

= French battleship Bouvet =

Bouvet was a pre-dreadnought battleship of the French Navy . She was laid down in January 1891 , launched in April 1896 , and completed in June 1898 . She was a member of a group of five broadly similar battleships , along with Charles Martel , Jauréguiberry , Carnot , and Masséna , which were ordered in response to the British Royal Sovereign class . Like her half-sisters , she was armed with a main battery of two 305 mm ( 12 in ) guns and two 274 mm ( 10 in ) guns in individual turrets . She had a top speed of 17 kn ( 33 km / h ; 20 mph ) .

Bouvet spent the majority of her career alternating between the Northern and Mediterranean Squadrons . At the outbreak of World War I , she escorted troop convoys from North Africa to France . She then joined the naval operations off the Dardanelles , where she participated in a major attack on the Turkish fortresses in the straits on 18 March 1915 . During the attack , she was hit approximately eight times by shellfire , though did not suffer fatal damage . She struck a mine at around 3 : 15 , and sank within two minutes ; only some 50 men were rescued from a complement of 710 . Two British battleships were also sunk by mines that day , and the disaster convinced the Allies to abandon the naval campaign in favor of an amphibious assault on Gallipoli .

= Design =

Bouvet was the last member of a group of five battleships built to a broadly similar design , but different enough to be considered unique vessels . The first ship was Charles Martel , which formed the basis for Bouvet and three other ships . Design specifications were identical for each of the ships , but different engineers designed each vessel . The ships were based on the previous battleship Brennus , but instead of mounting the main battery all on the centerline , the ships used the lozenge arrangement of the earlier vessel Magenta , which moved two of the main battery guns to single turrets on the wings . The five ships were built in response to the British Royal Sovereign class battleships .

= General characteristics and machinery =

Bouvet was 117 m ( 386 ft 6 in ) long between perpendiculars , and had a beam of 21 m ( 70 ft 2 in ) and a draft of 8 m ( 27 ft 6 in ) . She had a displacement of 12 ,007 tonnes ( 11 ,817 long tons ) . Unlike her half-sisters , her deck was not cut down to the main deck level , and her superstructure was reduced in size . She was equipped with two small fighting masts . Bouvet had a standard crew of 666 officers and enlisted men , though her wartime complement increased to 710 .

Bouvet had three vertical triple expansion engines each driving a single screw , with steam supplied by twenty-four Belleville water-tube boilers . Her propulsion system was rated at 15 ,000 indicated horsepower ( 11 ,000 kW ) , which allowed the ship to steam at a speed of 18 knots ( 33 km / h ; 21 mph ) . As built , she could carry 610 t ( 600 long tons ; 670 short tons ) of coal , though additional space allowed for up to 980 t ( 960 long tons ; 1 ,080 short tons ) in total .

= Armament and armor =

Bouvet's main armament consisted of two Canon de 305 mm Modèle 1893 guns in two single-gun turrets , one each fore and aft . She also mounted two Canon de 274 mm Modèle 1893 guns in two single-gun turrets , one amidships on each side , sponsoned out over the tumblehome of the ship's sides . Her secondary armament consisted of eight Canon de 138 mm Modèle 1893 guns , which were mounted in single turrets at the corners of the superstructure . She also carried eight 100 mm ( 3 in ) quick-firing guns , twelve 3-pounders , and eight 1-pounder guns . Her armament suite was rounded out by four 450 mm ( 18 in ) torpedo tubes , two of which were submerged in the ship's hull . The other two tubes were mounted above

water , though these were later removed .

The ship 's armor was constructed with nickel steel . The main belt was 460 mm ( 18 in ) thick amidships , and tapered down to 250 mm ( 9 @. @ 8 in ) at the lower edge . Forward of the central citadel , the belt was reduced to 305 mm ( 12 @. @ 0 in ) and further to 200 mm ( 7 @. @ 9 in ) at the stern ; the belt extended for the entire length of the hull . Above the belt was 101 mm ( 4 @. @ 0 in ) thick side armor . The main battery guns were protected with 380 mm ( 15 in ) of armor , and the secondary turrets had 120 mm ( 4 @. @ 7 in ) thick sides . The conning tower had 305 mm thick sides .

