

= German destroyer Z4 Richard Beitzen =

The German destroyer Z4 Richard Beitzen was a Type 1934 destroyer built for the Kriegsmarine during the 1930s . At the beginning of World War II in September 1939 , the ship was initially deployed to blockade the Polish coast , but she was soon transferred to the Kattegat where she inspected neutral shipping for contraband goods . In late 1939 and early 1940 , the ship laid two offensive minefields off the English coast that claimed 17 merchant ships . Richard Beitzen was in reserve during the Norwegian Campaign of early 1940 and was transferred to France later that year where she made several attacks on British shipping .

The ship returned to Germany in early 1941 for a refit and was transferred to Norway in June 1941 as part of the preparations for Operation Barbarossa , the German invasion of the Soviet Union . Richard Beitzen spent some time at the beginning of the campaign conducting anti @-@ shipping patrols in Soviet waters , but these were generally fruitless . She escorted a number of German convoys in the Arctic later in the year . The ship escorted several German heavy cruisers at the beginning and end of their anti @-@ shipping raids in 1942 . She participated in the Battle of the Barents Sea when Convoy JW 51B was attacked on 31 December 1942 near the North Cape , Norway .

Richard Beitzen spent much of 1943 escorting ships to and from Norway until November when she ran aground in November . Badly damaged , repairs lasted until August 1944 when she returned to Norway and resumed her former duties . The ship had another grounding incident in November and was under repair until February 1945 . While escorting a convoy in April , she was badly damaged by aircraft and was still under repair when the war ended on 9 May . Richard Beitzen was eventually allocated to the British when the surviving warships were divided between the Allies after the war . They made no use of the ship before scrapping her in 1949 .

= = Design and description = =

Richard Beitzen had an overall length of 119 meters ( 390 ft 5 in ) and was 114 meters ( 374 ft 0 in ) long at the waterline . The ship had a beam of 11 @. @ 30 meters ( 37 ft 1 in ) , and a maximum draft of 4 @. @ 23 meters ( 13 ft 11 in ) . She displaced 2 @, @ 223 long tons ( 2 @, @ 259 t ) at standard load and 3 @, @ 156 long tons ( 3 @, @ 207 t ) at deep load . The two Wagner geared steam turbine sets , each driving one propeller shaft , were designed to produce 70 @, @ 000 PS ( 51 @, @ 000 kW ; 69 @, @ 000 shp ) using steam provided by six high @-@ pressure Wagner boilers . The ship had a designed speed of 36 knots ( 67 km / h ; 41 mph ) , but her maximum speed was 38 @. @ 7 knots ( 71 @. @ 7 km / h ; 44 @. @ 5 mph ) . Richard Beitzen carried a maximum of 752 metric tons ( 740 long tons ) of fuel oil which was intended to give a range of 4 @, @ 400 nautical miles ( 8 @, @ 100 km ; 5 @, @ 100 mi ) at a speed of 19 knots ( 35 km / h ; 22 mph ) , but the ship proved top @-@ heavy in service and 30 % of the fuel had to be retained as ballast low in the ship . The effective range proved to be only 1 @, @ 530 nmi ( 2 @, @ 830 km ; 1 @, @ 760 mi ) at 19 knots . The crew numbered 10 officers and 315 enlisted men , plus an additional four officers and 19 enlisted men if serving as a flotilla flagship .

The ship carried five 12 @. @ 7 cm SK C / 34 guns in single mounts with gun shields , two each superimposed , fore and aft . The fifth gun was carried on top of the aft superstructure . Her anti @-@ aircraft armament consisted of four 3 @. @ 7 cm SK C / 30 guns in two twin mounts abreast the rear funnel and six 2 cm C / 30 guns in single mounts . Richard Beitzen carried eight above @-@ water 53 @. @ 3 @-@ centimeter ( 21 @. @ 0 in ) torpedo tubes in two power @-@ operated mounts . A pair of reload torpedoes were provided for each mount . Four depth charge throwers were mounted on the sides of the rear deckhouse and they were supplemented by six racks for individual depth charges on the sides of the stern . Enough depth charges were carried for either two or four patterns of 16 charges each . Mine rails could be fitted on the rear deck that had a maximum capacity of 60 mines . A system of passive hydrophones designated as ' GHG ' ( Gruppenhorchgerät ) was fitted to detect submarines .

