

= SMS Leipzig =

For other ships of this name , see SMS Leipzig (1875) and SMS Leipzig (1918) .

SMS Leipzig (" His Majesty 's Ship Leipzig ") was the sixth of seven Bremen -class cruisers of the Imperial German Navy , named after the city of Leipzig . She was begun by AG Weser in Bremen in 1904 , launched in March 1905 and commissioned in April 1906 . Armed with a main battery of ten 10.5 cm (4.1 in) guns and two 45 cm (18 in) torpedo tubes , Leipzig was capable of a top speed of 22.5 knots (41.7 km / h ; 25.9 mph) .

Leipzig spent her career on overseas stations ; at the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 , she was cruising off the coast of Mexico . After rejoining with the East Asia Squadron , she proceeded to South American waters , where she participated in the Battle of Coronel , where the German squadron overpowered and sank a pair of British armored cruisers . A month later , she again saw action at the Battle of the Falkland Islands , which saw the destruction of the East Asia Squadron . Leipzig was chased down and sunk by the cruisers HMS Glasgow and HMS Kent ; the majority of her crew was killed in the battle , with only 18 survivors .

= = Construction = =

Leipzig was ordered under the contract name " N " and was laid down at the AG Weser shipyard in Bremen in 1904 and launched on 21 March 1905 , after which fitting out work commenced . She was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 20 April 1906 . The ship was 111.1 meters (365 ft) long overall and had a beam of 13.3 m (44 ft) and a draft of 5.61 m (18.4 ft) forward . She displaced 3,816 t (3,875 long tons ; 4,206 short tons) at full combat load . Her propulsion system consisted of two triple -expansion engines , designed to give 10,000 indicated horsepower (7,500 kW) for a top speed of 22 knots (41 km / h ; 25 mph) . The engines were powered by ten coal -fired Marine -type water -tube boilers . Leipzig carried up to 860 tonnes (850 long tons) of coal , which gave her a range of 4,690 nautical miles (8,690 km ; 5,400 mi) at 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . She had a crew of 14 officers and 274 ? 287 enlisted men .

The ship was armed with ten 10.5 cm SK L / 40 guns in single mounts . Two were placed side by side forward on the forecastle , six were located amidships , three on either side , and two were placed side by side aft . The guns could engage targets out to 12,200 m (40,000 ft) . They were supplied with 1,500 rounds of ammunition , for 150 shells per gun . She was also equipped with two 45 cm (17.7 in) torpedo tubes with five torpedoes . They were submerged in the hull on the broadside . She was also fitted to carry fifty naval mines . The ship was protected by an armored deck that was up to 80 mm (3.1 in) thick . The conning tower had 100 mm (3.9 in) thick sides , and the guns were protected by 50 mm (2.0 in) thick shields .

= = Service history = =

Franz von Hipper served as the ship 's first commanding officer , from her commissioning in April until September , when Leipzig was deployed overseas , and was assigned to the East Asia Squadron , along with the armored cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the light cruisers Emden and Nürnberg . The ship was cruising off the west coast of Mexico at the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 to show the flag in the Americas . In addition , Leipzig had been tasked with safeguarding German nationals in Mexico during a period of unrest . She spent the first weeks of the conflict patrolling for British -flagged merchantmen off San Francisco before stopping in the Galapagos Islands on 18 August , on her way to South America . A week later , Leipzig sank a British freighter carrying sugar and then proceeded to the Peruvian coast by the 28th . She stopped in Guaymas in neutral Mexico to take on a fresh load of coal on 8 September .

On 14 October , she joined the rest of Vice Admiral Maximilian von Spee 's East Asia Squadron at Easter Island ; she brought with her three colliers . On 18 October , the Squadron departed , bound for South America ; they stopped in the Juan Fernández Islands while en route , and by 26 October ,

they were approaching Mas a Fuera . They then steamed to Valparaíso , Chile , where they received intelligence that indicated that the British cruiser HMS Glasgow was anchored in Coronel . Von Spee decided to proceed to Coronel to ambush the British ship when it left port . Glasgow was in fact joined by the armored cruisers HMS Good Hope and HMS Monmouth .

= = = Battle of Coronel = = =

While patrolling off Coronel , Leipzig stopped a Chilean barque and searched her , but since she was a neutral vessel , and not carrying contraband , the Germans let her go . At 16 : 00 on 1 November , Leipzig spotted a column of smoke in the distance , followed by a second ship at 16 : 17 , and a third at 16 : 25 . The British spotted Leipzig at approximately the same time , and the two squadrons formed into lines of battle . Leipzig was the third ship in the German line , behind the two armored cruisers . At 18 : 07 , von Spee issued the order " Fire distribution from left " , meaning that each ship would engage its opposite number ; the Germans fired first , at 18 : 34 .

