

= SMS Kaiser (1911) =

SMS Kaiser was the lead ship of the Kaiser class of battleships of the Imperial German Navy . Kaiser was built by the Imperial Dockyard at Kiel , launched on 22 March 1911 and commissioned on 1 August 1912 . The ship was equipped with ten 30 @. @ 5 @- @ centimeter (12 @. @ 0 in) guns in five twin turrets , and had a top speed of 23 @. @ 4 knots (43 @. @ 3 km / h ; 26 @. @ 9 mph) . Kaiser was assigned to the III Squadron of the High Seas Fleet for the majority of World War I.

In 1913 , Kaiser and her sister König Albert conducted a cruise to South America and South Africa . The ship participated in most of the major fleet operations during the war . She fought at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 , during which she was hit once and suffered negligible damage . The ship was also present during Operation Albion in the Baltic Sea in September and October 1917 , and at the Second Battle of Heligoland Bight in November 1917 .

During peace negotiations after the end of the war in 1918 , she was interned with other ships of the High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow . On 21 June 1919 the commander of the interned fleet , Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , ordered the fleet to be scuttled to ensure that the British would not be able to seize the ships . The wreck was subsequently raised in 1929 and broken up in Rosyth in 1930 .

= = Construction = =

Ordered under the contract name Ersatz Hildebrand as a replacement for the obsolete coastal defense ship Hildebrand , Kaiser was laid down at the Imperial Dockyard in Kiel in September 1909 . The hull was completed by 22 March 1911 , when the ship was launched ; this date was specifically chosen , as it was the birthday of Kaiser (Emperor) Wilhelm I. His grandson , Kaiser Wilhelm II , attended the launching ceremony , where German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann @- @ Hollweg gave a speech while Kaiserin (Empress) Augusta Victoria christened the ship . Fitting @- @ out work then began , which was completed by the end of July 1912 . On 1 August , the ship was commissioned for sea trials . These were concluded by 7 December ; the following day Kaiser joined the fleet as the flagship of V Division . Her crew consisted largely of men who had been transferred from the recently decommissioned battleships Elsass and Braunschweig .

The ship was 172 @. @ 40 m (565 ft 7 in) long overall and displaced a maximum of 27 @, @ 000 metric tons (26 @, @ 570 long tons) . She had a beam of 29 m (95 ft 2 in) and a draft of 9 @. @ 10 m (29 ft 10 in) forward and 8 @. @ 80 m (28 ft 10 in) aft . Kaiser was powered by three sets of Parsons turbines , supplied with steam by 16 coal @- @ fired boilers . The powerplant produced a top speed of 23 @. @ 4 knots (43 @. @ 3 km / h ; 26 @. @ 9 mph) . She carried 3 @, @ 600 metric tons (3 @, @ 500 long tons) of coal , which enabled a maximum range of 7 @, @ 900 nautical miles (14 @, @ 600 km ; 9 @, @ 100 mi) at a cruising speed of 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) .

Kaiser was armed with a main battery of ten 30 @. @ 5 cm SK L / 50 guns in five twin turrets . The ship disposed with the inefficient hexagonal arrangement of previous German battleships ; instead , three of the five turrets were mounted on the centerline , with two of them arranged in a superfiring pair aft . The other two turrets were placed en echelon amidships , such that both could fire on the broadside . The ship was also armed with fourteen 15 cm (5 @. @ 9 in) SK L / 45 guns in casemates amidships , eight 8 @. @ 8 cm (3 @. @ 5 in) SK L / 45 guns in casemates and four 8 @. @ 8 cm L / 45 anti @- @ aircraft guns . The ship 's armament was rounded out by five 50 cm (20 in) torpedo tubes , all mounted in the ship 's hull .

= = Service history = =

After joining the active fleet in December 1912 , Kaiser was stationed in Kiel . The ship then conducted individual training . In February 1913 , Kaiser was transferred to Wilhelmshaven , along with her sister ship Friedrich der Grosse . She then took part in several training exercises with the rest of the High Seas Fleet . These included maneuvers in the North Sea in March and April ,

artillery drills in the Baltic at the end of the month , and further fleet maneuvers in May . In June , Kaiser took part in the Kiel Week regatta . Kaiser Wilhelm II and Italian King Victor Emmanuel III inspected the ship . The annual summer cruise to Norway was conducted in July and August , followed immediately by the autumn maneuvers in August and September . In September 1913 , Captain Adolf von Trotha became the ship 's commanding officer , a post he held until January 1916 .