An active sonar system was scheduled to be installed in June 1940 , but it is uncertain when it was

actually done . During the war , the ship 's light anti @-@ aircraft armament was augmented several times . Improved 2 cm C / 38 guns replaced the original C / 30 guns and three additional guns were added sometime in 1941 . The two guns on the aft shelter deck were replaced by a single 2 cm quadruple Flakvierling mount , probably during her late 1941 refit . Richard Beitzen appears not have any additional AA guns added after this time .

= = Construction and career = =

Richard Beitzen , named after Lieutenant ( Kapitänleutnant ) Richard Beitzen who commanded the 14th Torpedo Boat Flotilla in World War I and was killed in action in March 1918 , was ordered on 7 July 1934 and laid down at Deutsche Werke , Kiel , on 7 January 1935 as yard number K245 . The ship was launched on 30 November 1935 and completed on 13 May 1937 . Her first captain was Lieutenant Commander ( Fregattenkapitän ) Hans @-@ Joachim Gadow . She made a port visit to Ulvik , Norway in April 1938 , together with her sisters Z2 Georg Thiele and Z3 Max Schultz . Upon her return she was taken in hand by Deutsche Werke to have her bow rebuilt to reduce the amount of water that came over the bow in head seas . This increased her length by .3 meters ( 1 ft 0 in ) . The ship participated in the August Fleet Review and the following fleet exercise . On 26 October , she was assigned to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla ( 1 . Zerstörer @-@ Flotille ) . In December , Richard Beitzen , together with her sisters Z1 Leberecht Maass , Georg Thiele , and Max Schultz , sailed to the area of Iceland to evaluate their seaworthiness in a North Atlantic winter with their new bows . On 23 ? 24 March 1939 , the ship was one of the destroyers that escorted Adolf Hitler aboard the pocket battleship Deutschland to occupy Memel . She participated in the fleet exercise the next month in the western Mediterranean and made several visits to Spanish and Moroccan ports in April and May . Upon her return , Richard Beitzen was accidentally rammed in the stern by the escort ship F9 .

When World War II began in September 1939 , Richard Beitzen was initially deployed in the western Baltic to enforce a blockade of Poland , but she was soon transferred to the Kattegat where she inspected neutral shipping for contraband goods beginning in mid @-@ September as one turbine was not operational . On the night of 12 / 13 December , German destroyers sortied to lay minefields off the British coast . Under the command of Commodore ( Kommodore ) Friedrich Bonte in his flagship Z19 Hermann Künne , Richard Beitzen , Z8 Bruno Heinemann , Z14 Friedrich Ihn , and Z15 Erich Steinbrinck laid 240 mines off the mouth of the River Tyne , where the navigation lights were still lit . The British were unaware of the minefield 's existence and lost eleven ships totaling 18 @,@ 979 gross register tons ( GRT ) . En route home the destroyers were ordered to escort the crippled light cruisers Leipzig and Nürnberg which had been torpedoed by the submarine HMS Salmon while covering the destroyers ' withdrawal . Despite their escort , the submarine HMS Ursula managed to sneak inside the anti @-@ submarine screen and fired a salvo of six torpedoes at Leipzig in the Elbe estuary the following day . Two of the torpedoes struck F9 which sank three minutes later with heavy loss of life , but the other torpedoes missed .

Bonte led a destroyer minelaying sortie to the Newcastle area on the night of 10 / 11 January with Ihn , Heidkamp , Eckoldt , Z22 Anton Schmitt , Richard Beitzen , and Z20 Karl Galster . Ihn had problems with her boilers that reduced her maximum speed to 27 knots ( 50 km / h ; 31 mph ) and she had to be escorted back to Germany by Beitzen . This minefield only claimed one fishing trawler of 251 tons . Max Schultz , Richard Beitzen and Z16 Friedrich Eckoldt laid 110 magnetic mines in the Shipwash area , off Harwich , on 9 / 10 February 1940 that sank six ships of 28 @,@ 496 GRT and damaged another .

