

= French battleship Provence =

Provence was a battleship of the French Navy built in the 1910s , named in honor of the French region of Provence . She was a member of the Bretagne class , alongside her two sister ships , Bretagne and Lorraine . Provence was laid down in May 1912 at the Arsenal de Lorient , launched in April 1913 , and commissioned into the fleet in March 1916 , after the outbreak of World War I. She was armed with a main battery of ten 340 mm ( 13 @. @ 4 in ) guns and had a top speed of 20 knots ( 37 km / h ; 23 mph ) .

Provence spent the bulk of her career in the French Mediterranean Squadron , where she served as the fleet flagship . During World War I , she was stationed at Corfu to prevent the Austro @-@ Hungarian fleet from leaving the Adriatic Sea , but she saw no action . She was modernized significantly in the 1920s and 1930s , and conducted normal peace @-@ time cruises and training maneuvers in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean . She participated in non @-@ intervention patrols during the Spanish Civil War .

In the early days of World War II , Provence conducted patrols and sweeps into the Atlantic to search for German surface raiders . She was stationed in Mers @-@ el @-@ Kébir when France surrendered on 22 June 1940 . Fearful that the Germans would seize the French Navy , the British Royal Navy attacked the ships at Mers @-@ el @-@ Kébir . Provence was damaged and sank in the harbor , though she was refloated and moved to Toulon , where she became the flagship of the training fleet there . In late November 1942 , the Germans occupied Toulon and , to prevent them from seizing the fleet , the French scuttled their ships , including Provence . She was raised in July 1943 , and some of her guns were used for coastal defense in the area ; the Germans scuttled her a second time in Toulon as a blockship in 1944 . Provence was ultimately raised in April 1949 and sold to ship breakers .

= = Design = =

Provence was laid down at the Arsenal de Lorient on 1 May 1912 , launched on 20 April 1913 , and completed in June 1915 . She was commissioned into the French Navy on 1 March 1916 . The ship was 166 meters ( 544 ft 7 in ) long overall and had a beam of 26 @. @ 9 m ( 88 ft 3 in ) and a full @-@ load draft of 9 @. @ 8 m ( 32 ft 2 in ) . She displaced around 25 @, @ 000 metric tons ( 25 @, @ 000 long tons ) at full load and had a crew of between 1124 and 1133 officers and enlisted men . She was powered by four Parsons steam turbines with eighteen Belleville boilers . They were rated at 29 @, @ 000 shaft horsepower ( 22 @, @ 000 kW ) and provided a top speed of 20 knots ( 37 km / h ; 23 mph ) . Coal storage amounted to 2 @, @ 680 t ( 2 @, @ 640 long tons ; 2 @, @ 950 short tons ) .

Provence 's main battery consisted of ten Canon de 340 mm Modèle 1912 guns mounted in five twin gun turrets , numbered from front to rear . They were placed all on the centerline ; two were in a superfiring pair forward , one amidships , and the last two in a superfiring arrangement aft . The secondary battery consisted of twenty @-@ two Canon de 138 mm Modèle 1910 guns in casemates along the length of the hull . She also carried seven 47 mm ( 1 @. @ 9 in ) Hotchkiss guns for defense against aircraft , two on the conning tower and one on the roof of each turret . The ship was also armed with four submerged 450 mm ( 17 @. @ 7 in ) torpedo tubes . The ship 's main belt was 270 mm ( 10 @. @ 6 in ) thick and the main battery was protected by up to 300 mm ( 11 @. @ 8 in ) of armor . The conning tower had 314 mm ( 12 @. @ 4 in ) thick sides .

= = Service = =

After entering service in 1916 , Provence and her sisters were assigned to the 1st Division of the 1st Battle Squadron , with Provence as the fleet flagship . The three ships remained in the unit for the remainder of the war . They spent the majority of their time at Corfu to prevent the Austro @-@ Hungarian fleet from attempting to break out of the Adriatic . The fleet 's presence was also intended to intimidate Greece , which had become increasingly hostile to the Triple Entente . Later in the war ,

men were drawn from their crews for anti @-@ submarine warfare vessels . As the Austro @-@ Hungarians largely remained in port for the duration of the war , Provence saw no action during the conflict . Indeed , she did not leave port at all for the entirety of 1917 . In April 1919 , she returned to Toulon . The French Navy intended to send the ship to the Black Sea to join operations against the Bolsheviks , but a major mutiny prevented the operation . She and Lorraine went to Constantinople in October 1919 , where they formed the core of the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron .

