

= SMS Kaiser Karl der Grosse =

SMS Kaiser Karl der Grosse (His Majesty 's Ship " Charles the Great ") was a German pre-dreadnought battleship of the Kaiser Friedrich III class , built around the turn of the 20th century for the Kaiserliche Marine (Imperial Navy) . Kaiser Karl der Grosse was built in Hamburg , at the Blohm and Voss shipyard . She was laid down in September 1898 and was launched in October 1899 . A shipyard strike and an accidental grounding delayed her completion until February 1902 ; she was therefore the last member of her class to enter service . The ship was armed with four 24 cm (9 in) guns in two twin gun turrets and had a top speed of 17 knots (32 km / h ; 20 mph) .

Kaiser Karl der Grosse served with the active fleet until 1908 , and during this time she participated in the normal peacetime routine of training cruises and fleet maneuvers . By 1908 , the new " all-big-gun " dreadnought battleships were entering service . As the ship was completely obsolete , she was withdrawn from active service and placed in the Reserve Division . At the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 , the ship was placed back in active duty as a coastal defense ship in the V Battle Squadron , though by February 1915 she was again placed in reserve . Kaiser Karl der Grosse was briefly used as a training ship and ended her career as a prison ship for prisoners of war in Wilhelmshaven . Following the German defeat in November 1918 , the ship was sold to ship breakers and scrapped in 1920 .

= = Design = =

Kaiser Karl der Grosse was 125 m (411 ft 1 in) long overall and had a beam of 20 m (66 ft 11 in) and a draft of 7 m (23 ft 11 in) forward and 8 m (27 ft 1 in) aft . She displaced up to 11,785 t (11,599 long tons) at full load . The ship was powered by three 3-cylinder vertical triple expansion steam engines , each driving one screw propeller . Steam was provided by four Marine-type and eight cylindrical boilers , all of which burned coal . Kaiser Karl der Grosse 's powerplant was rated at 13,000 metric horsepower (12,822 ihp ; 9,561 kW) , which generated a top speed of 17 knots (32 km / h ; 20 mph) . She had a normal crew of 39 officers and 612 enlisted men .

The ship 's armament consisted of a main battery of four 24 cm (9 in) SK L / 40 guns in twin gun turrets , one fore and one aft of the central superstructure . Her secondary armament consisted of eighteen 15 cm (5 in) SK L / 40 guns and twelve 8 cm (3 in) SK L / 30 quick-firing guns mounted in casemates . The armament suite was rounded out with six 45 cm torpedo tubes , all in above-water swivel mounts . The ship 's belt armor was 300 mm (11 in) thick , and the deck was 65 mm (2 in) thick . The conning tower and main battery turrets were protected with 250 mm (9 in) of armor plating , and the secondary casemates received 150 mm (5 in) of armor protection .

= = Service history = =

= = = Construction through 1904 = = =

Kaiser Wilhelm II , the emperor of Germany , believed that a strong navy was necessary for the country to expand its influence outside continental Europe . As a result , he initiated a program of naval expansion in the late 1880s ; the first battleships built under this program were the four Brandenburg-class ships . These were immediately followed by the five Kaiser Friedrich III-class battleships , of which Kaiser Karl der Grosse was a member . She was ordered under the contract name " B " as a new ship of the fleet . The ship 's keel was laid on 17 September 1898 at the Blohm & Voss in Hamburg under yard number 136 . She was the first capital ship to be built by the yard , and the second warship of any type . The new battleship was launched on 18 October 1899 and named for Charlemagne (Karl der Grosse in German) ; Wilhelm II gave the launching

speech and Johann Georg Mönckeberg , the Erster Bürgermeister (First Mayor) of Hamburg christened the ship . A major strike by shipyard workers in late 1900 significantly delayed completion of the ship . In October 1901 , a shipyard crew took the ship to the naval base at Wilhelmshaven , though while en route she ran aground in the lower Elbe . The hull was damaged in the incident , and the necessary repairs further delayed her entry into service ; she was not commissioned until 4 February 1902 .