On 22 February 1940 , Richard Beitzen and five other destroyers , Z3 Max Schultz , Z1 Leberecht Maass , Z6 Theodor Riedel , Z13 Erich Koellner and Eckoldt , sailed for the Dogger Bank to intercept British fishing vessels in " Operation Wiking " . En route , the flotilla was erroneously attacked by a Heinkel He 111 bomber from Bomber Wing 26 ( Kampfgeschwader 26 ) . Leberecht Maass was hit by at least one bomb , lost steering , and broke in half , sinking with the loss of 280 of her crew . During the rescue effort , Max Schultz hit a mine and sank with the loss of her entire crew of 308 . Hitler ordered a Court of Inquiry to be convened to investigate the cause of the losses and it

concluded that both ships had been sunk by bombs from the He 111. The Kriegsmarine had failed to notify its destroyers that the Luftwaffe was making anti-@ shipping patrols at that time and had also failed to inform the Luftwaffe that its destroyers would be at sea. Postwar evidence revealed that one or both ships struck a British minefield laid by the destroyers Ivanhoe and Intrepid.

Richard Beitzen was held in reserve for the German invasion of Norway on 9 April. Two days later, she escorted the light cruiser Köln home to Wilhelmshaven. The ship helped to lay a minefield in the Kattegat from 28 April to 20 May and then began a refit that lasted until September. She was transferred to Brest, France, in October. On the night of 24-25 November, Richard Beitzen, Z10 Hans Lody and Z20 Karl Galster sortied from Brest, bound for the Land's End area. En route they encountered some fishing ships south-@ west of Wolf Rock and engaged them with gunfire with little effect. The German ships then spotted a small convoy and sank one of the three merchantmen and damaged another. The flash from the guns alerted the five destroyers of the British 5th Destroyer Flotilla, but they could not intercept the German destroyers before dawn. Three nights later the German ship sortied again for the same area. They encountered two tugboats and a barge, but only sank one of the former and the barge, totaling 424 GRT. This time the 5th Destroyer Flotilla was able to intercept around 06:30 on 29 November. The Germans opened fire first, each destroyer firing four torpedoes, of which only two from Z10 Hans Lody hit their target, HMS Javelin. The torpedoes hit at each end of the ship and blew off her bow and stern, but the British were able to tow her home. Sometime in 1939-41 the ship was fitted with a FuMO 21 or FuMO 24 radar set above the bridge.

During January 1941, the ship laid a minefield off the coast of south-@ east England. The following month, she escorted the heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper on leaving and returning to Brest. Richard Beitzen departed for Kiel briefly on 16 March to begin a refit. She was then sent to Kirkenes, Norway in July 1941. Now a part of the 6th Destroyer Flotilla (6. Zerstörer-@ Flotille), she participated in a sortie on 12-13 July that sank two small Soviet ships at the cost of expending 80% of their ammunition. Another sortie on 22 July saw Richard Beitzen sink a Soviet flying boat on the water. She was damaged by shock from near-@ misses during another sortie on 9 August during which the Germans sank a converted fishing trawler and departed for Germany for repairs five days later.

She escorted the battleship Tirpitz for several days in mid-@ January 1942 as the battleship sailed from the Baltic to Trondheim, Norway. Richard Beitzen, together with the rest of the 5th Zerstörer Flotille, sailed from Kiel on 24 January for France as part of the preparations for the Channel Dash. On the evening of 25 January, Z8 Bruno Heinemann struck two mines laid by HMS Plover off the Belgian coast and sank. Richard Beitzen rescued 200 of the survivors and proceeded to Le Havre to put them ashore before reaching Brest on the 26th. The German ships departed Brest on 11 February, totally surprising the British. Richard Beitzen helped to repel an attack by five British destroyers and was damaged by a near-@ miss from a Bristol Blenheim bomber that she shot down with her newly installed 20 cm Flakvierling. Shortly afterwards, the ship joined four other destroyers in escorting Prinz Eugen and the heavy cruiser Admiral Scheer to Trondheim. Heavy weather forced Richard Beitzen and two other destroyers to return to port before reaching Trondheim and Prinz Eugen was badly damaged by a British submarine after their separation. After her return, the ship needed her machinery overhauled and began a refit at Bremen on 14 March. After it was completed she screened the heavy cruiser Lützow to Bogen Bay, Norway and laid a minefield in the Skagerrak en route.

