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HMS *Shropshire*

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HMS *Shropshire* was a [Royal Navy](#) (RN) [heavy cruiser](#) of the *London* sub-class of [County-class cruisers](#). She is the only warship to have been named after [Shropshire](#), England. Completed in 1929, *Shropshire* served with the RN until 1942, when she was transferred to the [Royal Australian Navy](#) (RAN) following the loss of sister ship [HMAS *Canberra*](#). Commissioned as **HMAS *Shropshire***, the ship remained in RAN service until 1949, and was sold for scrap in 1954.

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HMS *Shropshire*

History



United Kingdom

Name:	HMS <i>Shropshire</i>
Namesake:	Shropshire , England
Ordered:	17 March 1926
Builder:	William Beardmore and Company (Dalmuir , Scotland)
Laid down:	24 February 1927
Launched:	5 July 1928
Completed:	12 September 1929
Commissioned:	24 September 1929

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
Shropshire was one of four heavy cruisers built to the *London* design of the **County-class cruisers**.^[1] The cruiser had a displacement of 9,830 tons at standard load, was 632.75 feet (192.86 m) **long overall**, 595 feet (181 m) long **between perpendiculars**, and had a beam of 66 feet (20 m).^[1]

The propulsion system consisted of eight Yarrow-type boilers, which fed Parsons geared turbines.^[2] These generated 80,000 shaft horsepower, which was fed to the ship's four 11-foot (3.4 m) diameter propellers.^[2] The cruiser could reach speeds of up to 32.25 knots (59.73 km/h; 37.11 mph), with 12 knots (22 km/h; 14 mph) as the designated economical speed.^[1] At economical speed, she could travel 8,700 nautical miles (16,100 km; 10,000 mi).^[2]

Armament [\[edit \]](#)

The cruiser's initial armament consisted of eight **BL 8 inch Mk VIII naval guns** in four twin **turrets**, four single **QF 4 inch Mk V naval guns** and four single **QF 2 pounder naval guns** (or pom-poms) for anti-aircraft defence, four **3-pounder guns**, and a number of smaller calibre guns for point defence.^[1] During the 1930s, two 0.5-inch machine guns were added to the point defence armament.^[1]



Members of the ship's company watching a torpedo leaving the torpedo tubes mounted amidships during firing trials. One of the cruiser's twin 4-inch gun turrets can be seen. 

Shortly before transfer to the RAN in 1943, *Shropshire* underwent a refit.^[1] Although the main armament was unchanged, the 4-inch guns were upgraded to twin mountings, while the anti-aircraft armament was replaced with eighteen **20 mm Oerlikon** guns (seven twin mountings and four single mountings) and two **QF 2-pounder Mark VI** eight-barrelled pom-poms.^[1] The 3-pounder guns were deleted, while two quadruple-tube launchers for **21-inch torpedoes** and several **depth charge** chutes were installed.^[1] During the same refit, the cruiser

Decommissioned: 23 December 1942

Identification: **Pennant number:** 73, later 83, later 96

Honours and awards: **Battle honours:**
Atlantic 1941
Arctic 1941

Fate: Transferred to RAN



Australia

Name: HMAS *Shropshire*

Commissioned: 20 April 1943

Decommissioned: 10 November 1949

Motto: "Floreat Ambo"

Honours and awards: **Battle honours:**
New Guinea 1943–44
Leyte Gulf 1944
Lingayen Gulf 1945
Borneo 1945
Pacific 1945

Fate: Sold for scrapping, 16 July 1954

General characteristics

Class and type: **County-class** heavy cruiser

Displacement: 9,750 tons *standard*
13,315 tons *full load*

Length: 633 ft (193 m)

Beam: 66 ft (20 m)

Draught: 21 ft (6.4 m)

Propulsion: 8 × Admiralty 3-drum boilers
4-shaft Parsons geared turbines
80,000 shaft horsepower
(60,000 kW)

Speed: 32 knots (59 km/h; 37 mph)

ceased operating its seaplane, and the [aircraft catapult](#) was removed.^[2]

In 1945, during a refit in Sydney, *Shropshire*'s armament changed again.^[2] The torpedo tubes and depth charge throwers were stripped from the ship, and the entire Oerlikon outfit was replaced by fifteen single [40 mm Bofors](#) guns.^[2] By February 1946, six of the Bofors guns had been removed, with the cruiser's armament settling into its final configuration.^[2]

