

= SMS Schlesien =

SMS Schlesien was one of the five Deutschland class pre dreadnought battleships built for the Kaiserliche Marine between 1904 and 1906 . Named after the German province of Schlesien , she was built at the Schichau Werke shipyard in Danzig , where she was launched on 28 May 1906 . She was commissioned into the navy on 5 May 1908 . The ships of her class were already outdated by the time they entered service , being inferior in size , armor , firepower and speed to the revolutionary new battleship HMS Dreadnought .

After commissioning , Schlesien was assigned to the I Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet . She served with the fleet throughout the first two years of World War I ; by this time she had been transferred to the II Battle Squadron alongside her four sister ships . Schlesien was present at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 , where she was actively engaged only briefly . After Jutland , she was relegated to guard duties before being withdrawn altogether in 1917 , when she became a training ship . The Treaty of Versailles permitted the German navy to retain eight obsolete battleships , which included Schlesien , to defend the German coast . She saw extensive service with the reorganized Reichsmarine ; in the 1920s and 1930s the ship was rebuilt and eventually converted back into a training ship .

Schlesien saw limited combat during World War II , including the invasion of Norway in 1940 . After the conclusion of the operation , the ship was again given secondary duties . She ended her career as an anti aircraft ship in the Baltic ; in April 1945 Schlesien steamed to Swinemünde to restock her ammunition and evacuate wounded soldiers when she struck a mine on 3 May . She sank in shallow water , though much of her superstructure , including her main battery , remained above water . In the remaining days of the war , Schlesien used her heavy artillery to provide support for retreating German ground troops . After the end of the war , she was broken up , though some parts of the ship remained until the 1970s .

= = Construction = =

Schlesien was intended to fight in the line of battle with the other battleships of the High Seas Fleet . She was laid down on 19 November 1904 at the Schichau dockyard in Danzig . She was launched on 28 May 1906 , and in March 1908 was sent to Kiel , where her fitting out work was completed . She was commissioned for trials on 5 May , though these were interrupted from 6 July to 5 September when the ship was temporarily used as a torpedo trials vessel . Schlesien joined the fleet after the torpedo trials were completed in September . The British battleship HMS Dreadnought ? armed with ten 12 inch (30 @. 5 cm) guns ? had already been commissioned nearly two years prior , in December 1906 . Dreadnought 's revolutionary design rendered obsolete every ship of the German navy , including the newer Schlesien .

Schlesien was 127 @. 60 m (418 @. 6 ft) long , had a beam of 22 @. 20 m (72 @. 8 ft) , and a draft of 8 @. 21 m (26 @. 9 ft) . She had a full @- load displacement of 14 @, 218 metric tons (13 @, 993 long tons ; 15 @, 673 short tons) . She was equipped with three @- shaft triple expansion engines and twelve coal @- fired water @- tube boilers that produced a rated 18 @, 664 indicated horsepower (13 @, 918 kW) and a top speed of 18 @. 5 knots (34 @. 3 km / h ; 21 @. 3 mph) . In addition to being the fastest ship of her class , Schlesien was the most fuel efficient . At a cruising speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) , she could steam for 4 @, 770 nautical miles (8 @, 830 km ; 5 @, 490 mi) . She had a standard crew of 35 officers and 708 enlisted men .

The ship 's primary armament consisted of four 28 cm SK L / 40 guns in two twin turrets ; one turret was placed forward and the other aft . She was also equipped with fourteen 17 cm (6 @. 7 in) guns mounted in casemates and twenty 8 @. 8 cm (3 @. 5 in) guns in pivot mounts . The ship was fitted with six 45 cm (18 in) torpedo tubes , all submerged in the hull . One was in the bow , one in the stern , and four on the broadside . Her armored belt was 240 mm (9 @. 4 in) thick amidships and she had a 40 mm (1 @. 6 in) thick armored deck . The main battery turrets had 280 mm (11 in) thick sides .

= = Service history = =

After commissioning , Schlesien was assigned to the I Battle Squadron . Her first year of service , 1909 , saw a pattern of fleet maneuvers in the North and Baltic Seas as well as the Atlantic Ocean . Her first cruise into the Atlantic was conducted from 7 July to 1 August . Another round of exercises followed in the autumn . The I Battle Squadron was transferred from Kiel to Wilhelmshaven in April 1910 . The following month , in May 1910 , the fleet conducted training maneuvers in the Kattegat , between Norway and Denmark . For the first time , the annual summer cruise went to Norway . Fleet training followed , and a training cruise into the Baltic took place at the end of the year .

On 3 November 1911 , Schlesien was transferred to the II Battle Squadron with the rest of her sister ships . Training maneuvers in 1911 and 1912 followed the same pattern as in 1910 , with the exception of the summer cruise in 1912 ; owing to the Agadir Crisis that year , the cruise only went into the Baltic , rather than to Norway .

= = = World War I = = =

Schlesien remained with the High Seas Fleet throughout the first two years of the war . At the outbreak of war , the ship was deployed to guard the German Bight . She then rejoined the High Seas Fleet as part of the battleship support for the battlecruisers that bombarded Scarborough , Hartlepool , and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 . During the operation , the German battle fleet of some 12 dreadnoughts and 8 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 convinced Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl that he was confronted with the entire Grand Fleet , and so he broke off the engagement and turned for home . Two resultless fleet advances followed on 17 ? 18 and 21 ? 23 April 1915 . Another followed on 17 ? 18 May , and another on 23 ? 24 October .

On 24 ? 25 April 1916 , Schlesien and her sisters joined the dreadnoughts of the High Seas Fleet to support the battlecruisers of the I Scouting Group on a raid of the English coast . While en route to the target , the battlecruiser Seydlitz was damaged by a mine . The battlecruisers conducted a short bombardment of the ports of Yarmouth and Lowestoft . Visibility was poor , so the operation was soon called off before the British fleet could intervene .

