

= German cruiser Köln =

Köln was a light cruiser , the third member of the Königsberg class that was operated between 1929 and March 1945 , including service in World War II . She was operated by two German navies , the Reichsmarine and the Kriegsmarine . She had two sister ships , Königsberg and Karlsruhe . Köln was built by the Deutsche Werke shipyard in Kiel ; she was laid down in August 1926 , launched in May 1928 , and commissioned into the Reichsmarine in January 1930 . She was armed with a main battery of nine 15 cm SK C / 25 guns in three triple turrets and had a top speed of 32 knots (59 km / h ; 37 mph) .

Like her sister ships , Köln served as a training ship for naval cadets in the 1930s , and joined the non -@-@ intervention patrols during the Spanish Civil War during the latter part of the decade . After the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 , she conducted several operations in the North Sea , but did not encounter any British warships . She participated in the attack on Bergen during Operation Weserübung in April 1940 , and she was the only member of her class to survive the operation . In 1942 , she was modified to carry a Flettner Fl 282 helicopter experimentally . Later in 1942 , she returned to Norway , but did not see significant action . She remained there until early 1945 , when she returned to Germany ; in March , she was sunk by American bombers in Wilhelmshaven . She remained on an even keel , with her gun turrets above water ; this allowed her to provide gunfire support to defenders of the city until the end of the war in May 1945 .

= = Characteristics = =

Köln was 174 meters (571 ft) long overall and had a beam of 15 @. @ 2 m (50 ft) and a maximum draft of 6 @. @ 28 m (20 @. @ 6 ft) . She displaced 7 @, @ 700 long tons (7 @, @ 800 t) at full combat load . Her propulsion system consisted of four steam turbines and a pair of 10 @-@ cylinder four @-@ stroke diesel engines . Steam for the turbines was provided by six Marine @-@ type double @-@ ended oil @-@ fired boilers . The ship 's propulsion system provided a top speed of 32 knots (59 km / h ; 37 mph) and a range of approximately 5 @, @ 700 nautical miles (10 @, @ 600 km ; 6 @, @ 600 mi) at 19 knots (35 km / h ; 22 mph) . Köln had a crew of 21 officers and 493 enlisted men .

The ship was armed with nine 15 cm SK C / 25 guns mounted in three triple gun turrets . One was located forward , and two were placed in a superfiring pair aft . The rear gun turrets were offset to increase their arc of fire . They were supplied with 1 @, @ 080 rounds of ammunition , for 120 shells per gun . The ship was also equipped with two 8 @. @ 8 cm SK L / 45 anti @-@ aircraft guns in single mounts ; they had 400 rounds of ammunition each . Köln also carried four triple torpedo tube mounts located amidships ; they were supplied with twenty @-@ four 50 cm (20 in) torpedoes . She was also capable of carrying 120 naval mines . The ship was protected by an armored deck that was 40 mm (1 @. @ 6 in) thick amidships and an armored belt that was 50 mm (2 @. @ 0 in) thick . The conning tower had 100 mm (3 @. @ 9 in) thick sides .

= = Service history = =

Köln was ordered as " Cruiser D " under the contract name Ersatz Arcona , as a replacement for the old cruiser Arcona . The keel for Köln was laid on 7 August 1926 at the Kriegsmarinewerft shipyard in Wilhelmshaven . She was launched on 23 May 1928 , and commissioned into the Reichsmarine on 15 January 1930 , the last member of her class to be completed . She spent the year conducting sea trials and training in the Baltic Sea . In 1931 , she was modified with dual 8 @. @ 8 cm anti @-@ aircraft guns to replace the original single mounts , the rear superstructure was enlarged , and a fire control system was installed aft . Köln departed on a cruise into the Atlantic in early 1932 for more extensive sea trials . After returning to Germany , she took on her first crew of naval cadets for a world cruise , departing Germany in late 1932 . The tour lasted a full year ; she stopped in ports across the globe , including in the Atlantic , Pacific , and Indian Oceans , and the Mediterranean Sea .

In 1935 , the ship had an aircraft catapult installed , along with cranes to handle float planes . A pole mast was also installed on the rear side of the aft funnel . Köln continued to serve as a training ship until early 1936 , when she was transferred to fishery protection duty . Later that year , she joined the non @-@ intervention patrols off Spain during the Spanish Civil War . After the German heavy cruiser Deutschland was attacked by Republican bombers in the so @-@ called " Deutschland incident " , Köln transported wounded crew members from Deutschland back to Germany . Köln conducted a further four patrols off Spain before returning to fishery protection in the North Sea in 1938 . Late in the year , she went into drydock for a refit in Kiel .