Construction [[edit](#)]

Construction of the cruiser was ordered on 17 March 1926.^[3] *Shropshire* was laid down at the shipyard of [William Beardmore and Company](#), at [Dalmuir](#), Scotland on 24 February 1927.^[2] She was launched by [Violet Herbert, Countess of Powis](#), on 5 July 1928.^[2] Completed on 12 September 1929, the cruiser was commissioned into the RN on 24 September 1929.^[2]

The ship's name was chosen by [First Lord of the Admiralty William Bridgeman](#), whose [constituency](#) was located in the county of [Shropshire](#).^[1] *Shropshire* is the only ship of the RN or RAN to carry the name.^[3] The [ship's badge](#) takes the [leopard's](#) face from the [arms](#) of the Shropshire County Council.^[4]

Operational history [[edit](#)]

RN service [[edit](#)]

After post-commissioning workups, *Shropshire* was assigned to the 1st Cruiser Squadron of the [British Mediterranean Fleet](#) in November 1929.^[3] During 1935 and 1936, the cruiser was involved in the British response to the [Abyssinia Crisis](#).^[3] *Shropshire* was also present for the [Spanish Civil War](#), and between 22 August and 16 September 1936, supported the evacuation of refugees from [Barcelona](#).^[3] She remained in the Mediterranean (apart from returning to the United Kingdom for refits)

Range:	4,715 km (2,546 nmi; 2,930 mi) at 31.5 knots (58.3 km/h; 36.2 mph) 20,116 kilometres (10,862 nmi; 12,500 mi) at 12 knots (22 km/h; 14 mph) 3,210 tons fuel oil
Complement:	690 (peace), 1,000 (war)
Armament:	<i>Original configuration:</i> 8 × 8-in (203 mm) Mk VIII dual guns 4 × QF 4-in (102 mm) Mk V single AA guns 4 × 2-pdr (40 mm) single pom-poms 2 × 2-pdr (40 mm) quad pom-poms 2 × 0.5-in quadruple Vickers machine gun mount 2 × quadruple 21 inch (533 mm) torpedo tubes <i>April 1941 – November 1942 configuration:</i> 8 × 8-in (203 mm) Mk VIII dual guns 4 × QF 4-inch (101.6 mm) Mk XVI dual AA guns 2 × 2-pdr (40 mm) eight barrel pom-poms 10 × 20 mm (0.8 in) single guns 2 × .50 caliber quadruple Vickers machine gun mount 2 × quadruple 21-in (533 mm) torpedo tubes <i>November 1942 – April 1944 configuration:</i> 8 × 8 in (203-mm) Mk VIII dual guns 4 × QF 4-inch (101.6 mm) Mk XVI dual AA guns

until the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, at which point the cruiser was reassigned to the South Atlantic for **trade protection** patrols.^[3]

On 9 December 1939, *Shropshire* intercepted the German merchant *Adolf Leonhardt*, which was scuttled by her own crew.^{[5][6]} The cruiser returned to Britain for a refit in early 1940, before proceeding to the Indian Ocean, where she was employed on convoy cover duties^[3] between **Cape Town-Durban-Mombassa** and **Aden**.^[citation needed] She also participated in the campaign against **Italian Somaliland** during 1941,^[3] bombarding both **Mogadishu** and **Kismayu** during the advance of the **South African Army** from **Kenya** to **Abyssinia**, and sinking the Italian vessel *Pensilvania* off Mogadishu on 13 February.^[citation needed] She remained in the South Atlantic, undergoing a refit at **Simon's Town** between March and June 1941, then came home in October 1941 for a further major refit at **Chatham** between October 1941^[citation needed] and March 1942 before returning to the South Atlantic until the end of the year, when she was recalled to Chatham prior to transfer to the RAN.^[3]

The cruiser earned the RN **battle honours** "Atlantic 1941" and "Arctic 1941" for her wartime service.^[4]

Transfer to RAN [edit]

Following the loss of the Australian heavy cruiser *HMAS Canberra*, a County-class cruiser of the *Kent* sub-class, at the **Battle of Savo Island**, it was announced that *Shropshire* would be transferred to the RAN as a gift.^[7] King **George VI** announced on 10 September 1943 that the ship would be renamed *Canberra*.^[7] However, around the same time, United States President **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** chose to commemorate the Australian warship's loss by renaming the under-construction **Baltimore-class** cruiser *Pittsburgh* as *USS Canberra*.^[8]