= = = = Battle of Jutland = = = =

Admiral Scheer immediately planned another foray into the North Sea , but the damage to Seydlitz delayed the operation until the end of May . Schlesien was the second ship in the IV Division of the II Battle Squadron under the command of Rear Admiral Franz Mauve , positioned at the rear of the German line . Schlesien was the second to last ship in the German line , followed only by Schleswig @-@ Holstein . During the " Run to the North , " Admiral Reinhard Scheer , the commander of the fleet , ordered the fleet to pursue the British V Battle Squadron at top speed . The slower Deutschland @-@ class ships could not keep up with the faster dreadnoughts and quickly fell behind .

Later on the first day of the battle , the hard @-@ pressed battlecruisers of the I Scouting Group were being pursued by their British opponents . Schlesien and the other so @-@ called " five @-@ minute ships " came to their aid by steaming in between the opposing battlecruiser squadrons . Schlesien and her sisters could barely make out a target in the darkness . Due to the poor visibility their shooting was ineffective . The British battlecruisers scored several hits on the German ships ; in the brief melee a near miss from a large @-@ caliber gun sprayed shell splinters onto Schlesien 's decks , killing one man and wounding another . Admiral Mauve ordered an 8 @-@ point turn to the south , and the British did not follow .

Late on the 31st , the fleet organized for the night march back to Germany ; Schlesien and Schleswig @-@ Holstein fell in behind the mauled battlecruisers Von der Tann and Derfflinger at the

rear of the line . British destroyers conducted a series of attacks against the fleet , some of which targeted Schlesien . Regardless , the High Seas Fleet punched through the British destroyer forces and reached Horns Reef by 4 : 00 on 1 June . The German fleet reached Wilhelmshaven a few hours later , where the undamaged dreadnoughts of the Nassau and Helgoland classes took up defensive positions .

= = = Inter @-@ war years = = =

Following the German defeat in World War I , the German navy , reorganized as the Reichsmarine , was permitted to retain three of the Deutschland @-@ class battleships : Hannover , Schleswig @-@ Holstein and Schlesien , along with several of the Braunschweig @-@ class battleships . Deutschland , the oldest and least advanced ship of the class , was instead scrapped in 1922 . Schlesien and Schleswig @-@ Holstein were modernized in the 1920s , a process that included replacement of the ships ' 17 cm guns with 15 cm (5 @. @ 9 in) pieces . Schlesien and Schleswig @-@ Holstein continued in their battleship configuration with the active fleet , while Hannover was intended to be rebuilt as a target ship , although this never occurred .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein was the flagship of the fleet until 1932 when she was taken in for another reconstruction that converted her into a training vessel . As a result , Schlesien held the position of fleet flagship afterward . In 1932 , Wilhelm Canaris took command of the ship , a post he held for two years . In May 1935 , the Reichsmarine was again reorganized as the Kriegsmarine . Shortly after , Schlesien took part in extensive fleet maneuvers with the new heavy cruiser Deutschland . Later that year , Schlesien was converted into a training ship . Among the modifications were the installation of additional anti @-@ aircraft guns and replacement of the ship 's boilers . The newer boilers were more efficient , which allowed fewer of them to be used ; the additional space this created was used as crew compartments for the cadets and an instruction room . The crew was also altered ; the standard crew had been 35 officers and 708 enlisted men ; after the conversion , this was reduced to 29 officers and 559 sailors , supplemented by 214 cadets . The following year , Schlesien toured the Americas ; in March 1937 the ship stopped in Halifax , Nova Scotia . Later that year in December , she stopped in Mar del Plata , Argentina . In 1938 , the ship visited Samaná Bay in the Dominican Republic .

= = = World War II = = =

During the invasion of Poland in September 1939 , Schlesien initially remained in her training ship role , though she briefly acted as an icebreaker for U @-@ boats . Later in the month , Schlesien joined her sister Schleswig @-@ Holstein to bombard Polish positions along the Baltic coast ; the bombardments lasted from 25 ? 27 September . After the operation , Schlesien had six of her 15 cm guns removed to arm the new surface raider Pinguin . In 1940 , Schlesien took part in Operation Weserübung , the German invasion of Denmark and Norway . Schlesien operated in Danish waters throughout the operation . After the occupations were complete , Schlesien resumed her ice @-@ breaking duties . In March 1941 , Schlesien escorted mine @-@ layers in the Baltic . After returning from this operation , she was to be converted into a barracks ship in Gotenhafen . On 4 April 1942 , Schlesien departed for Gotenhafen in company with the battleship Gneisenau and the icebreaker Castor .

In mid 1944 , Schlesien 's and Schleswig @-@ Holstein 's anti @-@ aircraft armaments were considerably strengthened so they could be used as air defense ships in the port of Gotenhafen . In April 1945 , Schlesien was moved to Swinemünde to restock her ammunition supply as well as evacuate 1 @, @ 000 wounded soldiers from the front . On 3 May she struck a mine at Zinnowitz outside Swinemünde and beached in shallow water . Much of the ship remained above water , including her main armament ; she was able to provide artillery support for retreating German units . Between 1949 and 1956 , the wreck was demolished and then scrapped in situ by an East German company . However , some remains from the ship were still visible in 1970 .

= = Online links = =

SMS Schlesien in MaritimeQuest ? Schlesien 's gallery , including a photograph in the role of icebreaker

Schlesien visit to Argentina ? Schlesien 's commander pays respect to Mar del Plata 's mayor , December 1937

Schlesien visit to Argentina ? A Mar del Plata 's girl makes the military salute with the German naval ensign in the background