

The Alabama

CSS Alabama was a screw sloop-of-war built for the Confederate States Navy at Birkenhead, England, in 1862 by John Laird Sons and Company. Alabama served as a successful commerce raider, destroying 55 Union merchant and naval ships over the course of her two-year career. The Alabama was generally unable to stop at Confederate ports as entry was blockaded; when she needed repairs in 1864, she stopped at the French port of Cherbourg. She was sunk in battle by the USS Kearsarge in June 1864 at the Battle of Cherbourg just beyond the territorial (i.e. neutral) three-mile limit of the port. Hugill lists this as Roll, Alabama Roll. Roud 4710.

When the Alabama's keel was laid
Roll Alabama roll
In eighteen hundred and sixty two
Oh Roll Alabama roll

Oh she was built in Birkenhead
She was built in the yard of Jonathan Laird

And down to Liverpool she rolled one day
With British guns oh she was stocked

Down Mersey way she sail-ed forth
To destroy the commerce of the north

Near Cherbourg port she sailed one day
To collect her dues in prize money

There's many a sailor saw his doom
When the Kearsarge haul-ed into view

A shot from the forward cannon that day
Shot the Alabama's bows away

Off the three-mile limit in sixty-four
The Alabama sank to the sea floor