

H.M.S. COBRA



Career (UK)



Name: HMS *Cobra*
Builder: Armstrong Whitworth
Launched: 28 June 1899[1]
Acquired: 8 May 1900
Fate: Sank near Cromer on 19 September 1901

General characteristics

Displacement: 400 tons
Length: 223 feet (68 m)
Propulsion: Parsons turbines
Yarrow boilers
11,500 HP
Speed: 36.63 knots (67.84 km/h)
Armament: 1 × 12 pounder gun
5 × 6 pounder guns
2 × torpedo tubes

HMS *Cobra*, named after the cobra snake, was a steam turbine powered destroyer of the Royal Navy. She was built speculatively by Armstrong Whitworth, although her turbines were ordered by the Admiralty. She was launched on 28 June 1899, and purchased by the Navy on 8 May 1900 for £70,000.

Her short career came to an end when she broke her back and sank near Cromer on 19 September 1901. The break occurred 150 feet from her bows, between the two aft boilers. Twelve men, including the chief engineer, were saved; 44 Navy officers and men were drowned, and 23 staff from the contractors.

A court-martial enquiry held in October absolved the surviving officers of all blame, finding that "*Cobra did not touch the ground or come into any contact with any obstruction, nor was her loss due to any error in navigation, but was due to structural weakness of the ship.*" This was contested by the manufacturers and other shipbuilders, with incidents of equivalent boats being navigated to Australia or Japan without incident cited.

The loss of *Cobra*, only six weeks after that of HMS *Viper*, and this after the loss of HMS *Serpent* in 1890, created an aversion in the Royal Navy towards snake names, and these names were not reused.