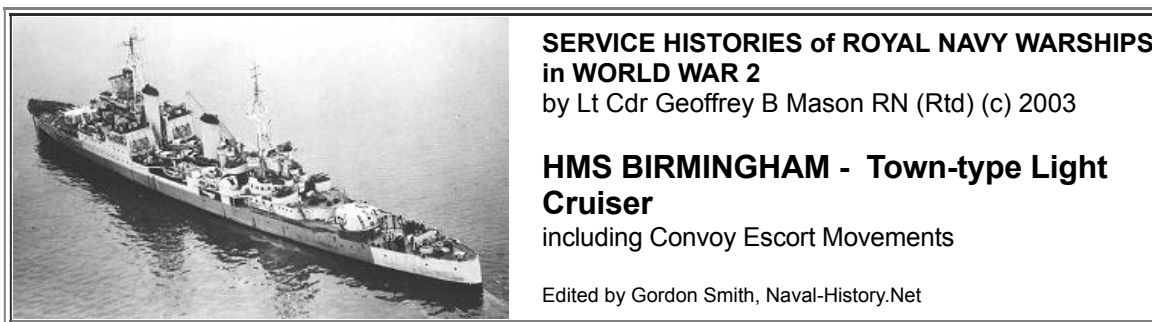


**Naval History Homepage** and Site Search**SERVICE HISTORIES of ROYAL NAVY WARSHIPS  
in WORLD WAR 2**

by Lt Cdr Geoffrey B Mason RN (Rtd) (c) 2003

**HMS BIRMINGHAM - Town-type Light  
Cruiser**

including Convoy Escort Movements

Edited by Gordon Smith, Naval-History.Net

HMS Birmingham (Navy Photos, [click to enlarge](#))[return to Contents List](#)

The second Royal Navy ship to bear the name BIRMINGHAM and ordered from HM Dockyard, Devonport on 1st March 1935. This name was introduced in 1913 for a cruiser sold in 1931. The ship was laid down on 18th July that year and launched on 1st September 1936. Build was completed on 18th Nov. 1937 and after trials in Home Waters she was deployed on the China Station. The City whose name she bears has maintained a strong relationship with this ship until scrapped and with the third that entered service in 1976.

**Battle Honours**

HELIGOLAND 1914 - DOGGER BANK 1915 - JUTLAND 1916 - NORWAY 1940 - KOREA 1952-53

**Heraldic Data**

Badge: On a Field White an arm proper holding a hammer proper  
issuant from a mural crown Gold.

**Motto**

'Forward'

**Details of War Service***(for more ship information, go to [Naval History Homepage](#) and type name in Site Search***1939**

September	Attached to 5th Cruiser Squadron on the China Station.
3rd	Based at Singapore and deployed in Indian Ocean and Malacca Straits on trade protection. Search for enemy merchant ships attempting to return to Europe.
October	Carried out patrol and interception duties in East Indies.
November	
4th	Relieved by HM Cruiser DAUNTLESS and took passage to Hong Kong
10th	Based in Hong Kong for contraband control search duties in Chinese waters.
28th	Escorted French liner ANDRE LEBON.
December	
9th	During search for German freighter BURGELAND reported on passage from Kobe intercepted Dutch ship and then joined the Armed Merchant Cruiser MORETON BAY for patrol off Japan in an endeavour to find enemy vessel.
17th	Damaged in collision with Tanker FRANCOL when fuelling.
27th	Propeller replaced and bow repaired in dock at Hong Kong.

**1940**

January	
3rd	Transferred to Mediterranean Fleet and took passage for Alexandria.

22nd Under refit in Malta.

February Transferred to Home Fleet.

March Passage to Scapa Flow to join 18th Cruiser Squadron in Home Fleet

27th Nominated for cover of simulated minelay off Norway at Bud in Force WB with HM Destroyers HYPERION and HERO (Operation WILFRED).

31st Sailed with the destroyers HMS FEARLESS and HMS HOSTILE to ensure security of simulated minelay and to capture any German fishing vessels in the area.

April

8th During deployment with HMS RENOWN to cover minelay ordered by CinC Home Fleet to join units on passage to patrol entrance to Vest Fjord.  
Due to fuel shortage ordered to return to Scapa Flow.

10th Under air attack off Norwegian coast.

13th Joined escort for military convoy NP1 carrying troops for landings in Norway, with HM Cruisers MANCHESTER and CAIRO screened by HM Destroyers NUBIAN SIKH and SOMALI (Operation RUPERT/R4).

14th Detached from NP1 with HMS MANCHESTER and HMS CAIRO screened by HM Destroyers

HIGHLANDER, VANOC and WHIRLWIND as escort for Polish liner CHOBRY and rms EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA during passage to Namsos.  
(Operation MAURICE - See Naval Staff History.)

