

= SMS Wittelsbach =

SMS Wittelsbach (" His Majesty 's Ship Wittelsbach ") was the lead ship of the Wittelsbach class of pre - dreadnought battleships of the Kaiserliche Marine . Wittelsbach was built at Wilhelmshaven Navy Dockyard . She was laid down in 1899 and completed in October 1902 , at the cost of 22 @, @ 740 @, @ 000 marks . Wittelsbach was the first capital ship built under the Navy Law of 1898 , brought about by Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz .

The ship served in the I Squadron of the German fleet for the majority of her career . Wittelsbach was rapidly superseded by new " all @-@ big @-@ gun " warships , and as a result served for less than eight years before being decommissioned on 20 September 1910 . After the start of World War I in August 1914 , Wittelsbach was brought back to active duty in the IV Battle Squadron . The ship saw limited duty in the Baltic Sea against Russian forces , though the threat from British submarines forced the ship to withdraw by 1916 . The ship then saw service in a number of auxiliary roles , ultimately as a tender for minesweepers after 1919 . In July 1921 , however , the ship was sold and broken up for scrap metal .

= = Description = =

Wittelsbach was 126 @. @ 8 m (416 ft 0 in) long overall and had a beam of 22 @. @ 8 m (74 ft 10 in) and a draft of 7 @. @ 95 m (26 ft 1 in) forward . The ship was powered by three 3 @-@ cylinder vertical triple expansion engines that drove three screws . Steam was provided by six naval and six cylindrical coal @-@ fired water @-@ tube boilers . Wittelsbach 's powerplant was rated at 14 @, @ 000 metric horsepower (13 @, @ 808 ihp ; 10 @, @ 297 kW) , which generated a top speed of 18 knots (33 km / h ; 21 mph) . She had a crew of 30 officers and 650 enlisted men .

Wittelsbach 's armament consisted of a main battery of four 24 cm (9 @. @ 4 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 @. @ 9 inch) SK L / 40 guns and twelve 8 @. @ 8 cm (3 @. @ 45 in) SK L / 30 quick @-@ firing guns . The armament suite was rounded out with six 45 cm (18 in) torpedo tubes , all in above @-@ water swivel mounts . Her armored belt was 225 millimeters (8 @. @ 9 in) thick in the central portion that protected her magazines and machinery spaces , and the deck was 50 mm (2 @. @ 0 in) thick . The main battery turrets had 250 mm (9 @. @ 8 in) of armor plating .

= = Service history = =

Wittelsbach 's keel was laid in 1899 , at the Kaiserliche Werft in Wilhelmshaven , under construction number 25 . She was ordered under the contract name " C " , as a new unit for the fleet . The vessel was the first battleship built under the direction of State Secretary Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz , according to the terms of the Navy Law of 1898 . Wittelsbach was launched on 3 July 1900 and commissioned on 15 October 1902 .

Upon commissioning in 1902 , Wittelsbach was assigned to the I Squadron of the Active Battle Fleet . In 1905 the German fleet was reorganized into two squadrons of battleships . Wittelsbach was assigned to the I Division of I Squadron . The ship was joined by her sisters Wettin and Zähringen . The German fleet consisted of another three @-@ ship division in the I Squadron and 2 three @-@ ship divisions in the II Squadron . This was supported by a cruiser division , composed of two armored cruisers and six protected cruisers . That year , Kapitän zur See Maximilian von Spee , who would go on to command the East Asia Squadron at the outbreak of World War I , took command of the ship .

In 1907 , the newest Deutschland @-@ class battleships were beginning to enter service . This provided the Navy with enough ships to form two full battle squadrons of eight ships each . The fleet was then renamed the Hochseeflotte (High Seas Fleet) . Wittelsbach served in the I Division until 20 September 1910 . The ship was then decommissioned and placed in reserve ; her crew was then sent to man the newly commissioned dreadnought Posen .

== = World War I == =

At the start of World War I , Wittelsbach was mobilized as part of the IV Battle Squadron , under the command of Vice Admiral Ehrhard Schmidt . Starting on 3 September , the IV Squadron , assisted by the armored cruiser Blücher , conducted a sweep into the Baltic . The operation lasted until 9 September and failed to bring Russian naval units to battle . In May 1915 , Wittelsbach and the rest of IV Squadron was transferred to support the German Army in the Baltic Sea area . Wittelsbach and her sisters were then based in Kiel . On 6 May , the IV Squadron ships were tasked with providing support to the assault on Libau . Wittelsbach and the other ships were stationed off Gotland to intercept any Russian cruisers that might attempt to intervene in the landings ; the Russians , however , did not do so . On 10 May , after the invasion force had entered Libau , the British submarines HMS E1 and HMS E9 spotted the IV Squadron , but were too far away to attack them .

By 1916 , the threat from submarines in the Baltic convinced the German navy to withdraw the elderly Wittelsbach @-@ class ships from active service . Wittelsbach was initially used as a training ship based in Kiel . The ship was then transferred to Wilhelmshaven for use as a fleet tender . Wittelsbach was converted into a depot ship in 1919 for minesweepers in the newly constituted Reichsmarine . She carried 12 of these shallow draft vessels . The ship served in this capacity for little more than a year ; on 8 March 1921 , Wittelsbach was stricken from the Navy List and sold four months later , on 7 July , for 3 @,@ 561 @,@ 000 Marks . The ship was then broken up for scrap in Wilhelmshaven .