

= SMS Ostfriesland =

SMS Ostfriesland was the second vessel of the Helgoland class of battleships of the Imperial German Navy . Named for the region of East Frisia , Ostfriesland 's keel was laid in October 1908 at the Kaiserliche Werft dockyard in Wilhelmshaven . She was launched on 30 September 1909 and was commissioned into the fleet on 1 August 1911 . The ship was equipped with twelve 30 @. @ 5 @- @ centimeter ( 12 @. @ 0 in ) guns in six twin turrets , and had a top speed of 21 @. @ 2 knots ( 39 @. @ 3 km / h ; 24 @. @ 4 mph ) . Ostfriesland was assigned to the I Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet for the majority of her career , including World War I .

Along with her three sister ships , Helgoland , Thüringen , and Oldenburg , Ostfriesland participated in all of the major fleet operations of World War I in the North Sea against the British Grand Fleet . This included the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 , the largest naval battle of the war . The ship also saw action in the Baltic Sea against the Russian Navy . She was present during the unsuccessful first incursion into the Gulf of Riga in August 1915 .

After the German collapse in November 1918 , most of the High Seas Fleet was interned in Scapa Flow during the peace negotiations . The four Helgoland @- @ class ships were allowed to remain in Germany , however , and were therefore spared the destruction of the fleet in Scapa Flow . Ostfriesland and her sisters were eventually ceded to the victorious Allied powers as war reparations ; Ostfriesland was transferred to the United States Navy . She was sunk during air power trials off the Virginia Capes in July 1921 .

= = Construction = =

Ostfriesland was ordered by the German Imperial Navy ( Kaiserliche Marine ) under the provisional name Ersatz Oldenburg , as a replacement for the old coastal defense ship Oldenburg . The contract for the ship was awarded to the Kaiserliche Werft ( Imperial Dockyard ) in Wilhelmshaven under construction number 31 . Work began on 19 October 1908 with the laying of her keel , and the ship was launched less than a year later , on 30 September 1909 . She was christened by the Princess of Innhausen and Knyphausen , a representative of the oldest East Frisian nobility . Fitting @- @ out , including completion of the superstructure and the installation of armament , lasted until August 1911 . Ostfriesland , named for the north @- @ western coastal area of Germany , was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 1 August 1911 , just under three years from when work commenced , at a cost of 43 @. @ 579 million gold marks .

The ship was 167 @. @ 2 m ( 548 ft 7 in ) long , had a beam of 28 @. @ 5 m ( 93 ft 6 in ) and a draft of 8 @. @ 94 m ( 29 ft 4 in ) , and displaced 24 @, @ 700 metric tons ( 24 @, @ 310 long tons ) at full load . She was powered by three 4 @- @ cylinder vertical triple expansion steam engines with 15 boilers ; each engine drove a four @- @ bladed screw . The ship 's engines were rated at 28 @, @ 000 PS ( 28 @, @ 000 ihp ; 21 @, @ 000 kW ) and produced a top speed of 21 @. @ 2 knots ( 39 @. @ 3 km / h ; 24 @. @ 4 mph ) . Ostfriesland stored up to 3 @, @ 200 metric tons ( 3 @, @ 100 long tons ) of coal , which allowed her to steam for 5 @, @ 500 nautical miles ( 10 @, @ 200 km ; 6 @, @ 300 mi ) at a speed of 10 knots ( 19 km / h ; 12 mph ) . After 1915 the boilers were modified to spray oil on the coal ; the ship could carry up to 197 metric tons ( 194 long tons ) of fuel oil . She had a crew of 42 officers and 1 @, @ 071 enlisted men .

Ostfriesland was armed with a main battery of twelve 30 @. @ 5 cm SK L / 50 guns in six twin gun turrets , with one turret fore , one aft , and two on each flank of the ship . The ship 's secondary armament consisted of fourteen 15 cm ( 5 @. @ 9 in ) SK L / 45 guns and fourteen 8 @. @ 8 cm ( 3 @. @ 5 in ) SK L / 45 guns . After 1914 , two of the 8 @. @ 8 cm guns were removed and replaced by 8 @. @ 8 cm anti @- @ aircraft guns . Ostfriesland was also armed with six 50 cm ( 19 @. @ 7 in ) submerged torpedo tubes . Her main armored belt was 300 mm ( 12 in ) thick in the central portion , and was composed of Krupp cemented armor ( KCA ) . Her main battery gun turrets were protected by the same thickness of KCA armor on the sides and faces , as well as the barbettes that supported the turrets . Ostfriesland 's deck was 63 @. @ 5 mm ( 2 @. @ 50 in ) thick .