Richard Beitzen took part in the preliminaries of Operation Rösselsprung, an attempt to intercept Arctic convoy PQ-@ 17 in July. Admiral Scheer and Lützow formed one group while Tirpitz and Admiral Hipper composed another. While en route to the rendezvous point at the Altafjord, Lützow and three destroyers ran aground, forcing the entire group to abandon the operation. Richard Beitzen, in the meantime escorted two oil tankers to the Altafjord on 2-3 July. During Operation Wunderland in August, Richard Beitzen, Z16 Friedrich Eckoldt and Z15 Erich Steinbrinck escorted Admiral Scheer at the beginning and end of its mission to attack Soviet shipping in the Kara Sea. They also escorted the minelayer Ulm as it departed to lay a minefield off Cape Zhelaniya in mid-@ August. On 13-15 October, Beitzen, Z16 Friedrich Eckoldt, and the destroyers Z27 and

Z30 laid a minefield off the Kanin Peninsula at the mouth of the White Sea that sank the Soviet icebreaker Mikoyan . Three weeks later , the same four destroyers escorted Admiral Hipper as she attempted to intercept Allied merchant ships proceeding independently to Soviet ports in early November .

= = = Battle of the Barents Sea = = =

During Operation Regenbogen , the attempt to intercept Convoy JW 51B sailing from the UK to the Soviet Union in late December , Richard Beitzen , Z16 Friedrich Eckoldt , and Z29 escorted Admiral Hipper as she attempted to occupy the attention of the convoy 's escort while Lützow and three other destroyers attacked the convoy . The three destroyers separated from Hipper to search for the convoy and were successful on the morning of 31 December . The destroyer HMS Obdurate spotted them in turn and closed to investigate when the German ships opened fire at a range of 8 @, @ 000 meters ( 8 @, @ 700 yd ) . Obdurate turned away to rejoin the convoy without sustaining any damage and the German ships did not pursue as they had been ordered to rejoin Hipper . The Germans found the minesweeper HMS Bramble , which had been detached earlier from the convoy to search for stragglers , as they maneuvered to close with the convoy and the destroyers were ordered to sink her while Hipper engaged the convoy 's escorting destroyers . This took some time in the poor visibility and Hipper was surprised in the meantime by the British covering force of the light cruisers Sheffield and Jamaica . After sinking Bramble , the German destroyers attempted to rejoin Hipper , but had no idea that British cruisers were in the area . They confused Sheffield with Hipper when they spotted each other at 4 @, @ 000 meters ( 4 @, @ 400 yd ) range and were totally surprised when Sheffield opened fire on Z16 Friedrich Eckoldt with every gun she possessed , sinking her with the loss of all hands . Richard Beitzen was not engaged before she escaped into the darkness .

Commander ( Fregattenkapitän ) Hans Dominik assumed command in January 1943 and the ship escorted the damaged Admiral Hipper and Köln down to Kristiansand at the end of the month . She began escorting convoys between that port and Aarhus , Denmark before she escorted the battleship Scharnhorst to Altafjord in early March . The following month she screened Nürnberg during the latter 's return to the Baltic and began a refit at Swinemunde that lasted until October . Returning to the Arctic , she ran aground in the Karmsund on 27 October that extensively damaged her . Richard Beitzen was refloated on 5 November and towed to Haugesund for emergency repairs . She reached Bergen on 26 November for temporary repairs that took until 18 December to effect . The ship arrived at Stettin five days later , but repairs , which included fitting a new bow , did not begin until 17 January as the dry dock was already occupied . The repairs were completed in June , but machinery problems meant that she was not operational again until 5 August when she reached Horten , Norway .

Richard Beitzen resumed escort work and laid mines in the Skagerrak until she ran aground again in November . Repairs were slow and she was not fully operational until 15 February 1945 . The ship was badly damaged by radar @-@ equipped bombers while screening a convoy on the morning of 24 April and put into Oslo , Norway for repairs that were not completed before the end of the war the next month . Richard Beitzen was captured by the British on 14 May and temporarily turned over to the Royal Norwegian Navy on 15 July while the Allies decided on the disposition of the captured ships . She was allocated to Britain at the end of 1945 and was then towed to Rosyth in February 1946 . Richard Beitzen was ordered to be used as a target in September , but a heavy leak three months later caused her to be beached lest she sink . Temporary repairs were made and she was allocated for disposal in January 1947 . Richard Beitzen was allocated to C. W. Dorkin for breaking up the following year and she was towed to their facility in Gateshead on 10 January 1949 .