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau quickly wrecked their British counterparts , while Leipzig fired at Glasgow without success . At 18 : 49 , Glasgow hit Leipzig , but the shell was a dud and did not explode . Leipzig and Dresden hit Glasgow five times before von Spee ordered Leipzig to close with the stricken Good Hope and torpedo it . A rain squall obscured the ship , and by the time Leipzig reached Good Hope 's position , the latter had sunk . Unaware of the sinking of Good Hope , no rescue operations were mounted by Leipzig 's crew . By 20 : 00 , Leipzig encountered Dresden in the gathering darkness , and the two initially mistook each other for hostile warships , though they quickly established their identity . Leipzig emerged from the battle essentially unscathed , and with no wounded crewmen .

In the aftermath of the Battle of Coronel , von Spee decided to return to Valparaíso to receive further orders ; while Scharnhorst , Gneisenau , and Nürnberg went into the harbor , Leipzig and Dresden escorted the colliers to Mas a Fuera . The rest of the East Asia Squadron joined them there on 6 November ; the cruisers restocked their coal and other supplies . On 10 November , Leipzig and Dresden were sent to Valparaíso , arriving on the 13th . Five days later , they rejoined the Squadron approximately 250 nautical miles (460 km ; 290 mi) west of Robinson Crusoe Island ; the unified Squadron then proceeded to the Gulf of Penas , arriving on 21 November . There , they coaled and prepared to make the long voyage around Cape Horn . The British , shocked by their defeat at Coronel , had meanwhile dispatched the powerful battlecruisers HMS Invincible and HMS Inflexible , under the command of Vice Admiral Doveton Sturdee , to hunt down and destroy von Spee 's ships . They departed Britain on 11 November and reached the Falkland Islands on 7 December , having been joined on the way by the armored cruisers Carnarvon , Kent , and Cornwall and the light cruisers Bristol and the battered Glasgow .

= = = Battle of the Falkland Islands = = =

On 26 November , the East Asia Squadron departed the Gulf of Penas , bound for Cape Horn and the Atlantic and reached the Cape on 2 December . While off the Cape , Leipzig took the Canadian sailing ship Drummair as a prize ; the ship was carrying 2 @, @ 750 t (2 @, @ 710 long tons ; 3 @, @ 030 short tons) of coal , which was transferred to the colliers Baden and Santa Isabel at Picton Island . On the night of 6 December , von Spee held a conference with the ship commanders to discuss his proposed attack on the Falklands ; Fregattenkapitän Haun , the commander of Leipzig , along with the commanders from Gneisenau and Dresden , opposed the plan and favored bypassing the Falklands to wage commerce war off La Plata . Nevertheless , von Spee made the decision to attack the Falklands on the morning of 8 December .

The Germans approached Port Stanley , the capital of the Falklands , early on the morning of 8 December ; the British quickly spotted them , and raised steam to go out and meet them . Von Spee initially thought the smoke clouds to be the British burning their coal stocks to prevent the Germans from seizing them . Upon realizing the presence of the powerful British squadron , he broke off the attack and turned to flee . The British quickly steamed out of the harbor in pursuit . By 12 : 55 , the

battlecruisers had caught up to the retreating Germans , and opened fire on Leipzig , the last ship in the German line , though she was not hit . Von Spee ordered the light cruisers to detach and flee while Scharnhorst and Gneisenau turned on their pursuers , in the hope that he could cover their escape . In response , Sturdee sent his cruisers to chase down Nürnberg , Dresden , and Leipzig .

Glasgow pursued Leipzig , and quickly caught up , opening fire by 14 : 40 . After about twenty minutes of firing , Leipzig was hit ; she turned to port to open the range , before turning to starboard in order to bring her full broadside into action . In the ensuing action , both ships were hit several times , forcing Glasgow to break off and fall behind the more powerful armored cruisers . Leipzig was battered severely by Cornwall and Kent and set on fire ; she nevertheless remained in action and continued to fight . In the course of the engagement , Leipzig hit Cornwall eighteen times , causing a significant list to port . She fired three torpedoes at the British ships , but failed to score any hits with them . At 19 : 20 , Haun issued the order to scuttle his wrecked ship ; the British approached and opened fire on the stricken cruiser at close range , killing large numbers of the crew . The British also destroyed a cutter filled with survivors , killing all of them . Leipzig finally capsized and sank at 21 : 05 , with Haun going down with his ship . Only eighteen men were pulled from the freezing water .