Kaiser Karl der Grosse was assigned to the II Division of the I Squadron on 19 February , the last member of her class to enter active service . With the assignment of Kaiser Karl der Grosse , the I Squadron was now fully composed of modern battleships . The squadron went on a training cruise to Britain in April and May , followed by a tour of the Kiel Week sailing regatta in late June . The ships then took part in another training cruise to Norway in July and then the autumn maneuvers , which began in the Baltic on 31 August . During the exercises , Kaiser Karl der Grosse was assigned to the " hostile " force , as were several of her sister ships . The " hostile " force was first tasked with preventing the " German " squadron from passing through the Great Belt in the Baltic . Kaiser Karl der Grosse and several other battleships were then tasked with forcing an entry into the mouth of the Elbe River , where the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal and Hamburg could be seized . The " hostile " flotilla accomplished these tasks within three days . The maneuvers concluded in the North Sea with a fleet review in the Jade . From 1 to 12 December , the squadron went on its normal winter cruise to Norway .

In 1903 , the fleet , which was composed of only one squadron of battleships , was reorganized as the " Active Battle Fleet . " Kaiser Karl der Grosse remained in the I Squadron along with her sister ships and the newest Wittelsbach @-@ class battleships , while the older Brandenburg @-@ class ships were placed in reserve in order to be rebuilt . The first quarter of 1903 followed the usual pattern of training exercises . The squadron went on a training cruise in the Baltic , followed by a voyage to Spain that lasted from 7 May to 10 June . In July , she joined the I Squadron for the annual cruise to Norway . The autumn maneuvers consisted of a blockade exercise in the North Sea , a cruise of the entire fleet first to Norwegian waters and then to Kiel in early September , and finally a mock attack on Kiel . The exercises concluded on 12 September . The winter training cruise began on 23 November in the eastern Baltic and continued into the Skagerrak in early December .

Kaiser Karl der Grosse participated in an exercise in the Skagerrak from 11 to 21 January 1904 . Squadron exercises followed from 8 to 17 March . A major fleet exercise took place in the North Sea in May . In July , the I Squadron and the I Scouting Group visited Britain , including a stop at Plymouth on 10 July . The German fleet departed on 13 July , bound for the Netherlands ; the I Squadron anchored in Vlissingen the following day . There , the ships were visited by Queen Wilhelmina . The I Squadron remained in Vlissingen until 20 July , when they departed for a cruise in the northern North Sea with the rest of the fleet . The squadron stopped in Molde , Norway , on 29 July , while the other units went to other ports . The fleet reassembled on 6 August and steamed back to Kiel , where it conducted a mock attack on the harbor on 12 August . Immediately after returning to Kiel , the fleet began preparations for the autumn maneuvers , which began on 29 August in the Baltic . The fleet moved to the North Sea on 3 September , where it took part in a major landing operation , after which the ships took the ground troops from the IX Corps that participated in the exercises to Altona for a parade for Wilhelm II . The ships then conducted their own parade for the Kaiser off the island of Helgoland on 6 September . Three days later , the fleet returned to the Baltic via the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal , where it participated in further landing operations with the IX Corps and the Guards Corps . On 15 September , the maneuvers came to an end . The I Squadron went on its winter training cruise , this time to the eastern Baltic , from 22 November to 2 December .

== = 1905 ? 14 == =

In January and February 1905 , Kaiser Karl der Grosse served briefly as the flagship of the squadron . During this period , she took part in a pair of training cruises with the I Squadron during 9 ? 19 January and 27 February ? 16 March 1905 . Individual and squadron training followed , with an

emphasis on gunnery drills . On 12 July , the fleet began a major training exercise in the North Sea . While on the cruise on 18 July , Kaiser Karl der Grosse was detached to visit Antwerp to represent Germany during the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the Belgian Revolution . The rest of the fleet then cruised through the Kattegat and stopped in Copenhagen and Stockholm ; Kaiser Karl der Grosse rejoined them on 3 August in Karlskrona . The summer cruise ended on 9 August , though the autumn maneuvers that would normally have begun shortly thereafter were delayed by a visit from the British Channel Fleet that month .

The British fleet stopped in Danzig , Swinemünde , and Flensburg , where it was greeted by units of the German Navy ; Kaiser Karl der Grosse and the main German fleet was anchored at Swinemünde for the occasion . The visit was strained by the growing Anglo - German naval arms race . As a result of the British visit , the 1905 autumn maneuvers (6 to 13 September) were shortened considerably , consisting only of exercises in the North Sea . The first exercise presumed a naval blockade in the German Bight , and the second envisioned a hostile fleet attempting to force the defenses of the Elbe . In November , the I Squadron cruised in the Baltic . In early December , the I and II Squadrons went on their regular winter cruise , this time to Danzig , where they arrived on 12 December . While on the return trip to Kiel , the fleet conducted tactical exercises .