Kaiser was selected to participate in a long @-@ distance cruise to test the reliability of the new turbine propulsion system . The ship was joined by her sister König Albert and the light cruiser Strassburg in a special " Detached Division " . The trio departed Germany on 9 December 1913 and proceeded to the German colonies in western Africa . The ships visited Lomé in Togoland , Duala and Victoria in Kamerun , and Swakopmund in German South @-@ West Africa . From Africa , the ships sailed to St. Helena and then on to Rio de Janeiro , arriving on 15 February 1914 . Strassburg was detached to visit Buenos Aires , Argentina before returning to meet the two battleships in Montevideo , Uruguay . The three ships sailed south around Cape Horn and then north to Valparaiso , Chile , arriving on 2 April and remaining for over a week .

On 11 April , the ships departed Valparaiso for the long journey back to Germany . On the return trip , the ships visited several more ports , including Bahía Blanca , Argentina , before returning to Rio de Janeiro . On 16 May the ships left Rio de Janeiro for the Atlantic leg of the journey ; they stopped in Cape Verde , Madeira , and Vigo , Spain while en route to Germany . Kaiser , König Albert , and Strassburg arrived in Kiel on 17 June 1914 . In the course of the voyage , the ships traveled some 20 @,@ 000 nautical miles (37 @,@ 000 km ; 23 @,@ 000 mi) . A week later , on 24 June , the Detached Division was dissolved and Kaiser returned to the III Squadron . Kaiser then participated in squadron exercises in July . Kaiser joined the High Seas Fleet for its annual summer cruise to Norway in July 1914 , about two weeks after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo . As a result of rising international tensions , the cruise was cut short and the German fleet was back in Wilhelmshaven by 29 July . At midnight on 4 August , the United Kingdom declared war on Germany .

= = = World War I = = =

The High Seas Fleet , including Kaiser , conducted a number of sweeps and advances into the North Sea . The first occurred on 2 ? 3 November 1914 , though no British forces were encountered . Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , the commander of the High Seas Fleet , adopted a strategy in which the battlecruisers of Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper 's I Scouting Group raided British coastal towns to lure out portions of the Grand Fleet where they could be destroyed by the High Seas Fleet . The raid on Scarborough , Hartlepool and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 was the first such operation . On the evening of 15 December , the German battle fleet of some twelve dreadnoughts ? including Kaiser and her four sisters ? and eight pre @-@ dreadnoughts came to within 10 nmi (19 km ; 12 mi) of an isolated squadron of six British battleships . However , skirmishes between the rival destroyer screens in the darkness convinced von Ingenohl that he was faced with the entire Grand Fleet . Under orders from Kaiser Wilhelm II to avoid risking the fleet unnecessarily , von Ingenohl broke off the engagement and turned the battlefleet back toward Germany .

Following the loss of SMS Blücher at the Battle of Dogger Bank in January 1915 , the Kaiser removed Admiral von Ingenohl from his post on 2 February . Admiral Hugo von Pohl replaced him as commander of the fleet . Admiral von Pohl conducted a series of fleet advances in 1915 in which Kaiser took part ; in the first one on 29 ? 30 March , the fleet steamed out to the north of Terschelling and return without incident . Another followed on 17 ? 18 April , where Kaiser and the rest of the fleet covered a mining operation by the II Scouting Group . Three days later , on 21 ? 22 April , the High Seas Fleet advanced towards the Dogger Bank , though again failed to meet any British forces . Kaiser was in dock in Kiel for periodic maintenance during the operation on 17 ? 18 May , but she was back with the fleet for the sortie on 29 ? 30 May , during which the fleet advanced as far as Schiermonnikoog before being forced to turn back by inclement weather . On 10 August , the fleet steamed to the north of Helgoland to cover the return of the auxiliary cruiser Meteor . A

month later , on 11 ? 12 September , the fleet covered another mine @-@ laying operation off the Swarte Bank . The last operation of the year , conducted on 23 ? 24 October , was an advance without result in the direction of Horns Reef .

On 12 January 1916 , Admiral Reinhard Scheer replaced von Pohl as the fleet commander . Kaiser was present during the fleet advance on 5 ? 7 March , though this too ended without action . While in port in Kiel , the old pre @-@ dreadnought Hannover accidentally collided with Kaiser , though neither ship was seriously damaged . Scheer continued the series of fleet operations practiced by his predecessors ; the fleet conducted sweeps of the North Sea on 26 March , 2 ? 3 April , and 21 ? 22 April . The battlecruisers conducted another raid on the English coast on 24 ? 25 April , during which Kaiser and the rest of the fleet provided distant support . Scheer planned another raid for mid @-@ May , but the battlecruiser Seydlitz had struck a mine during the previous raid and the repair work forced the operation to be pushed back until the end of the month .

