

= French battleship Courbet ( 1911 ) =

Courbet was the lead ship of her class , the first dreadnoughts built for the French Navy . She was completed before World War I and named in honour of Admiral Amédée Courbet . She spent the war in the Mediterranean , helping to sink the Austro -@- Hungarian protected cruiser Zenta in August 1914 . She spent the rest of the war providing cover for the Otranto Barrage that blockaded the Austro -@- Hungarian Navy in the Adriatic Sea . Although upgraded several times before World War II , she was not deemed to be a first -@- class battleship and spent most of the interwar period as a gunnery training ship .

Upon the German invasion of France , beginning on 10 May 1940 , Courbet was hastily rearmed . She supported Allied troops in the defence of Cherbourg during June , later that month taking refuge in England . As part of Operation Catapult , she was seized in Portsmouth by British forces on 3 July and was turned over to the Free French a week later . She was used as a patrol vessel depot ship and an anti -@- aircraft ship there until 31 March 1941 when she was disarmed and hulked . Her engines and boilers were removed in 1944 to prepare her for use as a breakwater during the Normandy landings in June 1944 . She was scrapped where she lay after the war .

= = Description = =

Courbet was 166 metres ( 544 ft 7 in ) long overall . She had a beam of 27 metres ( 88 ft 7 in ) and at full load a draft of 9 @. @ 04 metres ( 29 ft 8 in ) at the bow . She displaced 23 @, @ 475 tonnes ( 23 @, @ 100 long tons ) at standard load and 25 @, @ 579 tonnes ( 25 @, @ 180 long tons ) at full load . She proved to be rather wet in service as she was bow -@- heavy because of the superimposed turrets forward .

Courbet had four propeller shafts powered by four Parsons direct -@- drive steam turbines , rated at 28 @, @ 000 shaft horsepower ( 20 @, @ 880 kW ) . Twenty -@- four Niclausse boilers provided steam for her turbines . These boilers were coal -@- burning with auxiliary oil sprayers . She had a designed speed of 21 knots ( 39 km / h ; 24 mph ) , although she reached 22 knots ( 41 km / h ; 25 mph ) during trials . She carried up to 2 @, @ 700 long tons ( 2 @, @ 700 t ) of coal and 906 long tons ( 921 t ) of oil and could steam for 4 @, @ 200 nautical miles ( 7 @, @ 800 km ) at a speed of 10 knots ( 12 mph ; 19 km / h ) .

Courbet 's main armament consisted of twelve 305 -@- millimetre ( 12 in ) Mle 1910 45 -@- calibre guns mounted in six twin gun turrets , with two turrets superimposed fore and aft , and one on each flank of the ship . For anti -@- torpedo boat defence she carried twenty -@- two 138 -@- millimetre ( 5 @. @ 4 in ) Mle 1910 guns , which were mounted in casemates . Four 47 -@- millimetre ( 1 @. @ 9 in ) Modèle 1902 Hotchkiss guns were fitted , two on each beam . She was also armed with four 450 -@- millimetre ( 18 in ) submerged Modèle 1909 torpedo tubes with twelve torpedoes .

Courbet 's waterline armoured belt extended well below the waterline as the French were concerned about protection from underwater hits . Her main armour was also thinner than that of her British or German counterparts , but covered more area . It was 270 mm ( 11 in ) thick between the fore and aft turrets and tapered to 180 mm ( 7 @. @ 1 in ) towards the bow and stern . It extended 2 @. @ 4 m ( 7 ft 10 in ) below the normal waterline . Above the main belt was another belt , 180 mm thick , that covered the sides , and the secondary armament , up to the forecastle deck , 4 @. @ 5 m ( 15 ft ) deep , between the fore and aft turrets . The conning tower had armour 300 mm ( 11 @. @ 8 in ) thick . The main gun turrets had 290 mm ( 11 @. @ 4 in ) of armour on their faces , 250 mm ( 9 @. @ 8 in ) on their sides and roofs 100 mm ( 3 @. @ 9 in ) thick . Their barbettes had 280 mm ( 11 @. @ 0 in ) of armour . There was no anti -@- torpedo bulkhead although there was a longitudinal bulkhead abreast the machinery spaces that was used either as a coal bunker or left as a void .

= = Career = =

Courbet was built by the Arsenal de Lorient , at Lorient . Her keel was laid down on 1 September

1910 and she was launched on 23 September 1911 . She was completed on 19 November 1913 and finished her trials before World War I began the following year .

== = World War I == =

Courbet joined the 1st Division of the 1st Squadron of the French Mediterranean Fleet , at Toulon , upon commissioning in 1913 . She became the flagship of Vice @-@ Amiral Augustin Boué de Lapeyrère , commander of the 1st Squadron , after the beginning of the war until 12 April 1915 . Lapeyrère decided immediately on a sweep into the Adriatic to surprise the Austrian vessels enforcing a blockade of Montenegro and the Anglo @-@ French force , which included her sister ship Jean Bart , succeeded in cutting off and sinking the Austro @-@ Hungarian protected cruiser Zenta in an engagement off Antivari on 16 August 1914 , although her accompanying destroyer managed to escape . She spent most of the rest of 1914 providing gunfire support for the Montenegrin Army until U @-@ 12 hit Jean Bart on 21 December with a torpedo . This forced the battleships to fall back to either Malta or Bizerte to cover the Otranto Barrage . After the French occupied the neutral Greek island of Corfu in 1916 she moved forward to Corfu and Argostoli , but her activities were very limited as much of her crew was used to man anti @-@ submarine ships . Before the end of the war she was fitted with seven 75 @-@ millimetre ( 3 in ) Mle 1918 anti @-@ aircraft ( AA ) guns in single mounts . These guns were adaptations of the famous French Mle 97 75 @-@ mm field gun .