In June 1921 , Provence and Bretagne went to Le Havre for a naval review , and were back in Toulon in September . In 1922 , Provence and Lorraine were placed in reserve , leaving Bretagne the only member of her class in service ; while out of service , Provence underwent a significant refit . The work lasted from 1 February 1922 to 4 July 1923 , and was carried out in Toulon . The ship had her armament improved ; her main guns were given greater elevation to increase their range , and four 75 mm M1897 guns were installed on the forward superstructure . A heavy tripod mast with a fire control station and a rangefinder for the ship 's anti @-@ aircraft guns were also added .

Another refit followed on 12 December 1925 ? 11 July 1927 . The elevation of the main battery guns was again increased , the bow section of the belt armor was removed , and half of her boilers were converted to oil @-@ firing models . A third and final modernization began on 20 September 1931 and lasted until 20 August 1934 . The rest of the coal @-@ fired boilers were replaced with six Indret oil @-@ fired boilers , new turbines and main battery guns were installed , along with eight new 75 mm anti @-@ aircraft guns . After emerging from the refit , Provence and Bretagne were assigned to the 2nd Squadron in the Atlantic . There , they joined fleet exercises off the Azores , Madeira , and Morocco . The two ships took part in a cruise to Africa in 1936 . In August , they were involved in non @-@ intervention patrols after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War ; these patrols lasted until April 1937 .

= = = World War II = = =

At the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 , Provence was in Toulon along with Bretagne in the 2nd Squadron , with Provence serving as the flagship of Vice Admiral Ollive . On 21 October , she went into drydock for periodic maintenance , which lasted until 2 December . Two days later , Provence and Bretagne , along with numerous cruisers and destroyers , sortied from Dakar to cover French merchant shipping off West Africa and the Azores . Around the middle of the month , the French warships returned to port .

Provence was then sent to Casablanca , where she joined Force Y. The unit conducted several fruitless sweeps into the Atlantic . While in Gibraltar , she was damaged and forced to return to Toulon for repairs . While en route , she intercepted the Italian passenger ship Oceania ; Provence dispatched her to Marseilles so she could be inspected for contraband . Provence sailed for Oran on 24 January 1940 , and then returned to Force Y in Dakar . Force Y was transferred to Oran on 11 April ; they arrived five days later . On 27 April , Provence , her two sisters , and several cruisers were moved to Alexandria . On 18 May , Provence and Bretagne returned to Mers El Kébir .

Following the French surrender on 22 June , the French fleet was to be disarmed under German and Italian supervision , under the terms of the Armistice . The British high command , however , was concerned that the French ships would be seized by the Axis powers and placed in service . The Axis navies would then outnumber the British Royal Navy . Prime Minister Winston Churchill therefore ordered Vice Admiral James Somerville , the commander of Force H , to neutralize the French fleet at Mers @-@ el @-@ Kébir . He was instructed to order the French vessels to join the British with the Free French , to move them to French possessions like Martinique where they would be outside the reach of the Axis powers , to move them to the USA where they would be interned , to scuttle themselves , or be sunk . On 3 July , Somerville arrived and delivered the ultimatum . After 10 hours of discussions and the French rejection of any part of the ultimatum , the British ships opened fire .

Provence returned fire about 90 seconds after the British attacked , though she had no success against her assailants . Bretagne was hit by several 15 @-@ inch ( 380 mm ) shells and exploded , killing most of her crew . Provence was also hit several times and badly damaged ; the shells set her

on fire and caused her to settle to the bottom of the harbor , but she did not explode like her sister ship . The ship was subsequently refloated and temporarily repaired , and on 5 November , she was transferred to Toulon , arriving on the 8th . Provence was escorted by the destroyers Épée , Fleuret , Le Hardi , Lansquenet , and Mameluk . Beginning on 1 January 1942 , Provence became the flagship of the Flag Officer , Training Division . On 27 November , the German Army occupied Toulon , and to prevent them from seizing the fleet there , including Provence , the French scuttled their ships . At the time , Provence was moored next to the old pre - WWI dreadnought Condorcet and the seaplane carrier Commandant Teste . The Italians moved into Toulon and raised Provence on 11 July 1943 . Two of her 340 mm guns were removed from the ship and emplaced in a coastal battery at Saint - Mandrier sur Mer outside Toulon . The Axis then scuttled the ship a second time , as a blockship in the harbor . Provence was ultimately raised in April 1949 and was broken up for scrap .