

= SMS Bremse =

SMS Bremse was a Brummer @-@ class minelaying light cruiser of the German Kaiserliche Marine . She was built by AG Vulcan Stettin in 1915 and launched on 11 March 1916 at Stettin , Germany , the second of the two @-@ ship class after her sister , SMS Brummer . She served during the First World War , operating for most of the time in company with her sister . The two ships took part in an ambush on a convoy in the North Sea , where they sank two destroyers in a surprise attack , before hunting down and sinking nine merchantmen , after which they returned to port unscathed .

The Kaiserliche Marine considered sending the two ships to attack convoys in the Atlantic Ocean , but the difficulties associated with refueling at sea convinced the Germans to abandon the plan . Bremse was one of the ships interned at Scapa Flow under the terms of the armistice in November 1918 . On 21 June 1919 , the commander of the interned fleet , Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , ordered the scuttling of the fleet . She was salvaged in 1929 by teams working for Ernest Cox , though they had to contend with large quantities of oil and the risks of fires and explosions . Having been brought back to the surface after a decade underwater , she was then scrapped .

= = Construction = =

Bremse was ordered under the contract name " D " and laid down at the AG Vulcan shipyard in Stettin in 1915 . She was launched on 11 March 1916 , after which fitting @-@ out work commenced . Completed in less than four months , she was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 1 July 1916 . The ship was 140 @.@ 4 meters (461 ft) long overall and had a beam of 13 @.@ 2 m (43 ft) and a draft of 6 m (20 ft) forward . She displaced 5 @, @ 856 t (5 @, @ 764 long tons ; 6 @, @ 455 short tons) at full combat load . Her propulsion system consisted of two sets of steam turbines powered by two coal @-@ fired and four oil @-@ fired Marine @-@ type boilers . These provided a top speed of 28 knots (52 km / h ; 32 mph) and a range of 5 @, @ 800 nautical miles (10 @, @ 700 km ; 6 @, @ 700 mi) at 12 kn (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . In service however , the ship reached 34 kn (63 km / h ; 39 mph) .

The ship was armed with four 15 cm SK L / 45 guns in single pedestal mounts ; two were arranged side by side forward and two were placed in a superfiring pair aft . These guns fired a 45 @.@ 3 @-@ pound (20 @.@ 5 kg) shell at a muzzle velocity of 840 meters per second (2 @, @ 800 ft / s) . The guns had a maximum elevation of 30 degrees , which allowed them to engage targets out to 17 @, @ 600 m (57 @, @ 700 ft) . They were supplied with 600 rounds of ammunition , for 150 shells per gun . Brummer also carried two 8 @.@ 8 cm (3 @.@ 5 in) L / 45 anti @-@ aircraft guns mounted on the centerline astern of the funnels . She was also equipped with a pair of 50 cm (20 in) torpedo tubes with four torpedoes in a swivel mount amidships . Designed as a minelayer , she carried 400 mines . The ship was protected by a waterline armored belt that was 40 mm (1 @.@ 6 in) thick amidships . The conning tower had 100 mm (3 @.@ 9 in) thick sides , and the deck was covered with 15 mm (0 @.@ 59 in) thick armor plate .

= = Career = =

Over the period 11 ? 20 October 1916 , Bremse and Brummer served with the High Seas Fleet in the North Sea . On 10 January 1917 , the two ships laid a minefield off Norderney . They escorted minesweepers on 1 ? 13 March based in Emden and Wilhelmshaven . Their first major offensive operation was an attack on a British convoy in October 1917 . Britain had agreed to ship 250 @, @ 000 t (250 @, @ 000 long tons ; 280 @, @ 000 short tons) tons of coal per month to Norway , and a regular stream of convoys carrying shipments of coal was crossing the North Sea by late 1917 . These were usually weakly escorted by only a couple of destroyers and armed trawlers . Attempts to interdict them with U @-@ boats had to that point been ineffective , so Admiral Reinhard Scheer , the chief of the Admiralstab , decided to deploy a surface force to carry out a surprise attack to supplement the U @-@ boat campaign . In addition to damaging British shipping , Scheer sought to divert escorts from the Atlantic theater , where his U @-@ boats were concentrated . Bremse ,

commanded by Fregattenkapitän Westerkamp , and Brummer , commanded by Fregattenkapitän Leonhardi , were selected for the first such operation . Their high speed and large radius of action , coupled with their resemblance to British light cruisers , made them suited to the task . In preparation for the raid , their crews painted the ships dark gray to further camouflage them as British vessels .

