

SMS Brummer Wreck - Scapa Flow

Nationality:	German
Launched:	11 December 1915
Commissioned:	2 April 1916
Builder:	AG Vulcan, Stettin
Construction number:	422
Type:	Light Steam Ship (direct translation from plans)
Subtype/class:	Fast mine layer, Brummer Class
Displacement (standard):	4385 tonnes
Displacement (full load):	5856 tonnes
Length overall:	140m*
Beam:	13m
Draught:	5.88 - 6m
Complement:	309
Material:	Steel
Cause of loss:	Scuttled
Date lost:	21 June 1919; 13:05 hrs
Casualties (in scuttling):	0
Propulsion:	2 coal and 4 oil marine type boilers, 2 x steam turbines, Two propellers
Fuel:	1000 tonnes oil maximum, 600 tonnes coal maximum
Range:	5800 nautical miles at 12 knots
Power:	42797 shp**
Speed:	28 knots
Armour:	Belt 40mm maximum, deck 15mm, control tower 100mm sides & 20mm roof
Armament:	4 x 15cm guns, 2 x 8.8 anti aircraft guns, 2 x 50cm deck-mounted torpedo launchers, 400 mines

*measurements taken from the ships plans

**shp – shaft horse power

History of the Vessel

The SMS Brummer was built by the shipyard AG Vulcan, Stettin in 1915. Both the SMS Brummer and her sister ship SMS Bremse utilised turbines that were requisitioned from AG Vulcan at the start of World War I. These turbines were originally intended for the Borodino (also known as Izmail) class Russian battlecruiser Navarin, one of the four strong class that were launched for the Russian Baltic Fleet but never completed.

At the outbreak of war there were only 3 minelayers in the German navy. The Brummer and her sister ship were built to reinforce this number. The Brummer class ships are often described as light cruisers. This is not quite accurate as they were built as minelayers. Their intended purpose was not an offensive one. This meant that they were lightly armoured and had fewer guns than the light cruisers. All of the light cruisers were capable of carrying between 100 and 200 mines. The Brummer class carried significantly more at 400 mines but had just half the number of guns.

They resembled the British cruisers of the Aurora class due to the curved shape of the bow and the collapsible main mast. The hull incorporated three decks, oil being stored in bunkers in the bottom of the ship and coal along the sides.

19 August 1916 – The Brummer took part in a sortie towards the British coast in order to draw the British fleet out and over the lines of submarines. Although the U-boats reported some success the

German ships turned back after reports of many British vessels in the vicinity.

On 17 October 1917 the Brummer and her sister ship SMS Bremse intercepted a convoy that was en route from Bergen in Norway to Lerwick in Shetland. They had been selected for this task due to their high speed, large radius of action and resemblance to British cruisers. In preparation for the raid, their crews painted the ships dark grey to further camouflage them as British vessels.

They sank the Admiralty M class destroyers HMS Mary Rose and the R class destroyer HMS Strongbow along with nine neutral Scandinavian vessels in the convoy. The English poet, Sir Henry John Newbolt describes that 'throughout the attack the Germans displayed a severity which is hard to distinguish from downright cruelty. They gave the neutral masters and crews no chance to lower their boats and get away, but poured their broadsides into them without warning, as though they had been armed enemies. ... In the case of the destroyers the enemies conduct was even worse; to their everlasting discredit fire was opened and maintained upon the Strongbow's survivors.' The German rebuttal to the charge was that victims in the water and lifeboat were due to gunfire falling short rather than intentional firing upon them. Four officers and 41 men from the Strongbow were saved; two officers and eight men were the only survivors from the Mary Rose. The two trawlers with the escorts were undamaged, one of which rescued most of the survivors.

The bravery of the Royal Navy captains was recognised. They enabled three merchant ships to escape. However, they were criticised at the time for failing to draw away the German cruisers and not giving radio warnings of the attacks. It later transpired that the Brummer and Bremse had successfully jammed wireless signals during the attack.

The famous Room 40 (the code-breaking section of the Admiralty) did not display any charts showing the position of British ships and convoys which may have helped determine the objectives of the Brummer and Bremse. It probably did not help that as Brummer and Bremse were mine-laying cruisers the possibility that they may attack convoys was not considered.

After the successful attack plans were considered to increase boiler space on the Brummer and the Bremse so that they could become successful commerce raiders. As expected Britain added heavier units to convoy escort duty placing the Atlantic convoy system under greater pressure due to the transfer of escorts to the North Sea convoys. The entry of the United States and her navy into WWI relieved some of this pressure, and as there were doubts about the ability of the two cruisers to be successfully supplied at sea and avoid detection, the plans were never followed through.

The Brummer was interned in Scapa Flow on 26 November 1918.

People Associated with the Ship

- Kommander / Kapitan William Schulz (April 1916 - March 1917)
- Fregattenkapitän Leonhardi (March 1917 - November 1917)
- Kapitan Hans Quaet Faslem (November 1917 - December 1917)
- Kommander Edmund Schulz (December 1917 - August 1918)
- Lieutenant Commander Theodore Gorris (August 1918 - November 1918)
- Lieutenant Walter Prah (Internment commander)

Artefacts from the Wreck

In Lyness Museum:

- Lamp filter (2000.208)
- Bottle

Material reported under RoW amnesty (2001):

- A792 porthole: from seabed.

NMRS, MS/829/34.

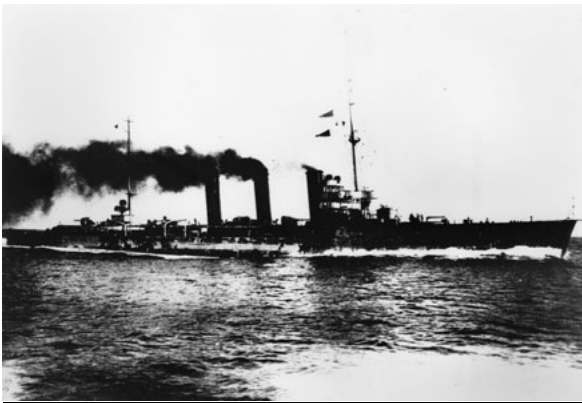
- A1077 1 fire hose connector: from seabed
- A2091 1 eggcup (plain and unadorned): in dumb waiter descending from galley
- A2620 1 bridge steering column and wheel: from seabed
- A2650 1 brass switch: from seabed
- A2744 1 valve top: from seabed
- A3034 1 lamp: from seabed
- A3136 1 'sighting stand': from seabed
- A3486 1 brass nut: from seabed.

NMRS, MS/829/35.

- A4512 Brass porthole hinged clip and threaded bar, and cylindrical copper rheostat with wood connection ends.

NMRS, MS/829/77.

Photos of the SMS Brummer



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HMS Aurora 1913 for comparison



HMS Abdiel & HMS Aurora 1913