

The Sussex Combined Services - Sea

H.M.S. Eastbourne



J.127 H.M.S. Eastbourne, 1941

Being a county that borders the English Channel along one side of its entire length, Sussex has always maintained close connections with the sea. Many men and women of the county have served as part of the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy and their support services. The ordinary people have played their part too, whether just as part of fundraising events, or exposing themselves to the dangers of war by such endeavours as the 'Little Ships' evacuation of Dunkirk.

The story of H.M.S. Eastbourne, therefore, is an excellent example of Sussex's close ties with the Sea, by no means limited to Eastbourne, or for that matter, Sussex. From its origins as an ordinary fishing vessel, to a purpose-built minesweeper funded and adopted by the townsfolk, who maintained relations with the ship that bore the name, and occasionally visited the town into the late 1950's.

In 1917, when food shortages in wartime Britain were extremely serious, the number of commercial fishing trawlers had been gravely depleted. The Admiralty were accordingly empowered to take over all remaining fishing vessels and a special Fishery Reserve of the Trawler Section was created for the trawlers. Although they were commissioned under the White Ensign, their fishing operations remained their owner's control. The purpose of the take-over was to effect an increase in the supply of fish, to give more adequate protection from the enemy and to reduce fish prices and profits.



Eastbourne's Warship Week, 1942

The ships were given new names, and fishing trawler CY 155 became H.M.S. "Eastbourne". This was the first vessel to bear the town's name.

However, the first warship, constructed as such, to receive the town's name, was the "Bangor" class fleet minesweeper, Job Number J. L069, built under the 1939 War Emergency Programme for fleet minesweepers. Lohnitz took 9 months and 18 days to build her, and she was completed on 17th April, 1941. She was given the pendant number J.127 and the name H.M.S. "Eastbourne".