= = = = Battle of Jutland = = = =

Almost immediately after the Lowestoft raid , Admiral Reinhard Scheer began planning another foray into the North Sea . He had initially intended to launch the operation in mid @-@ May , by which time the mine damage to Seydlitz was scheduled to be repaired ? Scheer was unwilling to embark on a major raid without his battlecruiser forces at full strength . On 9 May , however , several battleships developed problems with their engines , which delayed the operation further , to 23 May . On 22 May , Seydlitz was still not fully repaired , and the operation was again postponed , this time to 29 May . At noon on 29 May , the repairs to Seydlitz were finally completed , and the ship returned to the I Scouting Group . The plan called for Hipper 's battlecruisers to steam north to the Skagerrak , with the intention of luring out a portion of the British fleet so it could be destroyed by Scheer 's waiting battleships .

Kaiser and the rest of the III Battle Squadron were the leading unit of the High Seas Fleet ; the four König @-@ class battleships led the line . Kaiser , the flagship of Konteradmiral H. Nordmann , was directly astern of the four Königs . I Battle Squadron , composed of the eight Helgoland- and Nassau @-@ class battleships , followed III Squadron , with the six elderly pre @-@ dreadnoughts of II Battle Squadron bringing up the rear . Hipper 's five battlecruisers left the Jade estuary at 02 : 00 on 31 May ; Scheer , with the High Seas Fleet , followed an hour and a half later .

Shortly before 16 : 00 CET , the battlecruisers of I Scouting Group encountered the British 1st Battlecruiser Squadron , under the command of David Beatty . The opposing ships began an artillery duel that saw the destruction of Indefatigable , shortly after 17 : 00 , and Queen Mary , less than a half an hour later . By this time , the German battlecruisers were steaming south in order to draw the British ships towards the main body of the High Seas Fleet . At 17 : 30 , König 's crew spotted both the I Scouting Group and the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron approaching . The German battlecruisers were steaming to starboard , while the British ships steamed to port . At 17 : 45 , Scheer ordered a two @-@ point turn to port to bring his ships closer to the British battlecruisers , and a minute later at 17 : 46 , the order to open fire was given .

Between 17 : 48 and 17 : 52 , Kaiser , Kronprinz , Friedrich der Grosse , and all eight battleships of the I Squadron opened fire on several ships of the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron ; Kaiser , Ostfriesland , and Nassau engaged HMS Southampton , though only Nassau managed to score a hit on the cruiser . In the span of eight minutes , Kaiser fired eleven salvos at Southampton without success . The 2nd LCS then moved back out of range , having largely escaped unscathed . At 17 : 58 , Scheer ordered the fleet to maximum speed ; the greater speed of the Königs caused the distance between Kaiser and König to rapidly increase . At 18 : 05 , Southampton again came into range , and Kaiser opened fire . Kaiser fired four salvos at a range of 12 @,@ 000 m (13 @,@ 000 yd) , though again without scoring any hits . After three minutes of firing , Kaiser 's guns again fell silent .

Starting at 18 : 10 , Kaiser began firing on the 5th Battle Squadron battleship Malaya ; in the span of 25 minutes , Kaiser fired 27 salvos at an average range of 17 @,@ 300 m (18 @,@ 900 yd) . The British destroyers Nestor and Nomad , which had been disabled by earlier in the engagement ,

lay directly in the path of the advancing High Seas Fleet . Shortly before 18 : 30 , Kaiser and her three sister ships opened fire on Nomad with their secondary batteries . The hail of 15 @-@ cm shells smothered the ship ; a fire was started and one shell detonated the ship 's forward ammunition magazine . Nomad sank stern first at 18 : 30 . Nestor was meanwhile destroyed by the battleships of I Squadron .

Shortly after 19 : 00 , the German cruiser Wiesbaden had become disabled by a shell from the British battlecruiser Invincible ; Rear Admiral Behncke in König attempted to maneuver the III Squadron to cover the stricken cruiser . Simultaneously , the British 3rd and 4th Light Cruiser Squadrons began a torpedo attack on the German line ; while advancing to torpedo range , they smothered Wiesbaden with fire from their main guns . The eight III Squadron battleships fired on the British cruisers , but even sustained fire from the battleships ' main guns failed to drive off the British cruisers . The armored cruisers Defence , Warrior , and Black Prince joined in the attack on the crippled Wiesbaden . Between 19 : 14 and 19 : 17 , Kaiser and several other battleships and battlecruisers opened fire on Defence and Warrior . Defence was struck by several heavy caliber shells from the German dreadnoughts . One salvo penetrated the ship 's ammunition magazines and , in a massive explosion , destroyed the cruiser .