== = Interwar years == =

Courbet served as Vice @-@ Amiral Charlier 's flagship between 6 June 1919 and 20 October 1920 . The following year she became a gunnery training ship at Toulon , but she suffered a serious boiler fire in June 1923 that required repairs , so she was given the first of her upgrades between 9 July 1923 and 16 April 1924 , at La Seyne @-@ sur @-@ Mer . This included replacing one set of boilers with oil @-@ fired boilers , trunking together her two forward funnels , increasing the maximum elevation of the main armament from 12 ° to 23 ° , removal of her bow armour to make her more seaworthy , the installation of a fire @-@ control director , with a 4 @-@ 57 metres ( 15 ft 0 in ) rangefinder , atop the new tripod foremast as well as the installation of an experimental 7 @-@ 6 metres ( 24 ft 11 in ) rangefinder on top of her conning tower . She had another boiler fire in August 1924 and remained under repair for the rest of the year , but resumed her duties as a gunnery training ship upon her return from the dockyard .

She was refitted again between 15 January 1927 and 12 January 1931 . This was much more extensive than her earlier refit as another set of boilers was converted to oil @-@ firing , her high and medium pressure direct @-@ drive turbines were replaced by geared turbines and her fire @-@ control systems were comprehensively upgraded . A large cruiser @-@ type fire @-@ control director was added atop the foremast with a 4 @-@ 57 @-@ m coincidence rangefinder and a 3 @-@ metre ( 9 ft 10 in ) stereo rangefinder . The rangefinder above the conning tower was replaced by a duplex unit carrying two 4 @-@ 57 @-@ m rangefinders and another 4 @-@ 57 @-@ m rangefinder was added in an armoured hood next to the main mast . Two directors for the secondary guns were added on the navigation bridge , each with a 2 @-@ metre ( 6 ft 7 in ) coincidence rangefinder . A 8 @-@ 2 metres ( 26 ft 11 in ) rangefinder was added to the roof of ' B ' turret , the second one from the bow . Her Mle 1918 AA guns were exchanged for Mle 1922 guns and they were provided with three 1 @-@ 5 @-@ metre ( 4 ft 11 in ) rangefinders , one on top of the duplex unit on the conning tower , one on ' B ' turret and one in the aft superstructure . The 75 @-@ mm guns had a maximum depression of 10 ° and a maximum elevation of 90 ° . They fired a 5 @-@ 93 @-@ kilogram ( 13 @-@ 1 lb ) shell at a muzzle velocity of 850 m / s ( 2 @-@ ,@ 800 ft / s ) at a rate of fire of 8 ? 18 rounds per minute and had a maximum effective ceiling of 8 @-@ ,@ 000 metres ( 26 @-@ ,@ 000 ft ) .

She was transferred from the gunnery school to the navigation school in 1937 , before her final refit between 1 April 1937 and 19 September 1938 that removed her torpedo tubes and overhauled her

boilers . By 1939 she reverted to her role as a gunnery training ship , but she was ordered to Brest and Quiberon with her sister Paris upon the outbreak of World War II .

= = = World War II = = =

Courbet and her sister Paris formed a Fifth Squadron at the beginning of the war . They were transferred to the Atlantic to continue their training duties without interference . Both ships were ordered restored to operational status on 21 May 1940 by Amiral Mord and they were given six Hotchkiss 13 @. @ 2 @- @ millimetre ( 0 @. @ 52 in ) twin machine gun mounts and two single 13 @. @ 2 @- @ mm Browning machine guns at Cherbourg . Courbet was ordered to provide gunfire support to the defenders of Cherbourg against the advancing 7th Panzer Division and covered the evacuation of the town by the Allies , although the lack of spotting aircraft meant that she was not particularly effective in that role .

Courbet sailed for Portsmouth on 20 June . She was seized there , as part of Operation Catapult , by British forces on 3 July and a week later was turned over to the Free French , who used her as a depot and an anti @- @ aircraft ship in Portsmouth until 31 March 1941 when she was disarmed . Up to April 1944 she was deployed as a target ship in Scotland . At Loch Striven she was initially used as a target vessel for the " Highball " trials . " Highball " was a smaller version of " Upkeep " used in the Dambuster Raid . She remained in use as a depot and target ship until she was earmarked for use as a " Gooseberry " breakwater at Sword Beach during the Battle of Normandy . She had to be towed from Weymouth on 7 June by the British tugboats HMRT Growler and HMRT Samsonia as her engines and boilers had been removed earlier and replaced with concrete . She was scuttled on 9 June and was hit by Neger manned torpedoes during the nights of 15 ? 16 and 16 ? 17 August . She was scrapped in place after the war .