The fleet undertook a heavier training schedule in 1906 than in previous years . The ships were occupied with individual , division and squadron exercises throughout April . Starting on 13 May , major fleet exercises took place in the North Sea and lasted until 8 June with a cruise around the Skagen into the Baltic . The fleet began its usual summer cruise to Norway in mid - July . Kaiser Karl der Grosse and the I Squadron anchored in Molde , where they were joined on 21 July by Wilhelm II aboard the steamer SS Hamburg . The fleet was present for the birthday of Norwegian King Haakon VII on 3 August . The German ships departed the following day for Helgoland , to join exercises being conducted there . The fleet was back in Kiel by 15 August , where preparations for the autumn maneuvers began . On 22 - 24 August , the fleet took part in landing exercises in Eckernförde Bay outside Kiel . The maneuvers were paused from 31 August to 3 September when the fleet hosted vessels from Denmark and Sweden , along with a Russian squadron from 3 to 9 September in Kiel . The maneuvers resumed on 8 September and lasted five more days .

The ship participated in the uneventful winter cruise into the Kattegat and Skagerrak from 8 to 16 December . The first quarter of 1907 followed the previous pattern and , on 16 February , the Active Battlefleet was re - designated the High Seas Fleet . From the end of May to early June the fleet went on its summer cruise in the North Sea , returning to the Baltic via the Kattegat . This was followed by the regular cruise to Norway from 12 July to 10 August . During the autumn maneuvers , which lasted from 26 August to 6 September , the fleet conducted landing exercises in northern Schleswig with the IX Corps . The winter training cruise went into the Kattegat from 22 to 30 November . In May 1908 , the fleet went on a major cruise into the Atlantic instead of its normal voyage in the North Sea . The fleet returned to Kiel on 13 August to prepare for the autumn maneuvers , which lasted from 27 August to 7 September . Division exercises in the Baltic immediately followed from 7 to 13 September . Following the conclusion of these maneuvers on 18 September , Kaiser Karl der Grosse was decommissioned in Kiel and assigned to the Reserve Division in the Baltic . During this period , her sister ships were rebuilt , though Kaiser Karl der Grosse did not receive this treatment . In June and July 1911 , the ship underwent a major overhaul . By 1914 , the ship had been assigned to the V Squadron of the Reserve Fleet , alongside her four sister ships and the battleship Wettin .

== = World War I = = =

As a result of the outbreak of World War I , Kaiser Karl der Grosse and her sisters were brought out of reserve and mobilized as the V Battle Squadron on 5 August 1914 . The ships were prepared for war very slowly , and they were not ready for service in the North Sea until the end of August . They were initially tasked with coastal defense , though they served in this capacity for a very short time . In mid - September , the V Squadron was transferred to the Baltic , under the command of Prince Heinrich . He initially planned to launch a major amphibious assault on Windau , but a

shortage of transports forced a revision of the plan . Instead , the V Squadron was to carry the landing force , but this too was cancelled after Heinrich received false reports of British warships having entered the Baltic on 25 September . Kaiser Karl der Grosse and her sisters returned to Kiel the following day , disembarked the landing force , and then proceeded to the North Sea , where they resumed guard ship duties . Before the end of the year , the V Squadron was once again transferred to the Baltic .

Prince Heinrich ordered a foray toward Gotland . On 26 December 1914 , the battleships rendezvoused with the Baltic cruiser division in the Bay of Pomerania and then departed on the sortie . Two days later , the fleet arrived off Gotland to show the German flag , and was back in Kiel by 30 December . Kaiser Karl der Grosse briefly replaced her sister Kaiser Wilhelm II as the squadron flagship , from 23 January 1915 to 23 February . The squadron returned to the North Sea for guard duties , but was withdrawn from front @-@ line service by February . Shortages of trained crews in the High Seas Fleet , coupled with the risk of operating older ships in wartime , necessitated the deactivation of Kaiser der Grosse and her sisters . Starting in October , she served briefly as a training ship for engine room personnel , though on 19 November she was decommissioned in Kiel and disarmed . She was thereafter employed as a prison ship for prisoners of war in Wilhelmshaven . In November 1918 , Germany capitulated and signed the First Armistice at Compiègne , which ended hostilities so a peace treaty could be negotiated . According to Article 181 of the Treaty of Versailles , signed on 28 June 1919 , Germany was permitted to retain only six battleships of the " Deutschland or Lothringen types " . On 6 December 1919 , the ship was struck from the naval list and sold to ship @-@ breakers . The following year , Kaiser Karl der Grosse was broken up for scrap metal in Rönnebeck .