Half an hour after dawn on the morning of 17 October , Brummer and Bremse attacked a westbound convoy about 70 nautical miles (130 km ; 81 mi) east of Lerwick . The convoy consisted of twelve merchantmen and was escorted by the destroyers HMS Strongbow and Mary Rose and a pair of armed trawlers which had departed from Bergen . At dawn lookouts aboard Stronghold reported two unidentified ships closing on the convoy . Mistaking them for British cruisers Strongbow flashed recognition signals , but was suddenly fired upon at a range of 2 @, @ 700 m (8 @, @ 900 ft) by a barrage of 15 cm shells . Mary Rose tried to come to her assistance but was also hit ; both ships were quickly sunk . Brummer and Bremse then turned their attention to the convoy , hunting down and sinking nine of the merchantmen , before returning to port . One of the armed trawlers , the Elise , was fired on by Bremse while attempting to pick up survivors . None of the ships were able to send a wireless report , and despite having a squadron of sixteen light cruisers at sea to the south of the convoy , the British did not learn of the attack until 16 : 00 , when it was too late . Admiral David Beatty said of the action that ' luck was against us . ' The Admiralty responded to the raid by adding more and bigger escorts .

Late in the war , the Admiralstab considered sending Brummer and Bremse on a commerce raiding mission into the Atlantic . They were to operate off the Azores in concert with an oiler . The central Atlantic was out of the normal range of the U @-@ boats , and convoys were therefore lightly defended in the area . The Admiralstab canceled the plan , however , after it was determined that refueling at sea would be too difficult . Another problem was the tendency of the two ships to emit clouds of red sparks when steaming at speeds over 20 kn (37 km / h ; 23 mph) ; this would hamper their ability to evade Allied ships at night . On 2 April 1918 , Bremse laid a minefield consisting of 304 mines in the North Sea . She laid another 150 mines in the same area on 11 April . Bremse and her sister ended the month with a fleet sortie with the rest of the battle fleet on 22 ? 24 April . On 11 May , Bremse laid another minefield in the North Sea with 400 mines . Three days later , she laid another 420 mines in the North Sea . She was to have been part of the final sortie of the High Seas Fleet in October 1918 , but the operation was cancelled due to the outbreak of mutiny in the German Fleet .

= = = Internment and scuttling = = =

Along with the most modern units of the High Seas Fleet , Brummer and Bremse were included in the ships specified for internment at Scapa Flow by the victorious Allied powers . The ships steamed out of Germany on 21 November 1918 in single file , commanded by Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter . They were met at sea by a combined fleet of 370 British , American , and French warships . The fleet arrived in the Firth of Forth later that day , and between 25 and 27 November , they were escorted to Scapa Flow . Upon arrival , all wireless equipment was removed from the ships and the breech blocks of their heavy guns taken to prevent their use . Crews were reduced to minimum levels .

The fleet remained in captivity during the negotiations that ultimately produced the Treaty of Versailles . Reuter believed that the British intended to seize the German ships on 21 June 1919 , which was the deadline for Germany to have signed the peace treaty . Unaware that the deadline had been extended to the 23rd , Reuter ordered the ships to be sunk at the next opportunity . On the morning of 21 June , the British fleet left Scapa Flow to conduct training maneuvers , and at 11 : 20 Reuter transmitted the order to his ships . An armed British naval party had attempted to board Bremse and close her bottom valves , but found that they were already below the rising waterline . Instead they blasted off her anchor chains and she was taken in tow by a tug and the destroyer HMS Venetia , in an attempt to beach her before she sank . They managed to run her bow onto the beach , south of Cava , but the steeply sloping approach meant that her stern settled in deeper

water , and she rolled over and sank in 75 ft (23 m) of water at 14 : 30 , leaving her bow visible at low tide .

= = Salvage = =

Though the Admiralty arranged for some of the ships to be salvaged , most were left at the bottom of the sound until entrepreneur Ernest Cox bought the salvage rights and began to raise the remaining ships in the early 1920s . Bremse presented particular challenges . She had come to rest perched precariously on a rock , which sloped away dramatically , causing fears that she might slip off and sink in deeper water . Cox 's salvage team sealed her bulkheads and divided the hull into watertight compartments . The hull was patched up and an airlock fitted , but the team ran into difficulties with the large amount of oil which covered the wreck , more than had been found in any other of the ships salvaged previously . A three @-@ man team using oxyacetylene torches ignited some oil , causing an explosion . The men escaped without serious injuries , and thereafter small explosions and fires were common over the two months it took to prepare the ship , though no one was injured .

By July 1929 the last of the superstructure had been cleared , and Bremse was turned upside down using techniques developed on salvaging some of the destroyers . Compressors were then used to pump air into the hull and bring her to the surface , while she was supported by 9 @-@ inch wires attached to two floating docks anchored on her port shoreward side . The salvage teams had almost raised her when she suddenly toppled onto her side and then heeled over gradually during the night , settling onto the rocks inshore .

It was thought that the failure had been caused by there being too much remaining superstructure , and attempts were made to clean out the large quantity of oil that had spilled out during the attempt to raise her . The decision was made to burn off the oil , but the fire spread and had to be brought back under control . She was again patched up and pumped with air , breaking the surface on 29 November . The Bremse was eventually considered too unsafe to tow to Rosyth for scrapping , as had been done with the other ships Cox had salvaged , and instead she was taken to Lyness on 30 November 1929 and broken up there .