= = Service history = =

After commissioning , Ostfriesland conducted sea trials , which were completed by 15 September . Kapitän zur See ( KzS ) Walter Engelhardt served as the ship 's first commanding officer . On the 22nd , the ship was formally assigned to the I Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet . She then conducted individual ship training exercises , which were followed by I Squadron , and then fleet maneuvers in November . Ostfriesland became the new squadron flagship on 24 April 1912 , replacing Westfalen . The annual summer cruise in July ? August , which typically went to Norway , was interrupted by the Agadir Crisis . As a result , the cruise only went into the Baltic . Ostfriesland and the rest of the fleet then fell into a pattern of individual ship , squadron , and full fleet exercises over the next two years of peacetime . Ostfriesland won the 1912 / 1913 Kaiserschiespreis ? the Kaiser 's artillery shooting prize ? for I Squadron . Kapitänleutnant Friedrich Beesel was the ship 's gunnery officer at the time and , as such , was responsible for the accuracy of the ship 's shooting .

On 14 July 1914 , the annual summer cruise to Norway began . During the last peacetime cruise of the Imperial Navy , the fleet conducted drills off Skagen before proceeding to the Norwegian fjords on 25 July . The following day the fleet began to steam back to Germany , as a result of Austria @-@ Hungary 's ultimatum to Serbia . On the 27th , the entire fleet assembled off Cape Skadenes before returning to port , where it remained at a heightened state of readiness . War between Austria @-@ Hungary and Serbia broke out on the 28th , and in the span of a week all of the major European powers had joined the conflict . By 29 July Ostfriesland and the rest of I Squadron was back in Wilhelmshaven .

= = = World War I = = =

The first major naval action in the North Sea , the Battle of Helgoland Bight , took place on 28 August 1914 . At 04 : 30 , Helgoland , which was stationed off the heavily fortified island of Wangerooge , received the order to join Ostfriesland and sail out of the harbor . At 05 : 00 , the two battleships met the battered cruisers Frauenlob and Stettin . By 07 : 30 , the ships had returned to port for the night . On the afternoon of 7 September , Ostfriesland and the rest of the High Seas Fleet conducted a training cruise to the island of Heligoland . In October , Ostfriesland was equipped with a pair of 8 @.@ 8 cm flak guns for anti @-@ air defense .

Ostfriesland was present during the first sortie by the German fleet into the North Sea , which took place on 2 ? 3 November 1914 . No British forces were encountered during the operation . A second operation followed on 15 ? 16 December . This sortie was the initiation of a strategy adopted by Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , the commander of the High Seas Fleet . Admiral von Ingenohl intended to use the battlecruisers of Konteradmiral ( Rear Admiral ) Franz von Hipper 's I Scouting Group to raid British coastal towns to lure out portions of the Grand Fleet where they could be destroyed by the High Seas Fleet . Early on 15 December the fleet left port to raid the towns of Scarborough , Hartlepool , and Whitby . That evening , the German battle fleet of some twelve dreadnoughts ? including Ostfriesland and her three 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 battle fleet back toward Germany .

The Battle of Dogger Bank , in which Vice Admiral David Beatty 's 1st and 2nd Battlecruiser Squadrons ambushed the battlecruisers of I Scouting Group , occurred on 24 January 1915 . Ostfriesland and the rest of I Squadron sortied to reinforce the outnumbered German battlecruisers ; I Squadron left port at 12 : 33 CET , along with the pre @-@ dreadnoughts of II Squadron . They were too late , however , and failed to locate any British forces . By 19 : 05 , the fleet had returned to the Schillig Roads outside Wilhelmshaven . In the meantime , the armored cruiser Blücher had been overwhelmed by concentrated British fire and sunk , while the battlecruiser Seydlitz was severely damaged by a fire in one of the ammunition magazines . As a result , Kaiser Wilhelm II removed von

Ingenohl from his post and replaced him with Admiral Hugo von Pohl on 2 February .