The duplication of ship names with the United States Navy was against RAN policy, and it was initially felt that Australia had a greater claim to the name.^[9] Protests in favour of retaining *Shropshire*'s original name were received from the British elements of the ship's company, who felt that renaming a ship after one that had recently been sunk was inviting bad luck, and from citizens of the ship's namesake, which had adopted the cruiser in a **Warship Week** earlier that year, and thought that

2 × 2-pdr (40 mm) eight barrel pom-poms

6 × 20-mm (0.8 in) single guns

7 × 20-mm (0.8 in) dual guns

2 × 0.5-in quadruple Vickers machine gun mount

2 × quadruple 21-in (533 mm) torpedo tubes

January 1945 – February 1946 configuration:

8 × 8-in (203 mm) Mk VIII dual guns

4 × QF 4-inch (101.6 mm) Mk XVI dual AA guns

2 × 2-pdr (40 mm) eight barrel pom-poms

2 × 20-mm (0.8 in) dual guns

15 × 40-mm (1.5 in) Bofors Mk III single guns

Armour:

1 to 4 inches (2.5 to 10.2 cm) magazine box protection

1.375 inches (3.49 cm) deck

1 inch (2.5 cm) side-plating, turrets and bulkheads

4.5 inches (11 cm) belt

4 inches (10 cm) internal boiler room sides (added 1936–1940)

Aircraft carried:

One aircraft, one catapult. Three planes used during service; **Fairey III**, **Hawker Osprey**, **Supermarine Walrus**

Shropshire's history and links to the community were being discarded without thought.^[9] One letter proposed, that the ship be named "HMAS *Canberra* (*the gift of HMS*) *Shropshire*" in order to retain the old name.^[8] The Australian government decided to retain *Shropshire*'s old name after learning that the US offer had come directly from President Roosevelt.^[8]

Shropshire underwent refit at Chatham from December 1942 until 20 June 1943.^[3] Sources differ on the date of commissioning: although the commissioning ceremony was performed on 20 April, Captain [John Augustine Collins](#) successfully argued to have the ship recognised administratively as a commissioned Australian warship from 17 April, in order to keep Australian personnel (arriving that day) away from the RN [rum issue](#).^[4] The refit was not completed until 25 June.^[3]

RAN service [[edit](#)]

Shropshire left the United Kingdom in August, as part of the escort for a convoy to Gibraltar.^[3] After this, she continued on to Australia, and arrived in Sydney on 2 October.^[3] At the end of the month, she joined [Task Force 74](#) at Brisbane, and supported the amphibious landings at [Arawe](#) and [Cape Gloucester](#) during December.^[3] In March 1944, *Shropshire* was involved in the [Admiralty Islands campaign](#).^[3] During April, the cruiser participated in the [landing at Hollandia](#).^[3] In May, while operating in the Wakde-Sarmi-Biak area, a bomb was accidentally dropped by a United States aircraft between *Shropshire* and [HMAS *Warramunga*](#).^[3] Although the bomb missed both ships and appeared to cause no damage, the cruiser's engines began to malfunction four days later, and *Shropshire* returned to Australia for repairs.^[3]



Shropshire's forward turrets firing during the Battle of Morotai ↗

The ship returned to service on 12 July, and provided [naval gunfire support](#) for operations in Aitape and Cape Sansapore during July and August, [Morotai](#) in September, and [Leyte Gulf](#) in early October.^[3] *Shropshire* was reassigned to [Task Force 77](#), and participated in the [Battle of Surigao Strait](#) on 25 October.^[3] The cruiser was involved in the [Battle of Luzon](#) during January 1945, during which she was attacked by two [kamikaze](#) aircraft: one narrowly missed, while the second was shot down by [HMAS *Gascoyne*](#) close enough for debris to hit *Shropshire*.^[3] *Shropshire* fired in anger for the last time during the [Corregidor landings](#), then briefly returned to Australia.^[3]

Shropshire returned to the Philippines in time for the Japanese surrender of the islands, then proceeded to Japan, and was present at [Tokyo Bay](#) on 2 September 1945 for the signing of the [Japanese Instrument of Surrender](#).^{[3][10]} The cruiser's wartime service with the RAN was recognised with five battle honours: "New Guinea 1943–44", "Leyte Gulf 1944", "Lingayen Gulf 1945", "Borneo 1945", and "Pacific

1945".^{[11][12]} Only five personnel died during the ship's RAN service, but although all five occurred during World War II, none were the result of enemy action; one drowned, and the other four were the result of accidents.^[7]



Shropshire arriving in Sydney Harbour on 30 November 1945. The cruiser has just returned from Japan, and is transporting Australian soldiers home.