= = Service history = =

Bouvet was laid down in Lorient on 16 January 1893 , and launched on 27 April 1896 . After completing fitting @-@ out work , she was commissioned into the French Navy in June 1898 . In 1903 , Bouvet was replaced in the Mediterranean Squadron by the new battleship Suffren ; she in turn replaced the old ironclad battleship Dévastation in the Northern Squadron . The Squadron remained in commission for only six months of the year . During the annual fleet maneuvers in July ? August 1903 , Bouvet served as the flagship of Admiral Gervais , the neutral observer for the simulated battles . During the maneuvers off Golfe @-@ Juan , the battleship Gaulois accidentally rammed Bouvet on 31 January 1903 , though both vessels emerged largely undamaged .

By 1906 , Bouvet had returned to the Mediterranean Squadron , which was under the command of Vice Admiral Touchard . Following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Naples in April 1906 , Bouvet and the battleships Léna and Gaulois aided survivors of the disaster . The annual summer fleet exercises were conducted in July and August ; during the maneuvers , Bouvet nearly collided with the battleship Gaulois again . She was assigned to the Second Squadron of the Mediterranean Squadron by 1908 ; she was retained on active service for the year , but with a reduced crew .

= = = Loss off the Dardanelles = = =

Together with the older French pre @-@ dreadnoughts , Bouvet escorted Allied troop convoys through the Mediterranean until November when she was ordered to the Dardanelles to guard against a sortie by the German battlecruiser SMS Goeben . She bombarded the Turkish fort of Kum Kale , on the Asian side of the strait on 19 February . During the bombardment , Bouvet assisted the battleship Suffren by sending firing corrections via radio while Gaulois provided counter @-@ battery fire to suppress the Ottoman coastal artillery .

On 18 March , Bouvet , along with Charlemagne , Suffren , and Gaulois , was to attack the Dardanelles fortresses . The plan called for six British pre @-@ dreadnoughts to suppress the Turkish fortifications , after which the French battleships would attack those same fortifications at close range . The French fleet was commanded by Admiral Émile Guépratte ; the acting Allied commander was Rear Admiral John de Robeck , who stood in for Admiral Sackville Carden . The Allied battleships were arranged in line abreast , in three rows ; Bouvet was stationed in the center of the second row . The force entered the straits at 11 : 30 and bombarded the town of Çanakkale , before turning to the Fortress Hamidieh and other nearby fortifications at 13 : 30 .

For the first half @-@ hour , the French and British battleships shelled the forts indiscriminately , before turning to attacking individual gun batteries . In the course of the attack on the fortresses , Bouvet sustained eight hits from Turkish artillery fire . Her forward turret was disabled after the propellant gas extractor broke down . One of the shells destroyed one of her masts . At around 15 : 15 , Bouvet struck mine with a 176 @-@ pound ( 80 kg ) explosive charge , which detonated below the starboard 274 mm gun turret . These mines had been freshly laid a week before the attack , and were unknown to the Allies .

Bouvet capsized and sank in about two minutes . The ship was in poor condition at the time due to her age , which likely contributed to her rapid sinking , though there was some speculation that her ammunition magazine exploded . The destruction of the ship caught the Allies by surprise ; her loss came during the height of the bombardment . Torpedo boats and other smaller vessels rushed to

pick up survivors , but they rescued only a handful of men . From her complement of 710 men , some 660 were killed in the sinking .

Despite the sinking of the Bouvet , the first such loss of the day , the British remained unaware of the minefield , thinking the explosion had been caused by a shell or torpedo . Subsequently two British pre -@-@ dreadnoughts , Ocean and Irresistible , were sunk and the battlecruiser Inflexible were damaged by the same minefield . Suffren and Gaulois were both badly damaged by coastal artillery during the engagement . The loss of Bouvet and two other British battleships during the 18 March attack was a major factor in the decision to abandon a naval strategy to take Constantinople , and instead opt for the Gallipoli land campaign .