in 1919 and sold for scrap two years later .

= = Design and description = =

The Monmouths were designed to protect British merchant shipping from fast cruisers like the French Guichen , Châteaurenault or the Duplex class . The ships were designed to displace 9,000 long tons (10,000 t) . They had an overall length of 463 feet 6 inches (141.3 m) , a beam of 66 feet (20.1 m) and a deep draught of 25 feet (7.6 m) . They were powered by two 4-cylinder triple expansion steam engines , each driving one shaft , which produced a total of 22,000 indicated horsepower (16,000 kW) designed to give a maximum speed of 23 knots (43 km / h ; 26 mph) . Essex , however , was one of three of the Monmouths that failed to meet her designed speed . The engines were powered by 31 Belleville boilers . She carried a maximum of 1,600 long tons (1,600 t) of coal and her complement consisted of 678 officers and ratings .

The Monmouth class ships ' main armament consisted of fourteen breech-loading (BL) 6-inch Mk VII guns . Four of these guns were mounted in two twin gun turrets , one each fore and aft of the superstructure , and the others were positioned in casemates amidships . Six of these were mounted on the main deck and were only usable in calm weather . They had a maximum range of approximately 12,200 yards (11,200 m) with their 100-pound (45 kg) shells . Ten quick-firing (QF) 12-pounder (3-inch (76 mm)) 12-cwt guns were fitted for defence against torpedo boats . Essex also carried three 3-pounder (1.9 in (47 mm)) Hotchkiss guns and two submerged 18-inch (450 mm) torpedo tubes .

Beginning in 1915 , the main deck six-inch guns of the Monmouth class ships were moved to the upper deck and given gun shields . Their casemates were plated over to improve seakeeping . The twelve-pounder guns displaced by the transfer were repositioned elsewhere . At some point in the war , a pair of three-pounder anti-aircraft guns were installed on the upper deck .

The waterline armour belt of the Monmouths had a maximum thickness of 4 inches (102 mm) and was closed off by 5-inch (127 mm) transverse bulkheads . The armour of the gun turrets and their barbets was 4 inches thick while that of the casemates had a thickness of 5 inches . The protective deck armour ranged in thickness from .75 ? 2 inches (19 ? 51 mm) and the conning tower was protected by 10 inches (254 mm) of armour .

= = Construction and service = =

Essex , named to commemorate the English county , was laid down at Pembroke Royal Dockyard , Wales , on 2 January 1900 and launched on 29 August 1901 , when she was christened by Mrs. Barlow , wife of the Captain Superintendent of the dockyard . The ship was completed on 22 March 1904 and was initially assigned to the 2nd Cruiser Squadron of the Channel Fleet . Essex was placed in reserve in March 1906 and suffered a six-inch gun explosion in July while

training . She was recommissioned in September 1909 and assigned to the 4th Cruiser Squadron on the North America and West Indies Station . She was transferred to the Home Fleet Training Squadron in 1912 and refitted the following year . Essex rejoined the 4th Cruiser Squadron in January 1914 with Commander Hugh Tweedie in command .

After visiting Madeira and Jamaica , the ship arrived in Veracruz , Mexico , on 9 February to relieve her sister ship , Suffolk , and protect British interests during the on @-@ going Mexican Revolution . Two weeks later , she visited Galveston , Texas , before heading for Tampico , Mexico where she arrived on 11 March . Essex only spent a few days there before returning to Veracruz on 13 March . She was in Tampico when Mexican soldiers briefly detained American sailors buying gasoline for their ship on 9 April (the Tampico Affair) and returned to Veracruz ten days later , two days before the Americans began landing there on 21 April . They were not satisfied by the Mexican apologies and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson ordered the city occupied in retribution and to forestall a major arms delivery to Victoriano Huerta 's forces . The Mexicans resisted and stray bullets hit Essex the next day , wounding one man who was shot in both feet . Tweedie , escorted by two ratings , was sent to take dispatches for the British Minister in Mexico City on the 26th and returned two days later . Rear @-@ Admiral Christopher Craddock inspected the ship and her crew on 5 ? 6 May . Essex sailed for Tampico on 10 May before leaving Mexican waters on the 14th . A month later , the ship was in Quebec City when she was visited by the Canadian Minister of Marine and Fisheries on 16 June . The following month , Essex ferried the Governor General of Canada , Prince Arthur , Duke of Connaught and Strathearn , to Newfoundland and Labrador before returning to Quebec City on 20 July .

== = World War I == =

When Craddock received the preliminary war warning on 27 July , he ordered Essex to join her sister Lancaster in Bermuda , which she reached three days later . The ship was ordered to patrol the area north and northwest to protect British shipping and destroy any German commerce raiders . As the Germans appeared to be concentrating their efforts in the Caribbean , Craddock ordered Essex south to reinforce his forces there in early September . On 7 September , she captured the tender , SS Bethania , for the armed merchant cruiser SS Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse , en route from Halifax to Jamaica . The ship continued to patrol the sealanes from the Caribbean Sea to Canadian waters until the end of February 1915 , when she escorted a troop convoy from Halifax to Queenstown , Ireland . Essex then sailed to Barrow @-@ in @-@ Furness where she began a refit that lasted until 29 April . Now assigned to the 7th Cruiser Squadron of the Grand Fleet , she spent the next several weeks in Avonmouth or Scapa Flow before being transferred to Cruiser Force I and began patrolling the area between the Azores , Madeira , Cape Verde and Gibraltar on 8 June . Rear @-@ Admiral Archibald Moore , commander of the 9th Cruiser Squadron , hoisted his flag aboard the ship on 4 September and pulled it down on the 29th . Essex began a brief refit at Gibraltar on 1 October that lasted until the 26th and then resumed patrolling the Central Atlantic . She captured a German merchantman , SS Telde , on 3 May 1916 in the Canary Islands . The ship resumed patrolling until her arrival in Devonport on 17 August ; Essex was paid off days later .

Later in the year , she was recommissioned and served as a destroyer depot ship at Devonport . By April 1918 , Essex was an accommodation ship there . As of 1 December , she was serving as a training ship , but she reverted to her previous role as an accommodation ship by 1 May 1919 . Essex was paid off again by October 1919 and was later sold for scrap on 8 November 1921 and broken up in Germany .