

= SMS König Wilhelm =

SMS König Wilhelm ( King William ) was an armored frigate of the Prussian and later the German Imperial Navy . The ship was laid down in 1865 at the Thames Ironworks shipyard in London , originally under the name Fatih for the Ottoman Empire . She was purchased by Prussia in February 1867 , launched in April 1868 , and commissioned into the Prussian Navy in February 1869 . The ship was the fifth ironclad ordered by the Prussian Navy , after Arminius , Prinz Adalbert , Friedrich Carl , and Kronprinz . She was built as an armored frigate , armed with a main battery of sixteen 24 cm ( 9 @. @ 4 in ) and five 21 cm ( 8 @. @ 3 in ) guns ; several smaller guns and torpedo tubes were added later in her career .

The ship was for a time the largest and most powerful warship in the German navy ; she served as its flagship during the Franco @-@ Prussian War in 1870 ? 1871 , though engine troubles prevented the ship from seeing action . In 1878 , the ship accidentally rammed and sank the ironclad Grosser Kurfürst , with great loss of life . König Wilhelm was converted into an armored cruiser in 1895 ? 1896 ; by early 1904 , however , she had been superseded by newer vessels . In May of that year , she was placed out of active service and used as a floating barracks and training ship , a role she held through World War I. In 1921 , the ship was ultimately broken up for scrap , after a career spanning 52 years and three German states .

= = Design = =

= = = General characteristics and machinery = = =

König Wilhelm was 108 @. @ 60 meters ( 356 @. @ 3 ft ) long at the waterline and 112 @. @ 20 m ( 368 @. @ 1 ft ) long overall . She had a beam of 18 @. @ 30 m ( 60 @. @ 0 ft ) and a draft of 8 @. @ 56 m ( 28 @. @ 1 ft ) forward and 8 @. @ 12 m ( 26 @. @ 6 ft ) aft . The ship was designed to displace 9 @, @ 757 metric tons ( 9 @, @ 603 long tons ; 10 @, @ 755 short tons ) at a normal loading , and up to 10 @, @ 761 t ( 10 @, @ 591 long tons ; 11 @, @ 862 short tons ) with a combat load . The ship 's hull was constructed with transverse and longitudinal iron frames . It contained eleven watertight compartments and a double bottom that ran for 70 percent of the length of the vessel .

König Wilhelm was noted by the German navy as having had " satisfactory sea @-@ keeping qualities " ; the ship was responsive to commands from the helm and had a moderate turning radius . She suffered from severe roll but little pitch . The ship 's crew numbered 36 officers and 694 enlisted men , and while serving as a flagship , the crew was augmented with a command staff composed of 9 officers and 47 enlisted men . König Wilhelm carried a number of smaller boats , including two picket boats , two launches , a pinnace , two cutters , two yawls , and one dinghy .

A horizontal two @-@ cylinder single expansion steam engine , built by Maudslay , Son & Field of London , powered the ship . It drove a four @-@ bladed screw 7 m ( 23 ft ) in diameter . J Penn & Sons of Greenwich built eight trunk boilers for the ship . These were divided into two boiler rooms with twenty fireboxes in each , supplied steam to the engine at 2 standard atmospheres ( 200 kPa ) . The propulsion system was rated at 8 @, @ 000 indicated horsepower ( 6 @, @ 000 kW ) and a top speed of 14 knots ( 26 km / h ; 16 mph ) , though on trials König Wilhelm managed to make 8 @, @ 440 ihp ( 6 @, @ 290 kW ) and 14 @. @ 7 knots ( 27 @. @ 2 km / h ; 16 @. @ 9 mph ) . The ship carried 750 t ( 740 long tons ; 830 short tons ) of coal , which enabled a maximum range of 1 @, @ 300 nautical miles ( 2 @, @ 400 km ; 1 @, @ 500 mi ) at a cruising speed of 10 knots ( 19 km / h ; 12 mph ) . A ship rig with a surface area of 2 @, @ 600 square meters ( 28 @, @ 000 sq ft ) supplemented the steam engine , though in service they added little to the ship 's performance . Steering was controlled with a single rudder .

= = = Armament and armor = = =

As built , König Wilhelm was equipped with thirty 72 pounder cannon . After her delivery to Germany , these guns were replaced with eighteen 24 centimeter ( 9 4 in ) L / 20 guns , supplied with a total of 1 440 rounds of ammunition . These guns were mounted in a central battery , with nine on either broadside . The guns could depress to 4 ° and elevate to 7 5 ° ; at maximum elevation , the guns could reach targets out to 4 500 m ( 14 800 ft ) . The ship 's armament was rounded out by five 21 cm ( 8 3 in ) guns , which could depress to 5 ° and elevate to 13 ° . Their maximum range was 5 900 m ( 19 400 ft ) .

