= HMS Calliope (1884) =

HMS Calliope was a Calypso @-@ class corvette (later classified as a third @-@ class cruiser) of the Royal Navy which served from 1887 until 1951 . Exemplifying the transitional nature of the late Victorian navy , Calliope was a sailing corvette ? last such ship built for the Royal Navy ? but supplemented the full sail rig with a powerful engine . Steel was used for the hull , and like the earlier iron @-@ hulled corvettes , Calliope was cased with timber and coppered below the waterline , in the same manner as wooden ships .

Calliope was known for " one of the most famous episodes of seamanship in the 19th century " , when the vessel was the only one present to avoid being sunk or stranded in the tropical cyclone that struck Apia , Samoa in 1889 . After retirement from active service , Calliope served as a training ship until 1951 , when the old corvette was sold for breaking .

= = Design and construction = =

Calliope and sister ship Calypso comprised the Calypso class of corvettes designed by Nathaniel Barnaby . Part of a long line of cruiser classes built for protecting trade routes and colonial police work , they were the last two sailing corvettes built for the Royal Navy . Corvettes had been built of iron since the Volage class of 1867 , but the Calypsos and the preceding Comus class were instead built of steel . Corvettes were designed to operate across the vast distances of Britain 's maritime empire , and could not rely on dry docks for maintenance . Since iron (and steel) hulls were subject to biofouling , and they could not easily be cleaned , the established practice of copper sheathing was extended to protect them ; the metal plating of the hull was timber @-@ cased and coppered below the waterline . The only armour was a 1 @.@ 5 @-@ inch (38 @-@ mm) armoured deck covering the machinery spaces , but coal bunkers along the sides gave some protection to the machinery spaces .

Calypso and Calliope differed from their nine predecessors of the Comus class in armament ; they were also slightly longer , had a deeper draught , and displaced 390 tons more . Originally planned as a ten @-@ gun corvette , Calliope was completed with four 6 @-@ inch (152 @.@ 4 mm) breechloaders in sponsons fore and aft on each side , twelve 5 @-@ inch (127 @.@ 0 mm) breechloaders in broadside between the 6 @-@ inch guns , and six quick @-@ firing Nordenfelts .

The compound @-@ expansion steam engine was supplied with steam by 6 boilers and developed 4 @,@ 023 indicated horsepower (3 @,@ 000 kW) . This was 50 % more powerful than the predecessor class , which gave the corvette one more knot of speed , a difference that would be crucial in the disaster that made Calliope famous . Driving a single feathering screw , the engine could achieve a speed of 13 ¾ knots , or 14 ¾ knots with forced draught . The vessel nevertheless was a fully rigged sailing ship , allowing sustained service in areas where coaling stations were far apart . Calliope was well @-@ suited to distant cruising service for the British Empire at its Victorian peak .

Although laid down in 1881 , Calliope was not launched until 1884 , and was placed in reserve at Portsmouth before completion . The ship was not activated until 25 January 1887 , when the vessel was placed in commission for the China Station , the sort of distant service for which the class had been designed . The same year , all corvettes and frigates were re @-@ classified as " cruisers " , with Calliope and Calypso falling into the " third @-@ class cruiser " category .

= = Service with the fleet = =

The British Empire was the largest on Earth , and Britain protected that empire and its trade routes with the world 's largest navy . Great Britain assumed the role of peacekeeper on the world 's oceans , and the Royal Navy was the instrument by which the Pax Britannica was kept . The global reach of the Royal Navy included the western Pacific Ocean , patrolled by the Australia Station . In 1887 Captain Henry Coey Kane took Calliope to the Pacific . At first assigned to the China Station , the vessel was reassigned to the Australia Station later in 1887 . The cruiser was in New Zealand at

the end of that year , and was the first vessel to enter the new Calliope Dock . In early 1888 Calliope was sent north to watch over a looming diplomatic crisis and potential military confrontation in Samoa .

This crisis had its roots in the Great Powers ' competition for colonies in the last decades of the 19th century . The German Empire , invigorated by its victory over France in the Franco @-@ Prussian War and by its unification under the Prussian monarchy , had newfound imperial ambitions that stretched beyond Europe . It had shared in the division of Africa , and in the 1880s looked to the Pacific as well . Ships of its Imperial Navy were sent to Apia in Samoa , where German agents had fomented rebellion against the indigenous government . They were countered there by the Asiatic Squadron of the United States Navy . The United States had nearly completed establishing control over its territories on the North American continent , leading American ambitions to stretch beyond its shores . The squadron was at Samoa to assert US interests in the Pacific and to watch the Germans .

In March 1889 , the new corvette Calliope ? sent to keep the peace and protect Britain 's interests in Samoa ? joined the competing squadrons of the Imperial German and United States navies at Apia . The harbour there was primitive , small and nearly surrounded by reefs . Perhaps fit for four ships , the anchorage held seven warships and six merchant vessels on 14 March .

The barometer began to fall that day and a tropical cyclone began to form . The 1889 Apia cyclone increased in ferocity over the next two days . Rain fell in sheets , cutting visibility . Winds of 70 to 100 knots (130 ? 185 km / h) blew directly into the anchorage , trapping the ships in the V @-@ shaped harbour . The harbour bottom was scoured by currents and anchors lost their purchase . Operating their engines at full speed to resist the wind and waves , ships nevertheless dragged their anchors and were inexorably driven landward . Vessels collided and were thrown on the reefs or ashore , and some sank . By 09 : 00 on the 16th , Calliope , although still riding at anchor , had been hit by one ship and narrowly missed by another , and Captain Kane decided to attempt to escape . To relieve the strain on the five anchor cables , Calliope 's boilers were producing maximum pressure ; the engines were being worked " red hot " , and the propeller was making 74 revolutions per minute , sufficient for 15 knots (28 km / h) in calmer waters . In spite of this titanic effort , the ship was barely able to make headway against the winds and the seas in the harbour , and anchor cables began to part .