15th Destination changed to Lillesjona where troops were to be transferred to destroyers for the remainder of passage to Namsos.

17th Passage to Scapa Flow with HMS VANOC and HMS WHIRLWIND escorting rms EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA.

20th Deployed to reinforce HMS CAIRO and two French destroyers as escort for French troopship

VILLE D'ALGER during final part of passage to Namsos.

22nd Return passage to Scapa Flow.

24th Took passage from Rosyth for delivery of stores and reinforcements to SICKLE FORCE at Andalsnes and Molde in company with HM Cruisers MANCHESTER and YORK screened by HM Destroyers ACHERON, HMS ARROW and HMS GRIFFIN.  
(Note: Troops and stores were ferried ashore at Andalsnes from HMS BIRMINGHAM and HMS YORK. For details see Naval Staff History.)

25th Retained in Norwegian waters with HMS MANCHESTER for interception patrols

26th Sank the German Trawler SCHELSWIG (Schiff 37) which had been wearing a Dutch Flag. During this engagement rammed HMS ARROW.

May

1st Took part in evacuation of allied troops from Andalsnes and Molde with HM Cruisers MANCHESTER and CALCUTTA, HM Sloop HMS AUCKLAND and HM Destroyers DELIGHT, DIANA, INGLEFIELD, MASHONA and SOMALI.  
390 troops were embarked for return passage.  
For full details of the Norwegian operations see NARVIK by Donald MacIntyre THE DOOMED EXPEDITION by Jack Adams and Naval Staff History.

2nd Arrived at Scapa Flow with passengers.

8th Transferred to Nore Command with HMS MANCHESTER and HMS SHEFFIELD for interception duties in southern North Sea.

9th Sailed from Rosyth with HM Destroyers JANUS, HAVOCK, HEReward and HYPERION for duty in Nore Command.

Bank area. Diverted on passage to join search with destroyers for ships reported in Little Fisher Bank area.

Boats Under air attacks. For details see Naval Staff History.  
(Note: During this search HM Destroyer KELLY was badly damaged in action with E-Boats and had to be towed to Tyne for repair covered by this ship

10th	Deployed with HM Cruiser SHEFFIELD to cover the tow by HM Destroyer BULLDOG of the damaged destroyer KELLY to Tyne Estuary.
12th	Arrived at Harwich on completion and deployed in support of Dutch military operations at Terschelling.
June	Based in Humber estuary with ships of 1st Cruiser Squadron for patrol duty in North Sea.
July	Remained in North Sea for anti-invasion patrol.
August	
31st	Transferred to Sheerness for anti-invasion patrols. Deployed with HM Cruisers MANCHESTER and SOUTHAMPTON screened by three Fleet destroyers in search for invasion craft.
September to November	Under refit at Liverpool. Type 286M surface warning radar fitted. (Note: This was the first ship borne radar capable of detection of surface craft and was a modified RAF type equipment fitted in aircraft for ship detection. For details of the development and use of Radar by the RN see RADAR AT SEA by D Howse.)
December	Post refit trials.
27th	On completion returned to Scapa Flow to resume Home Fleet duties. Deployed with 18th Cruiser Squadron in Home Fleet for escort and patrol duty in NW Approaches. One of the objectives of this was the interception of enemy commerce raiders and blockade runners. (Details of Contraband Control in Northern waters are given in ARMED MERCHANT CRUISERS by K. POOLMAN).
1 9 4 1	
January	
24th	Relieved HM Cruisers AURORA and NAIAD with HM Cruiser EDINBURGH and
three	Fleet destroyers as escort for the merchant ships ELIZABETH BURKE, TAURUS and
TAI	SHAN which had escaped from Gotenberg carrying essential commodities obtained in Sweden (Operation RUBBLE).
February	Nominated for Ocean Escort of Middle East military convoy and took passage to Clyde to join.
9th	Joined Convoy WS6A with HM Cruiser PHOEBE and HM Armed Merchant Cruiser CATHAY as Ocean Escort during passage to Freetown.
15th	HM Battleship RODNEY screened by HM Destroyers ECLIPSE AND ELECTRA
joined	escort.
17th	HMS RODNEY and screen detached and replaced by HM Battlecruiser RENOWN and HM Aircraft Carrier ARK ROYAL.
21st	HM Battleship MALAYA joined.
March	
1st	Arrived at Freetown with WS6A
6th	Sailed from Freetown as Convoy WS6 Ocean Escort during passage to Cape Town with HMS PHOEBE and HMS CATHAY.
21st	Detached from WS6 on arrival at Cape Town. Joined 18th Cruiser Squadron for trade defence duties in South Atlantic.
April	Nominated for return to Home Fleet duties and took passage to Scapa Flow.
May	Deployed with Home Fleet.
6th	Ocean Escort for minelay in Northern Barrage by 1st Minelaying Squadron