König Wilhelm was reconstructed into an armored cruiser in 1895 - 1896 and rearmed with twenty 24 cm L / 20 guns , a single 15 cm ( 5 9 in ) L / 30 gun with 109 rounds mounted in the stern , and eighteen 8 8 cm ( 3 5 in ) quick firing guns on the upper deck , nine on each broadside . The 15 cm gun had a range of 8 900 m ( 29 200 ft ) . Five 35 cm ( 14 in ) torpedo tubes were also installed ; two were placed in the bow , one on both broadsides , and one in the stern , all above water . The torpedo tubes were supplied with a total of 13 rounds . Following her conversion into a training ship , most of her armament was removed . The ship only carried sixteen 8 8 cm L / 30 guns , and in 1915 , twelve of these were removed .

As built , the ship was protected by wrought iron plating mounted over teak backing . Protection at the waterline was thickest amidships , with an outer layer of iron armor 305 mm ( 12 0 in ) thick , an inner layer of 178 mm ( 7 0 in ) thick iron , and 250 mm ( 9 8 in ) of teak behind the iron . The outer layer was reduced to 152 mm ( 6 0 in ) in the stern but did not extend to the bow . The inner layer was 127 mm ( 5 0 in ) thick in both the bow and stern , and the teak backing was 90 mm ( 3 5 in ) for both ends of the ship . The main battery was protected with 150 mm ( 5 9 in ) thick plating and capped on either end with 150 mm thick transverse bulkheads . During her reconstruction into an armored cruiser , the iron armor was cut away and replaced with stronger steel armor . The conning tower received armor protection during the refit as well . The sides were 50 to 100 mm ( 2 0 to 3 9 in ) thick sloped plates , with a 30 mm ( 1 2 in ) thick roof .

= = Service history = =

Laid down at the Thames Ironworks shipyard in London , England in 1865 , the ship was originally ordered by the Ottoman Empire as the Fatikh . The ship was built to a design created by the British naval architect Edward Reed . Before her launch , the Prussian Navy purchased the ship on 6 February 1867 and initially renamed it Wilhelm I. On 14 December 1867 , the ship was renamed again , as König Wilhelm . She was launched on 25 April 1868 and commissioned less than a year later , on 20 February 1869 . The ship 's first commander was Kapitän zur See Ludwig von Henk . The ship was the largest and most powerful vessel in the Prussian fleet , and served as its flagship . Indeed , König Wilhelm remained the largest German vessel until 1891 . This was in part due to the fact that Germany laid down only one small ironclad between 1876 and 1888 ; the four Brandenburg class battleships , launched in 1891 and 1892 , were the first ships to surpass König Wilhelm in size .

= = = Franco - Prussian War = = =

At the outbreak of the Franco - Prussian War in 1870 , the greatly numerically inferior Prussian Navy assumed a defensive posture against a naval blockade imposed by the French Navy . König Wilhelm and the broadside ironclads Friedrich Carl and Kronprinz , along with the small ironclad ram Prinz Adalbert , had been steaming in the English Channel before the French declared war ; they had left Plymouth on 10 July with the intention of steaming to Fayal in the Azores . On the 13th , however , they put into port and learned of the rising tension between France and Prussia . The ships therefore returned to Wilhelmshaven immediately , arriving on 16 July . France declared war on Prussia three days later on 19 July . König Wilhelm , Friedrich Carl , and Kronprinz were concentrated in the North Sea at the port of Wilhelmshaven. They were subsequently joined there by the turret ship Arminius , which had been stationed in Kiel .

Despite the great French naval superiority , the French had conducted insufficient pre war planning for an assault on the Prussian naval installations , and concluded that it would only be possible with Danish assistance , which was not forthcoming . The four ships , under the command of Vice Admiral Jachmann , made an offensive sortie in early August 1870 out to the Dogger Bank , though they encountered no French warships . König Wilhelm and the other two broadside ironclads thereafter suffered from chronic engine trouble , which left Arminius alone to conduct operations . König Wilhelm , Friedrich Carl , and Kronprinz stood off the island of Wangerooge for the majority of the conflict , while Arminius was stationed in the mouth of the Elbe river . On 11 September , the three broadside ironclads were again ready for action ; they joined Arminius for another major operation into the North Sea . It too did not encounter French opposition , as the French Navy had by this time returned to France . After the war , the Prussian Navy became the Imperial Navy , and resumed its peacetime training routines . General Albrecht von Stosch became the chief of the Imperial Navy , and organized the fleet for coastal defense .