As Warrior limped away to the west , the Queen Elizabeth @-@ class battleships of the 5th Battle Squadron joined the Grand Fleet as it entered the battle from the north . However , Warspite was forced to haul out of line to the south , towards the oncoming German fleet . Warspite came under intense fire from the approaching German battleships ; Kaiser scored a hit on Warspite that damaged her steering gear and forced her to steam in a circle , out of control . After completing two full circles and sustaining 13 heavy hits , Warspite came back under control and rejoined the squadron . However , by 20 : 00 the steering gear had again failed , so the ship was forced to withdraw from the engagement .

By 20 : 15 , the German fleet had faced the Grand Fleet for a second time and was forced to turn away ; in doing so , the order of the German line was reversed . Kaiser was now the fifth ship from the rear of the German line , ahead of only the four König @-@ class battleships . Kaiser was hit twice in quick succession by heavy @-@ caliber shells , at 20 : 23 and three minutes later . The Common Pointed , Capped , shells came from the 30 cm (12 in) guns of Agincourt . One shell penetrated the upper deck and landed in a hammock stowage compartment below the No. 7 casemate ; the shell failed to explode and instead broke up on impact , starting a small fire that was quickly put out . The other shell probably exploded outside the ship .

Shortly before 21 : 30 , Kaiser , Prinzregent Luitpold , and Markgraf spotted British light forces approaching . The German ships opened fire at a range of around 7 @,@ 300 m (8 @,@ 000 yd) with both their main and secondary armament . The light cruiser Calliope was badly damaged , which forced the British ships to withdraw . At around 23 : 30 , the German fleet reorganized into the night cruising formation . Kaiser was the twelfth ship , in the center of the 24 @-@ ship line .

After a series of night engagements between the leading battleships and British destroyers , the High Seas Fleet punched through the British light forces and reached Horns Reef by 04 : 00 on 1 June . The German fleet reached Wilhelmshaven a few hours later ; the I Squadron battleships took up defensive positions in the outer roadstead and Kaiser , Kaiserin , Prinzregent Luitpold , and Kronprinz stood ready just outside the entrance to Wilhelmshaven . The remainder of the battleships and battlecruisers entered Wilhelmshaven , where those that were still in fighting condition replenished their stocks of coal and ammunition . The two shell hits suffered by Kaiser had been largely ineffectual , wounding only one crewmember .

== == Subsequent operations == ==

On 18 August , Admiral Scheer attempted a repeat of the 31 May operation ; the two serviceable German battlecruisers ? Moltke and Von der Tann ? supported by three dreadnoughts , were to bombard the coastal town of Sunderland in an attempt to draw out and destroy Beatty 's battlecruisers . The rest of the fleet , including Kaiser , would trail behind and provide cover . The British were aware of the German plans and sortied the Grand Fleet to meet them . By 14 : 35 ,

Admiral Scheer had been warned of the Grand Fleet 's approach and , unwilling to engage the whole of the Grand Fleet just eleven weeks after the decidedly close call at Jutland , turned his forces around and retreated to German ports .

Another fleet advance followed on 18 ? 20 October , though it ended without encountering any British units . Two weeks later , on 4 November , Kaiser took part in an expedition to the western coast of Denmark to assist two U @-@ boats ? U @-@ 20 and U @-@ 30 ? that had become stranded there . On 1 December , the High Seas Fleet was reorganized ; Kaiser and her sisters were transferred to the newly created IV Battle Squadron , with Kaiser as the flagship . In 1917 , the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare was reinstated ; the surface units of the German navy were therefore tasked with covering the departures and arrivals of the U @-@ boats . As a result , Kaiser spent most of the year on picket duty in the German Bight . In May 1917 , Kaiser went into the dock for periodic maintenance .