The eight I Squadron ships went into the Baltic on 22 February 1915 for unit training , which lasted until 13 March . Following their return to the North Sea , the ships participated in a series of uneventful fleet sorties on 29 ? 30 March , 17 ? 18 April , 21 ? 22 April , 17 ? 18 May , and 29 ? 30 May . Ostfriesland and the rest of the fleet remained in port until 4 August , when I Squadron returned to the Baltic for another round of training maneuvers . That month , KzS Ernst @-@ Oldwig von Natzmer replaced Engelhardt as the ship 's commanding officer . From the Baltic , the squadron was attached to the naval force that attempted to sweep the Gulf of Riga of Russian naval forces in August 1915 . The assault force included the eight I Squadron battleships , the battlecruisers Von der Tann , Moltke , and Seydlitz , several light cruisers , 32 destroyers and 13 minesweepers . The plan called for channels in Russian minefields to be swept so that the Russian naval presence , which included the pre @-@ dreadnought battleship Slava , could be eliminated . The Germans would then lay minefields of their own to prevent Russian ships from returning to the Gulf . Ostfriesland and the majority of the other big ships of the High Seas Fleet remained outside the Gulf for the entirety of the operation . The dreadnoughts Nassau and Posen were detached on 16 August to escort the minesweepers and to destroy Slava , though they failed to sink the old battleship . After three days , the Russian minefields had been cleared , and the flotilla entered the Gulf on 19 August , but reports of Allied submarines in the area prompted a German withdrawal from the Gulf the following day . By 26 August , I Squadron had returned to Wilhelmshaven .

On 23 ? 24 October , the High Seas Fleet undertook its last major offensive operation under the command of Admiral von Pohl , though it ended without contact with British forces . By January 1916 hepatic cancer had weakened von Pohl to the point where he was no longer able to carry out his duties , and he was replaced by Vizeadmiral ( Vice Admiral ) Reinhard Scheer in January . Scheer proposed a more aggressive policy designed to force a confrontation with the British Grand Fleet ; he received approval from the Kaiser in February . Scheer 's first operation was a sweep into the North Sea on 5 ? 7 March , followed by two more on 21 ? 22 March and 25 ? 26 March . During Scheer 's next operation , Ostfriesland supported a raid on the English coast on 24 April 1916 conducted by the German battlecruiser force . The battlecruisers left the Jade Estuary at 10 : 55 and the rest of the High Seas Fleet followed at 13 : 40 . The battlecruiser Seydlitz struck a mine while en route to the target , and had to withdraw . The other battlecruisers bombarded the town of Lowestoft unopposed but , during the approach to Yarmouth , encountered the British cruisers of the Harwich Force . A short gun duel ensued before the Harwich Force withdrew . Reports of British submarines in the area prompted I Scouting Group to retreat . At this point , Scheer , who had been warned of the sortie of the Grand Fleet from its base in Scapa Flow , also withdrew to safer German waters .

= = = = Battle of Jutland = = = =

Ostfriesland was present during the fleet operation that resulted in the battle of Jutland , which took place on 31 May and 1 June 1916 . The German fleet again sought to draw out and isolate a portion of the Grand Fleet and destroy it before the main British fleet could retaliate . During the operation , Ostfriesland was the lead ship in I Squadron 's I Division and the ninth ship in the line , directly astern of the fleet flagship Friedrich der Grosse and ahead of her sister Thüringen . I Squadron was the center of the German line , behind the eight König- and Kaiser @-@ class battleships of III Squadron . The six elderly pre @-@ dreadnoughts of the III and IV Divisions ? II Battle Squadron ? formed the rear of the formation . Ostfriesland flew the flag of Vizeadmiral ( Vice Admiral ) Erhardt Schmidt , the squadron commander during the battle and Scheer 's deputy commander .

Shortly before 16 : 00 , 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 half an hour later . By this time , the German battlecruisers were steaming south to draw the British ships toward the main body of the High Seas Fleet . At 17 : 30 , the crew of the leading German battleship , König , spotted both 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 , the order to open fire was given .

While the leading battleships engaged the British battlecruiser squadron , Ostfriesland and ten other battleships fired on the British 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron . Ostfriesland , Kaiser , and Nassau engaged the cruiser Southampton , though only Nassau scored a hit . After about 15 minutes , Ostfriesland shifted fire to Birmingham and Nottingham , though again failed to hit her targets . Shortly after 19 : 15 , the British dreadnought Warspite came into range ; Ostfriesland opened fire at 19 : 25 with her main battery guns , at ranges of 10 @,@ 800 to 15 @,@ 000 yd ( 9 @,@ 900 to 13 @,@ 700 m ) . Ostfriesland claimed hits from her third and fourth salvos . Warspite was hit by a total of thirteen heavy shells during this period .