= = = Collision with Grosser Kurfürst = = =

While steaming in the Straits of Dover on 31 May 1878 , König Wilhelm accidentally collided with the newly commissioned turret ironclad Grosser Kurfürst . The two ships , along with Preussen , had left Wilhelmshaven on the 29th . König Wilhelm and Preussen steamed in a line , with Grosser Kurfürst off to starboard . On the morning of the 31st , the three ships encountered a pair of sailing vessels off Folkestone . Grosser Kurfürst turned to port to avoid the boats while König Wilhelm sought to pass the two boats , but there was not enough distance between her and Grosser Kurfürst . She therefore turned hard to port to avoid Grosser Kurfürst , but the action was not taken quickly enough , and König Wilhelm found herself pointed directly at Grosser Kurfürst . König Wilhelm 's ram bow tore a hole in Grosser Kurfürst .

A failure to adequately seal the watertight bulkheads aboard Grosser Kurfürst caused the ship to sink rapidly , in the span of about eight minutes . Out of a crew of 500 men , 269 died in the accident . König Wilhelm was also badly damaged in the collision , with severe flooding forward . König Wilhelm 's captain initially planned on beaching the ship to prevent it from sinking , but determined that the ship 's pumps could hold the flooding to an acceptable level . The ship made for Portsmouth , where temporary repairs could be effected to allow the ship to return to Germany . In the aftermath of the collision , the German navy held a court martial for Rear Admiral Batsch , the squadron commander , and Captains Monts and Kuehne , the commanders of the two ships , along with Lieutenant Clausa , the first officer aboard Grosser Kurfürst , to investigate the sinking . The damage to König Wilhelm necessitated a lengthy period of repairs from 1878 to 1882 . The work was carried out at the Imperial Dockyard in Wilhelmshaven , and also included reboiling and replacement of the ship 's ram . Torpedo nets were fitted to the ship from 1885 to 1897 .

= = = Later service = = =

By 1893 , König Wilhelm had been assigned as the flagship for the II Division of the German fleet ; the four Sachsen @-@ class armored corvettes composed the I Squadron . The ship flew the flag of Admiral Otto von Diederichs , and was based in Wilhelmshaven . On 20 February 1894 , a special ceremony was held on board the ship to commemorate the 25th anniversary of her commissioning . Kaiser Wilhelm II attended the ceremony , as did Ludwig von Henk , who had by that time retired as a Vizeadmiral . In April 1894 , the II Division conducted a training cruise to prepare for the annual summer maneuvers . During the cruise , König Wilhelm ran aground on a mud bank off the Frisian coast . Deutschland and Friedrich der Grosse quickly pulled the ship free with minimal damage . The ships then proceeded to Scotland via Oslo and Bergen . The division returned to Kiel at the end of May to replenish its stocks of coal and provisions for the summer exercises . During the 1894 maneuvers , von Diederich 's II Division acted as the opposing force in the Baltic , simulating a Russian fleet attacking Germany 's Baltic coast . Following the conclusion of maneuvers in September , Admiral Diederichs left the squadron and was replaced by Admiral Karl Barandon .

In 1895 , König Wilhelm went into drydock at the Blohm and Voss shipyard in Hamburg for an extensive reconstruction into an armored cruiser . The vessel 's armament was increased , the ship rig was removed , and new fighting masts were installed in place of the old masts . The ship 's crew was dramatically increased , to 38 officers and 1 @, @ 120 enlisted men . Work lasted through 1896 , and the ship was returned to the fleet in her new guise on 25 January 1897 . On 26 June , she represented Germany at the Fleet Review for Queen Victoria 's Diamond Jubilee . She served with the fleet until 1904 , when she was removed from active duty . Starting on 3 May 1904 , she became a harbor ship . She was then used barracks ship and training vessel for naval cadets , based in Kiel , starting on 1 October 1907 . Two years later , König Wilhelm was moved to the Naval Academy at Mürwik , where she continued in these duties . Starting in 1910 , the old corvette Charlotte served as a support vessel for the ship . The light cruiser Medusa replaced Charlotte as König Wilhelm 's auxiliary vessel in 1917 . König Wilhelm served through World War I , until 1921 , after Germany 's defeat . On 4 January 1921 , the ship was stricken from the naval register and broken up for scrap in Rönnebeck .