	(Operation SN9A).
7th	Diverted with HMS EDINBURGH, HMS MANCHESTER, HMS SOMALI and three other Fleet destroyers to intercept German Weather Ship MUNCHEN known to be on station in North Atlantic. This operation was intended to obtain the ENIGMA Coding machine with its associated documentation. MUNCHEN scuttled but these vital items were recovered by the boarding party before enemy vessel sank.
19th	Deployed with HMS MANCHESTER for interception patrol between Faeroes Islands and Iceland.
23rd	Joined by HM Cruiser ARETHUSA.
24th	Patrol line adjusted after loss of HM Battleship HOOD on order to cover any possible escape by BISMARCK to NE of Iceland.
June	
4th	Transferred to South Atlantic as Flagship for ships engaged in trade defence. Nominated as Ocean Escort for Middle East WS military convoy during passage to Durban from Clyde.
7th	Joined Convoy WS9A with HM Armed Merchant Cruiser DUNOTTAR CASTLE.
14th	At Freetown with Convoy WS9A.
20th	Sailed from Freetown for Cape of Good Hope with WS9A.
July	
2nd	At Cape Town.
5th	Took passage to Durban as WS9A Ocean Escort.
9th	Detached from WS9A on relief by HM Cruiser HAWKINS.
12th	Deployed for commerce raider interception and trade defence.
August to December.	Interception patrols and convoy defence deployment in southern oceans.

## 1942

January	Deployed off Falklands with HM Armed Merchant Cruiser HMS ASTURIAS after Japan entered war to deter any possible attack.
February	Under refit by HM Dockyard Simonstown, South Africa. 20mm Close Range AA armament fitted and Radar Type 284 for 6in main armament fire control installed. Surface warning Type 286M Radar replaced by improved RN British equipment (Type 291) using rotating aerial instead of 'fixed' type used with Type 286.
March	During refit period transferred to 4th Cruiser Squadron in Eastern Fleet.
April	to
May	On completion of Post Refit trials detached for duty at Alexandria with the Mediterranean Fleet with HMS NEWCASTLE.
25th	Took passage via Suez to Mediterranean.
June	
6th	Arrived at Alexandria for service with 15th Cruiser Squadron.
11th	Part of escort for passage of Malta relief convoy from Alexandria with ships of 15th Cruiser Squadron and destroyers of Mediterranean Fleet. (Operation VIGOROUS)
15th	Under heavy air attacks and damaged by near miss. The consequential severe whipping of structure disabled gun turrets.
16th	Returned to Alexandria when operation was abandoned due to threat of surface intervention by Italian fleet and continuation of heavy air attacks. Full details of this disastrous operation which was a classic case of much interference by shore authorities is given in ENGAGE THE ENEMY MORE CLOSELY by Corelli Barnett, THE BATTLE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN by

## D MacIntyre, MALTA CONVOYS by R Woodman and The Naval Staff History)

## July

- 2nd Passage to Kilindini to rejoin Eastern Fleet.  
 18th Deployed at Kilindini with HM Battleship WARSPITE, HM Aircraft Carriers FORMIDABLE and ILLUSTRIOUS.  
 (Note: This was part of the revised policy made possible by the arrival of reinforcements in the Indian Ocean and intended to intensify the RN contribution to naval operations in South East Asia against Japan.  
 21st Took passage to Colombo with HM Cruiser MAURITIUS, HM Destroyers NORMAN, NIZAM, INCONSTANT and Dutch VAN GALEN as Force A  
 25th At Colombo and prepared to provide cover for passage of three Dummy convoys on passage in Bay of Bengal to simulate an attack on the Andaman Islands.  
 (Operation STAB - Diversion during US landings on Guadalcanal.

## August

- 2nd STAB cancelled after CinC determined that the objective had been achieved.  
 (See WAR WITH JAPAN (HMSO), Volume HE)  
 11th Returned to Kilindini with HM Minelaying Cruiser MANXMAN.

## September

- 5th Deployed with Eastern Fleet ships including HM Cruiser GAMBIA, HM Seaplane Carrier ALBATROSS escorted by HM Destroyers EXPRESS, FORTUNE, HOTSPUR and INCONSTANT to Majunga with Netherlands destroyer VAN HEEMSKERCK for

## the final

- occupation of Madagascar by 29th Infantry Brigade (Operation STREAM).  
 10th Covered landings at Majunga, Madagascar.  
 12th Supported landings at Antanarive until 15th September.  
 18th Supported landings at Tamatave.

## October

Returned to trade protection duty in Indian Ocean.

## November

- 24th Rescued survivors from ss TILAWA sunk by Japanese submarine 129 off Bombay.

