

## The First Shot of World War I. *HMS Lance* QF 4 inch Mk IV gun.

### History

The day after the declaration of war (5th August 1914) ships from the 1st Division 3rd destroyer Flotilla were on patrol off the Dutch coast. It consisted of *HMS Lance*, *HMS Landrail* and *HMS Amphion*. Sighting the German minelayer *Konigin Luise* the 3 destroyers engaged and sunk the mine layer, making it the first naval casualty of the War. *HMS Lance* fired the first round in the action and is therefore accredited with firing the first shots of WWI

(<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30025433>).



**Fig. 01**      *HMS Lance*

### Ship

*HMS Lance* was a Laforey-class destroyer built by John I. Thornycroft & Company at its new yard in Woolston, Hampshire, England. The Laforey-class destroyers were armed with; three QF 4-inch (101.6 mm) Mk IV guns on P Mk. IX mountings, one QF 2 pdr pom-pom Mk. II and two twin tubes for torpedoes. *HMS Lance* was launched on 25 February 1914 less than six months before the outbreak of war. Throughout the war *HMS Lance* was attached to the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla based at Harwich. After the war *HMS Lance* was sold and broken up in 1921(Gardiner:76). All that

remains of the ship is the forward 4 inch gun that fired the opening shot of WWI. This can currently be seen at the National Museum of the Royal Navy.



**Fig. 01**      *HMS Lance's* QF 4-inch gun Mk IV

### **Gun History**

*HMS Lance's* QF 4-inch gun Mk IV was a rapid fire pedestal mount gun made in 1913. The MkIV was introduced in 1911 to supersede the slower firing BL 4 inch Mk VIII. It was the main gun on most British destroyers in World War I. It was also used on cruisers and submarines in WWI and merchant ships in World War II. When fired the MkIV's recoil opened the breech, ejecting the cartridge so a new one could be inserted into the breech. This allowed a trained crew to fire a 32lb high explosive shell over nine miles at a rate of fire of 15 - 20 rounds per minute.

### **Gun Description**

Manufacturer:                      Royal Gun Factory & Vickers, Son & Maxim.

Weight:	1,250 kg (2,750 pounds) barrel & breech
Barrel length:	4.064 m (160 inches)
Bore:	101.6 mm (4-inch)
Calibre:	40 calibres
Shell:	Separate QF 31 pounds (14.06 kg)
Breech:	Horizontal sliding block
Muzzle velocity:	2,370 feet per second (720 m/s)
Maximum firing range:	10,000 yards (9,100 m)

### **Surviving Examples**

The Mk IV gun from *HMS Lance* formerly on display at the Imperial War Museum, London, (Catalogue number ORD 114), but currently on display at the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

### **References**

- Gardiner, Robert., 1985. *Conway's all the world's fighting ships, 1906-1921*. London.
- Thurston L.F., and Hogg I.V., 1972. *British Artillery Weapons and Ammunition, 1914-18*. Littlehampton.