= = = World War II = = =

In March 1939 , Köln participated in the annexation of Memel which Germany had demanded from Lithuania . Later in the year , she joined the battleship Gneisenau and the heavy cruisers Deutschland , Admiral Scheer , and Admiral Graf Spee for a major series of maneuvers in the Atlantic . In the final days of August , Köln was stationed in the western Baltic to prevent Polish vessels from fleeing after the German invasion of Poland on 1 September ; she was unsuccessful in this task . She thereafter joined her sister ships in laying a series of defensive minefields .

Köln joined Gneisenau and nine destroyers for a sortie into the North Sea on 7 ? 9 October . The goal was to draw units of the Royal Navy over a U @-@ boat line and into range of the Luftwaffe , though it failed on both counts . The British launched an air attack consisting of 12 Wellington bombers , though it too failed to hit any of the German warships . On 20 ? 22 November , Köln and the cruiser Leipzig escorted the battleships Gneisenau and Scharnhorst on the first leg of their sortie into the North Atlantic . On the 22nd , Köln and Leipzig were detached to join an unsuccessful patrol for Allied merchant ships in the Skagerrak along with Deutschland and three torpedo boats . The patrol lasted until 25 November , and failed to locate any Allied freighters . On 13 December , Köln , Leipzig , and Nürnberg covered the return of several destroyers that had laid an offensive minefield off Newcastle .

Köln took part in Operation Weserübung , the invasion of Norway , in April 1940 . She was assigned Group 3 , tasked with the assault on Bergen , along with her sister Königsberg . She reached the harbor unscathed , but Königsberg was not so lucky ; she was badly damaged by Norwegian coastal guns . Köln nevertheless supported the German infantry ashore with her main guns . After the port was secured , she returned to Germany , along with a pair of destroyers . In late 1940 , she went into drydock for further modifications . A degaussing coil was installed , along with a helicopter landing platform on top of turret " Bruno " . She thereafter served as a testbed for the Flettner FI 282 helicopter , a task she performed until 1942 .

While still conducting experiments with the FI 282 in September 1941 , Köln provided gunfire support to ground troops attacking Soviet positions on Dagö in the Gulf of Riga . She also bombarded Soviet positions on Ristna . She joined the battleship Tirpitz , Admiral Scheer , Nürnberg , and several destroyers and torpedo boats formed the Baltic Fleet , which was intended to block any Soviet warships from fleeing the eastern Baltic . No Soviet vessels attempted to do so , however . On 13 July , the Soviet submarine Shch @-@ 322 tried to attack Köln , but the cruiser 's escorts forced the Soviet submarine to break off the attack .

Toward the end of 1941 , she was transferred to the North Sea , and went into drydock for her last major modification . This consisted of the installation of a FuMO 21 radar set on the forward command center roof . In July 1942 , Köln departed Germany to join the growing naval presence in Norway , though she saw no major action there . On 13 September , she and the heavy cruisers Admiral Scheer and Admiral Hipper and two destroyers attempted to attack Convoy PQ 18 . While en route from Narvik to Altenfjord , the flotilla was attacked by the British submarine HMS Tigris , but the torpedoes passed behind the German ships . The convoy was instead attacked by U @-@ boats and long @-@ range bombers , which sank thirteen freighters . She returned to Germany in January 1943 , where she was decommissioned in Kiel on 17 February . She was sent to drydock in early 1944 for an overhaul to prepare her to return to combat duty ; this was completed by 1 July . The cruiser served briefly as a training ship before escorting German merchant vessels in Norway .

While en route from Kristiansand on 7 July , the ship laid a defensive minefield in the Skagerrak . She and three destroyers laid another minefield on 14 ? 15 July , before steaming to Trondheim .

On the night of 13 ? 14 December , Köln was attacked by British bombers in Oslofjord ; several near misses caused damage to her propulsion system that required repair in Germany . She departed Norway on 23 January 1945 in company with Admiral Hipper and a destroyer , and arrived in Kiel on 8 February . She then proceeded to Wilhelmshaven , where she was again attacked by Allied bombers repeatedly . On 30 March , B @-@ 24 Liberators from the Eighth Air Force attacked the harbor ; Köln was hit and sank on an even keel . Since her guns remained above water , the ship was used as an artillery battery to defend the city from advancing Allied forces . She served in this capacity until the end of the war in May . She was partially dismantled in situ after the end of the war , and finally raised in 1956 for scrapping .