= = = = Operation Albion = = = =

In early September 1917 , following the German Army 's conquest of the Russian port of Riga , the Navy decided to eliminate the Russian naval forces that still held the Gulf of Riga . The Admiralstab (the Navy High Command) planned an operation to seize the Baltic island of Ösel , and specifically the Russian gun batteries on the Sworbe peninsula . On 18 September , the order was issued for a joint operation with the army to capture Ösel and Moon islands ; the primary naval component was organized into a Special Unit , which comprised the flagship , Moltke , along with the IV Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet . The IV Squadron was composed of the V and VI Divisions . V Division included the four König @-@ class ships , and was by this time augmented with the new battleship Bayern . The VI Division consisted of the five Kaiser @-@ class battleships . Along with 9 light cruisers , 3 torpedo boat flotillas , and dozens of mine warfare ships , the entire force numbered some 300 ships , supported by over 100 aircraft and 6 zeppelins . The invasion force amounted to approximately 24 @,@ 600 officers and enlisted men . Opposing the Germans were the old Russian pre @-@ dreadnoughts Slava and Tsesarevich , the armored cruisers Bayan , Admiral Makarov , and Diana , 26 destroyers , and several torpedo boats and gunboats . The garrison on Ösel numbered some 14 @,@ 000 men .

On 24 September , Kaiser left Kiel , bound for the Putziger Wiek , where she rendezvoused with several other battleships . From there , the ship went to Libau , which she reached on 10 October . Two days later , on the morning of 12 October , Kaiser , joined by her sisters Kaiserin and Prinzregent Luitpold , opened fire on the Russian shore batteries at Cape Hundsort . On 14 October Kaiser engaged the Russian destroyer Grom and disabled the ship 's engine with a single hit . Grom was captured and taken in tow , but she quickly foundered . Kaiser then bombarded Russian positions on Cape Toffri on 16 October .

By 20 October , the fighting on the islands was winding down ; Moon , Ösel , and Dagö were in German possession . The previous day , the Admiralstab had ordered the cessation of naval actions and the return of the dreadnoughts to the High Seas Fleet as soon as possible . On 31 October Kaiser and the rest of the Special Unit were detached from the operation and sent back to Kiel , which they reached by 2 November . Kaiser was back in the North Sea on 7 November .

= = = = Final operations = = = =

Kaiser and Kaiserin were assigned to security duty in the Bight on 17 November ; they were tasked with providing support to the II Scouting Group (II SG) and several minesweepers . Two British light cruisers , Calypso and Caledon , attacked the minesweepers and II SG in Heligoland Bight . Kaiser and her sister intervened and hit one of the light cruisers . The two ships briefly engaged the battlecruiser Repulse , but neither side scored any hits . However , the German commander failed to press the attack .

On 2 February 1918 , the light cruiser Stralsund struck a mine ; Kaiser was among those ships that sortied to escort the damaged cruiser back to port . The ship was also present during the fleet

advance on 23 ? 24 April . The operation was intended to intercept a heavily escorted British convoy to Norway on 23 ? 25 April , though the operation was canceled when the battlecruiser Moltke suffered mechanical damage . In the final months of the war , Captain Hermann Bauer took command of the ship ; his period in command lasted from August to November .

Kaiser was to have taken part in a final fleet action days before the Armistice , an operation which envisioned the bulk of the High Seas Fleet sortieing from their base in Wilhelmshaven to engage the British Grand Fleet . In order to retain a better bargaining position for Germany , Admirals Hipper and Scheer intended to inflict as much damage as possible on the British navy , whatever the cost to the fleet . Consequently , on 29 October 1918 , the order was given to depart from Wilhelmshaven to consolidate the fleet in the Jade roadstead , with the intention of departing the following morning . However , starting on the night of 29 October , sailors on Thüringen mutinied . The unrest spread to other battleships , which forced Hipper and Scheer to cancel the operation .

= = = Fate = = =

Following the capitulation of Germany in November 1918 , most of their fleet ships were interned in the British naval base in Scapa Flow under the command of Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter . Prior to the departure of the German fleet , Admiral Adolf von Trotha made clear to von Reuter that he could not allow the Allies to seize the ships , under any conditions . The fleet rendezvoused with the British light cruiser Cardiff , which led the ships to the Allied fleet that was to escort the Germans to Scapa Flow . The massive flotilla consisted of some 370 British , American , and French warships . Once the ships were interned , their guns were disabled through the removal of their breech blocks . The fleet remained in captivity during the negotiations that ultimately produced the Versailles Treaty .

A copy of The Times informed von Reuter that the Armistice was to expire at noon on 21 June 1919 , the deadline by which Germany was to have signed the peace treaty . Rear Admiral von Reuter came to the conclusion that the British intended to seize the German ships after the Armistice expired . Unaware that the deadline had been extended to the 23rd , Reuter ordered the ships to be sunk . 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 . Kaiser sank at 13 : 24 ; the ship was raised in 1929 and broken up for scrap in Rosyth starting in 1930 .