To port and only 20 feet (6 m) away was the coral reef . Ahead were the US ships USS Vandalia and USS Trenton ; to starboard were other warships . There was only a narrow opening between the vessels to one side and the ground to the other . Hemmed in by these obstacles and with the rudder at times within 6 feet (2 m) of the reef , Calliope manoeuvred while still attached to the anchor cables , which began to give way . When Captain Kane saw an opening , he slipped the anchors and drove forward . Avoiding the helpless Vandalia , he approached the sinking Trenton , coming so close that Calliope 's fore yard @-@ arm passed over the American 's deck . As Calliope rolled to port , the yard lifted over Trenton . The crew of the helpless and doomed American ship cheered Calliope as the corvette slipped past . The British ship 's drive for the open sea was called by the American commander on the scene " one of the grandest sights a seaman or anyone else ever saw ; the lives of 250 souls depended on the hazardous adventure . "

Making for the harbour mouth , the British ship 's bow and stern alternately rose and plunged into the incoming waves ; the propeller at times was spinning in air , requiring a careful hand on the throttle to keep the shaft from running away to destruction . Green seas were boarding the vessel and running the length of the deck . There were ten men on the wheel and more below handling relieving tackle on the tiller to assist in maintaining control of the rudder . Taking two hours to travel four cables , the cruiser finally escaped the anchorage into the open sea , an achievement not known to Calliope 's crew for some time , as sea spray and spume had reduced visibility to nothing .

The storm kept Calliope at sea the next two days . Re @-@ entering the harbour on 19 March to search for the missing anchors , the crew discovered that all of the other ships ? twelve in all ? had been wrecked or sunk , and nearly every crew had been diminished by the loss of men killed by the storm . Unable to find the anchor amidst the wreckage , and his ship having sustained significant damage , Captain Kane decided to return to Australia . He turned over Calliope 's diving outfit to the

US Navy to assist it in salvage , and received in return boats from the wrecked American ships to replace the boats which had been stripped from Calliope by the storm .

Captain Kane then took his ship to Sydney , where they received a hero 's welcome . The narrowness of Calliope 's escape ; the excellence of the engines and the dedication of the crew , who kept the power plant in operation for many hours during the ordeal ; the seamanship of Captain Kane and officers ; their bravery in letting go of their anchor and facing the storm , trusting only in their ship and themselves ; and the respect and encouragement given to them by the crew of Trenton ; made Calliope famous .

The engineer of Calliope , Henry George Bourke , was specially promoted from staff engineer to fleet engineer on 28 May 1889 , " for his services in Her Majesty 's ship ' Calliope , ' during the recent hurricane at Samoa . " He attributed his success to the superior properties of West Coast coal from New Zealand used to fire the ship 's boilers ; this statement attracted the custom of the British Admiralty when fuelling its ships in those waters .

Captain Kane was made Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the 1891 Queen 's Birthday Honours . He was cited by the Admiralty for his " nerve and decisions " , given the command of HMS Victory in 1892 , and in 1897 was promoted to rear @-@ admiral .

Calliope returned to service on the Australian station after repairs were complete . At the end of 1889 the cruiser was recalled to the United Kingdom .

= = In reserve = =

Arriving back home in early 1890 , Calliope was placed in reserve and remained there for the next seven years . In June 1897 the cruiser was present at Queen Victoria 's Diamond Jubilee Review of the Fleet at Spithead . That same year Calliope became a tender to HMS Northampton , an older and larger armoured cruiser used as seagoing training ship for boys . Calliope also was occasionally used as a training cruiser herself , and toured the Mediterranean from February to April in 1900 , and again in March 1901 , and in March 1902 . During the summer 1902 she undertook a training cruise in home waters May ? June 1902 under the command of Captain E. D. St. A. Ommanney , visiting Campbeltown , Belfast Lough , Portishead , Dartmouth , Lyme Regis and Guernsey ; before she took part in the Coronation Naval Review .

Relieved of tender duty in 1905 , Calliope was returned to reserve and promptly stricken from the effective list . The cruiser laid up at Portsmouth , and in 1906 was listed for sale for a time . The next year Calliope was moved to North East England for a new career .

= = Training ship = =

On 29 October 1907 Calliope became a drill ship at Newcastle upon Tyne for the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve , Tyne Division , and served there for over four decades . The cruiser surrendered the name " Calliope " to a C @-@ class cruiser between 1915 and 1931 , and became Helicon . After the newer Calliope was paid off in the 1930s , Helicon reverted to Calliope and retained that name until sold in 1951 . When finally scrapped in 1953 , the steering wheel was presented to the government of Western Samoa . The mahogany panelling from the officers ' wardroom was reclaimed in 1953 and now forms the wings to the 18th century organ in the west gallery of Christ Church , North Shields , Tyne and Wear .

The name " Calliope " also lives on in the Royal Navy . In 1951 the ship 's successor as training ship on the Tyne took that name , and now the shore establishment itself bears the title and honours the memory of HMS Calliope .