By 20 : 15 , the German battle line had faced the entire deployed Grand Fleet a second time . Scheer ordered a 180 @-@ degree turn at 20 : 17 , which was covered by a charge by the battlecruiser squadron and a torpedo @-@ boat attack . In order to hasten the maneuver , Schmidt ordered Ostfriesland to turn immediately without waiting for Thüringen behind him . This move caused some difficulty for the III Squadron ships ahead , though the ships quickly returned to their stations . At around 23 : 30 , the German fleet reorganized into the night cruising formation . Ostfriesland was the eighth ship , stationed toward the front of the 24 @-@ ship line . An hour later , the leading units of the German line encountered British light forces and a violent firefight at close range ensued . Sometime around 01 : 10 , the armored cruiser Black Prince stumbled into the German line . Thüringen illuminated the vessel with her spotlights and poured salvos of 30 @.@ 5 cm rounds into the ship . Ostfriesland fired with her 15 cm guns and Kaiser fired both 30 @.@ 5 cm and 15 cm guns . In the span of less than a minute , two massive explosions tore the cruiser apart and killed the entire 857 @-@ man crew .

Despite the ferocity of the night fighting , the High Seas Fleet punched through the British destroyer forces and reached Horns Reef by 4 : 00 on 1 June . At 06 : 20 , however , Ostfriesland struck a mine , previously laid by the destroyer HMS Abdiel on 4 May , on her starboard side . The ship hauled out of line , as the explosion was initially thought to have been a torpedo fired by a submarine . Ostfriesland fell behind the fleet and steamed at slow speed , screened by the destroyers V3 , V5 , and briefly by G11 . By 10 : 40 , the battleship had increased speed to 15 knots ( 28 km / h ; 17 mph ) . Her anti @-@ submarine escort was eventually reinforced by a floatplane , which spotted what it believed to be a British submarine at 12 : 20 . Ostfriesland turned away , which caused the torpedo bulkhead , damaged slightly by the mine explosion , to tear open . More water entered the ship and caused a 4 @.@ 75 degree list to starboard , forcing Ostfriesland to reduce speed again . The ship requested assistance from a pumping ship at 14 : 20 , but by 14 : 45 the flooding was under control and the ship passed the Outer Jade Lightship . She was able to increase speed gradually to 10 knots ( 19 km / h ; 12 mph ) , and at 18 : 15 she reached port in Wilhelmshaven . The mine tore a hole that measured 40 ft × 16 ft ( 12 @.@ 2 m × 4 @.@ 9 m ) and allowed 500 t ( 490 long tons ) of water into the ship . Further flooding occurred after the torpedo bulkhead damage at 12 : 20 , though the full damage report has not survived . Ostfriesland was drydocked in Wilhelmshaven for repairs , which lasted until 26 July . In the course of the battle , Ostfriesland fired 111 rounds from her main battery , 101 shells from her 15 cm guns , and a single 8 @.@ 8 cm shell . The only damage sustained was the mine that was struck on the morning of 1 June , which killed one man and wounded ten .

== = Later operations == =

On 18 August 1916 , 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 Ostfriesland , would trail behind and provide cover . On the approach to the English coast , Scheer turned north after receiving a false report from a zeppelin about a British unit in the area . As a result , the bombardment was not carried out , and by 14 : 35 , Scheer had been warned of the Grand Fleet 's approach and so turned his forces around

and retreated to German ports .

On 25 ? 26 September , Ostfriesland and the rest of I Squadron provided support for a sweep out to the Terschelling Bank conducted by the II Führer der Torpedoboote ( Leader of Torpedo Boats ) . Scheer conducted another fleet operation on 18 ? 20 October in the direction of the Dogger Bank . For the majority of 1917 , Ostfriesland was assigned to guard duty in the German Bight . During Operation Albion , the amphibious assault on the Russian @-@ held islands in the Gulf of Riga , Ostfriesland and her three sisters were moved to the Danish straits to block any possible British attempt to intervene . On 28 October the four ships arrived in Putzig Wiek , and from there steamed to Arensburg on the 29th . On 2 November the operation was completed and Ostfriesland and her sisters began the voyage back to the North Sea . In March 1918 , Natzmer was replaced as the ship 's commander by KzS Hans Herr . A final abortive fleet sortie took place on 23 ? 24 April 1918 . Ostfriesland , Thüringen , and Nassau were formed into a special unit for Operation Schlußstein , a planned occupation of St. Petersburg . The three ships reached the Baltic on 10 August , but the operation was postponed and eventually canceled . The special unit was dissolved on 21 August and the battleships were back in Wilhelmshaven on the 23rd .