## December

Deployed with Eastern Fleet for trade protection duty and offensive sweeps.  
 (Eastern Fleet activities between 1942 and 1945 are provided in OPERATION PACIFIC by E. Gray).

## 1943

## January

Eastern Fleet deployment in continuation.  
 to

## February

Nominated for return to UK for refit after escort of military convoy during passage in Indian Ocean.

## March

- 1st Joined Convoy WS26 at Durban with HM Cruiser CERES as Ocean Escort during passage to Aden.  
 9th Detached from WS26 on relief by HMS HAWKINS.  
 (Note: HMS CERES detached on 8th.)  
 Passage to Devonport.

## April

Taken in hand for repair and refit by HM Dockyard on arrival.  
 Nominated for further deployment with Eastern Fleet.  
 Additional radar fitted for AA fire-control (Type 285), Air warning (Type 281) and IFF sets installed. Radar Type 291 for surface and air warning replaced by new 10cm Type 273- (For details see RADAR AT SEA by D. Howse).

May  
to

Under refit

August		
September		On completion carried out post refit trials at Plymouth.
October		Prepared for foreign service and work-up with Home Fleet.
November		
	18th	On completion of work-up at Scapa Flow took passage to rejoin Eastern Fleet via Mediterranean.
	27th	Deployed in eastern Mediterranean.
	28th	Sustained major damaged after being hit by torpedo fired from U407 off the coast of Cyrenaica. Forward magazine flooded and ship listed 8 degrees. Speed had to be reduced to 20 knots.
December		Under temporary repair at Alexandria.
1 9 4 4		
January to April .		Under repair. Arrangements made for permanent repair to be carried out in US Navy shipyard.
May		Passage to USA
June		
	9th	Taken in hand for repair and refit by US Navy Yard at Norfolk, Va.
July to October		Under refit Harbour trials (Note: Preparatory work for installation of RN radar and other equipment was carried out
November		On completion of trials took passage to UK to complete refit work in UK.
December		Under refit at HM Dockyard, Portsmouth. Type 282 AA fire control radar fitted for Close Range weapons. X Turret and aircraft facility removed.
1 9 4 5		
January		
	14th	Joined 10th Cruiser Squadron in Home Fleet at Scapa Flow.
February to March		Deployed with Home Fleet and took part in offensive sweeps against shipping off Norwegian coast. (For details of Home Fleet operations off Norway between 1944 and 1945 see ENGAGE THE ENEMY MORE CLOSELY by Corelli Barnett and Naval Staff History.)
April		
	3rd	Deployed with HM Cruiser BELLONA to cover air strikes by HM Escort Carriers HMS QUEEN, HMS SEARCHER and HMS TRUMPETER on Norwegian coastal shipping. This operation had to be cancelled because of weather. Carried out patrol inside Arctic Circle till 12th April..
May		
	5th	Passage to Copenhagen with HM Cruiser DIDO screened by HM Destroyers ZEALOUS ZEPHYR and ZEST (Operation CLEAVER).
	6th	Accepted surrender of German warships PRINZ EUGEN and NURNBERG.
	13th	Relieved by HM Cruiser DEVONSHIRE and returned to Scapa Flow.
	26th	Embarked troops at Rosyth for passage to Trondheim to assist with capture of German troops still not in custody.

28th Arrived in Trondheim.

June Deployed as Flagship to 10th Cruiser Squadron, Home Fleet.  
to Remained in Home Fleet until the end of hostilities with Japan.  
August

### Post War Notes

After the end of hostilities HMS BIRMINGHAM continued in service to 1952 and in 1953 took part in United Nations naval operations off the west coast of Korea. She was put on the Disposal List and broken up in 1960 at Inverkeithing. This name continued in naval use when given to a Type 42 Destroyer which entered service in 1976 and maintained the close association with the City.

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### Addendum

#### CONVOY ESCORT MOVEMENTS of HMS BIRMINGHAM by Don Kindell

*These convoy lists have not been cross-checked with the text above*

Date convoy sailed	Joined convoy as escort	Convoy No.	Left convoy	Date convoy arrived
11/04/40	13/04/40	NP 001	15/04/40	15/04/40
29/03/41	05/04/41	SL 070	20/04/41	23/04/41
11/06/42	14/06/42	MW 011	16/06/42	16/06/42
10/01/43	18/01/43	MC 003	23/01/43	23/01/43
01/02/43	01/02/43	CM 038	10/02/43	20/02/43
11/02/43	19/02/43	MC 004	27/02/43	27/02/43
31/03/43	unknown	SL 127	unknown	15/04/43
15/11/43	16/11/43	KMF 026	23/11/43	30/11/43
04/11/43	29/11/43	UGS 023	01/12/43	01/12/43
21/06/44	21/06/44	MKF 032	27/06/44	04/07/44

*(Note on Convoys)*

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revised 3/6/11  
*further editing and formatting is required*

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