The cruiser remained in Japanese waters until 17 November, when she sailed for Sydney.^[3] In May 1946, *Shropshire* transported the Australian contingent to England for the British Empire victory celebrations.^[13] The ship returned home in August.^[13] From January until March 1947, *Shropshire* was in Japanese waters.^[4]



Decommissioning and fate [[edit](#)]

After returning to Sydney in March 1947, *Shropshire* was prepared for decommissioning, although she was not paid off into reserve until 10 November 1949.^[4] The ship was sold to **Thos W Ward** of **Sheffield**, England, acting on behalf of the **British Iron & Steel Corporation**, on 16 July 1954, for 82,500 pounds sterling.^[4] On 9 October 1954, the Dutch tug *Oostzee* began the voyage from Sydney to **Dalmuir**, Scotland.^[4] **Breaking** commenced in Dalmuir on 20 January 1955, with the ship's hull then transported to **Troon**, where scrapping resumed on 19 September.^[4]

A silver **bugle** presented to the ship by the **King's Shropshire Light Infantry** was kept by the RAN after *Shropshire*'s decommissioning, and was later placed on display at the **Russell Offices** (which houses the **Department of Defence**) until at least the mid-1980s.^[14]

Citations [[edit](#)]

- ¹ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} ^{**d**} ^{**e**} ^{**f**} ^{**g**} ^{**h**} ^{**i**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 119
- ² ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} ^{**d**} ^{**e**} ^{**f**} ^{**g**} ^{**h**} ^{**i**} ^{**j**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 120
- ³ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} ^{**d**} ^{**e**} ^{**f**} ^{**g**} ^{**h**} ^{**i**} ^{**j**} ^{**k**} ^{**l**} ^{**m**} ^{**n**} ^{**o**} ^{**p**} ^{**q**} ^{**r**} ^{**s**} ^{**t**} ^{**u**} ^{**v**} ^{**w**} ^{**x**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 121
- ⁴ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} ^{**d**} ^{**e**} ^{**f**} ^{**g**} ^{**h**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 125
- ⁵ "Naval events Dec 1939"^{[[c](#)]}. naval-history.net. Retrieved 8 January 2013.
- ⁶ "SS Adolf Leonhardt (+1939)"^{[[c](#)]}. Wrecksite. Retrieved 8 January 2013.
- ⁷ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 128
- ⁸ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 129
- ⁹ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, pp. 128–9
- ¹⁰ "Allied Ships Present in Tokyo Bay During the Surrender Ceremony, 2 September 1945"^{[[c](#)]}. Naval Historical Center – U.S. Navy. 27 May 2005. Retrieved 13 January 2007. "Taken from *Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas (CINCPAC/CINCPHA) A16-3/FF12 Serial 0395, 11 February 1946: Report of Surrender and Occupation of Japan*"
- ¹¹ "Navy Marks 109th Birthday With Historic Changes To Battle Honours"^{[[c](#)]}. Royal Australian Navy. 1 March 2010. Archived from the original^{[[c](#)]} on 13 June 2011. Retrieved 23 December 2012.

12. [^] "Royal Australian Navy Ship/Unit Battle Honours"  (PDF). Royal Australian Navy. 1 March 2010. Archived from [the original](#)  (PDF) on 14 June 2011. Retrieved 23 December 2012.

13. [^] ^{*a*} ^{*b*} Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 124

14. [^] Cassells, *The Capital Ships*, p. 130

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External links [[edit](#)]

- RAN Sea Power Centre page for HMAS *Shropshire*
- History of the ship as written by Stan Nicholls, who served aboard as an officer
- HMS *Shropshire* at U-boat.net
- HMAS *Shropshire* at U-boat.net



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	 Royal Australian Navy	<i>Australia</i> · <i>Canberra</i>
London class	 Royal Navy	<i>London</i> · <i>Devonshire</i> · <i>Sussex</i> · <i>Shropshire</i>
	 Royal Australian Navy	<i>Shropshire</i>
Norfolk class	<i>Norfolk</i> · <i>Dorsetshire</i>	

Surrey class *Surrey*^X · *Northumberland*^X

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