= = = Fate = = =

Ostfriesland and her three sisters were to have taken part in a final fleet action at the end of October 1918 , days before the Armistice was to take effect . The bulk of the High Seas Fleet was to have sortied from its base in Wilhelmshaven to engage the British Grand Fleet ; Scheer ? by now the Großadmiral ( Grand Admiral ) of the fleet ? intended to inflict as much damage as possible on the British navy , to improve Germany 's bargaining position , despite the expected casualties . But many of the war @-@ weary sailors felt that the operation would disrupt the peace process and prolong the war . On the morning of 29 October 1918 , the order was given to sail from Wilhelmshaven the following day . Starting on the night of the 29th , sailors on Thüringen and then on several other battleships mutinied . The unrest ultimately forced Hipper and Scheer to cancel the operation . Informed of the situation , the Kaiser stated " I no longer have a navy " . On 16 December , Ostfriesland was decommissioned and used as a barracks ship .

Following the capitulation of Germany in November 1918 , most of the High Seas Fleet , under the command of Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , was interned in the British naval base in Scapa Flow . Only the most modern ships were sent for internment ; the four Helgoland @-@ class ships were left in Germany . 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 scuttle his ships . In the span of a few hours , ten battleships and five battlecruisers sank in the shallow waters of Scapa Flow . KzS Karl Windmüller served as Ostfriesland 's final commander , until she was stricken from the navy list on 5 November 1919 . She was then surrendered to the Allies as " H " as a replacement for the ships that had been scuttled . The ship remained in Germany until 7 April 1920 , when a German crew took her to Rosyth . She was ceded to the United States as war reparations , and on 9 April an American crew arrived to bring her to the US .

In July 1921 , the Army Air Service and the US Navy conducted a series of bombing tests off Cape Hatteras , led by General Billy Mitchell . The targets included demobilized American and former German warships , including the old battleship Iowa , the cruiser Frankfurt , and finally Ostfriesland on 20 July . At 13 : 30 ET , the first attack wave , armed with 230 lb ( 100 kg ) bombs , struck the stationary ship . Eight of thirty @-@ three bombs found their mark , after which the ship was inspected . The second wave was also armed with 230 lb bombs , and the third and fourth carried 600 lb ( 270 kg ) bombs . Five 600 lb bombs found their mark , but little damage was done to the ship 's topside . The bombs that nearly missed the ship , however , had done significant underwater damage to the hull , which allowed some flooding and created a list of five degrees to port and three additional feet of draft at the stern . The bombing schedule was interrupted by a storm in the late afternoon .

Early on the morning of 21 July , the fifth wave of bombers began their attack . At 08 : 52 , the first Army bomber dropped a 1 @,@ 000 lb ( 450 kg ) bomb that hit the ship ; four more bombers

followed and scored two further hits . Inspectors again went aboard Ostfriesland following the fifth attack and noted that the hits had not seriously damaged the ship , though one had created a large hole on her starboard side that allowed further flooding . By noon , she was down five feet at the stern and one foot at the bow . At 12 : 19 , the next attack wave , equipped with 2 @, @ 000 lb ( 910 kg ) bombs , struck . Six bombs were dropped , none of which hit , though three detonated very close to the hull . At 12 : 30 , Ostfriesland began to sink rapidly by the stern and the list to port increased dramatically . At 12 : 40 , the ship rolled over and sank . The results of the tests were widely publicized and Mitchell became both a national hero and the " infallible prophet of aviation " .

The leadership of the US Navy , however , was outraged by Mitchell 's handling of the tests ; the 2 @, @ 000 lb bombs had not been sanctioned by the Navy , which had set the rules for the engagement . Mitchell 's bombers had also not allowed inspectors aboard the ship between bombing runs as stipulated by the Navy . The joint Army ? Navy report on the tests , issued a month later and signed by General John Pershing , stated that " the battleship is still the backbone of the fleet . " Mitchell wrote his own , contradictory account of the tests , which was then leaked to the press . The sinking of the battleship sparked great controversy in the American public sphere ; Mitchell 's supporters exaggerated the significance of the tests by falsely claiming Ostfriesland to be an unsinkable " super @-@ battleship " and that " old sea dogs ... wept aloud . " Senator William Borah argued that the tests had rendered battleships obsolete . Mitchell was widely supported in the press , though his increasingly combative tactics eventually resulted in a court @-@ martial for insubordination that forced him to retire from the military .