

= SMS Nassau =

SMS Nassau was the first dreadnought battleship built for the Imperial German Navy , a response to the launching of the British battleship HMS Dreadnought . Nassau was laid down on 22 July 1907 at the Kaiserliche Werft in Wilhelmshaven , and launched less than a year later on 7 March 1908 , approximately 25 months after Dreadnought was launched . She was the lead ship of her class of four battleships , which included Posen , Rheinland , and Westfalen .

Nassau saw service in the North Sea in the beginning of World War I , in the II Division of the I Battle Squadron of the German High Seas Fleet . In August 1915 , she entered the Baltic Sea and participated in the Battle of the Gulf of Riga , where she engaged the Russian battleship Slava . Following her return to the North Sea , Nassau and her sister ships took part in the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 . During the battle , Nassau collided with the British destroyer HMS Spitfire . Nassau suffered a total of 11 killed and 16 injured during the engagement .

After World War I , the bulk of the High Seas Fleet was interned in Scapa Flow . As they were the oldest German dreadnoughts , the Nassau @-@ class ships were for the time permitted to remain in German ports . After the German fleet was scuttled , Nassau and her three sisters were surrendered to the victorious powers as replacements for the sunken ships . Nassau was ceded to Japan in April 1920 . With no use for the ship , Japan sold her to a British wrecking firm which then scrapped her in Dordrecht , Netherlands .

= = Construction = =

Nassau was ordered under the provisional name Ersatz Bayern , as a replacement for the old Sachsen @-@ class ironclad Bayern . She was laid down on 22 July 1907 at the Kaiserliche Werft in Wilhelmshaven , under construction number 30 . Construction work proceeded under absolute secrecy ; detachments of soldiers were tasked with guarding the shipyard itself , as well as contractors that supplied building materials , such as Krupp . The ship was launched on 7 March 1908 ; she was christened by Princess Hilda of Nassau , and the ceremony was attended by Kaiser Wilhelm II and Prince Henry of the Netherlands , representing his wife 's House of Orange @-@ Nassau .

Fitting out work was delayed significantly when a dockyard worker accidentally removed a blanking plate from a large pipe , which allowed a large amount of water to flood the ship . The ship did not have its watertight bulkheads installed , so the water spread throughout the ship and caused it to list to port and sink 1 @.@ 6 m ( 5 ft 3 in ) to the bottom of the dock . The ship had to be pumped dry and cleaned out , which proved to be a laborious task . The ship ultimately was completed by the end of September 1909 . She was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 1 October 1909 , and trials commenced immediately . HMS Dreadnought , the ship that spurred Nassau 's construction , had been launched 2 February 1906 , some 25 months before Nassau . The ship cost the German navy 37 @,@ 399 @,@ 000 gold marks .

Nassau was 146 @.@ 1 m ( 479 ft 4 in ) long , 26 @.@ 9 m ( 88 ft 3 in ) wide , and had a draft of 8 @.@ 9 m ( 29 ft 2 in ) . She displaced 18 @,@ 873 t ( 18 @,@ 575 long tons ) with a normal load , and 20 @,@ 535 t ( 20 @,@ 211 long tons ) fully laden . The ship had a crew of 40 officers and 968 enlisted men . Nassau retained three @-@ shafted triple expansion engines with coal @-@ fired boilers instead of more advanced turbine engines . Her propulsion system was rated at 21 @,@ 699 ihp ( 16 @,@ 181 kW ) and provided a top speed of 20 knots ( 37 km / h ; 23 mph ) . She had a cruising radius of 8 @,@ 300 nautical miles ( 15 @,@ 400 km ; 9 @,@ 600 mi ) at a speed of 12 knots ( 22 km / h ; 14 mph ) . This type of machinery was chosen at the request of both Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and the Navy 's construction department ; the latter stated in 1905 that the " use of turbines in heavy warships does not recommend itself . " This decision was based solely on cost : at the time , Parsons held a monopoly on steam turbines and required a 1 million gold mark royalty fee for every turbine engine . German firms were not ready to begin production of turbines on a large scale until 1910 .

Nassau carried twelve 28 cm ( 11 in ) SK L / 45 guns in an unusual hexagonal configuration . Her

secondary armament consisted of twelve 15 cm ( 6 in ) SK L / 45 guns and sixteen 8 @. @ 8 cm ( 3 in ) SK L / 45 guns , all of which were mounted in casemates . The ship was also armed with six 45 cm ( 18 in ) submerged torpedo tubes . One tube was mounted in the bow , another in the stern , and two on each broadside , on either ends of the torpedo bulkhead . The ship 's belt armor was 270 mm ( 11 in ) thick in the central portion of the hull , and the armored deck was 80 mm ( 3 in ) thick . The main battery turrets had 280 mm ( 11 in ) thick sides , and the conning tower was protected with 400 mm ( 16 in ) of armor plating .

= = Service history = =

On 16 October 1909 , Nassau and her sister Westfalen participated in a ceremony for the opening of the new third entrance in the Wilhelmshaven Naval Dockyard . They were still on trials in February 1910 , but they took part in the annual maneuvers of the High Seas Fleet . Nassau finished her trials on 3 May and joined the newly created I Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet . Over the next four years , the ship participated in the normal series of squadron and fleet maneuvers and training cruises . The one exception was the summer training cruise for 1912 when , due to the Agadir Crisis , the cruise only went into the Baltic . On 14 July 1914 , the annual summer cruise to Norway began . The threat of war , however , caused the Kaiser to cancel the cruise after two weeks , and by the end of July , the fleet was back in port . 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 .

Nassau participated in most of the fleet advances into the North Sea throughout the war . The first operation was conducted primarily by Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper 's battlecruisers ; the ships bombarded the English coastal towns of Scarborough , Hartlepool , and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 . A German battlefleet of 12 dreadnoughts ? including Nassau ? and eight pre @-@ dreadnoughts sailed in support of the battlecruisers . On the evening of 15 December , they 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 the German fleet commander , Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , that the entire Grand Fleet was deployed before him . Under orders from Kaiser Wilhelm II to not risk the fleet , von Ingenohl broke off the engagement and turned the battlefleet back towards Germany .

= = = Battle of the Gulf of Riga = = =

In August 1915 , the German fleet attempted to clear the Gulf of Riga in order to facilitate the capture of Riga by the German army . To do so , the German planners intended to drive off or destroy the Russian naval forces in the area , which included the pre @-@ dreadnought battleship Slava and a number of gunboats and destroyers . The German naval force would also lay a series of minefields in the northern entrance to the gulf to prevent Russian naval reinforcements from being able to enter the area . The fleet that assembled for the assault included Nassau and her three sister ships , the four Helgoland @-@ class battleships , and the battlecruisers Von der Tann , Moltke , and Seydlitz . The force would operate under the command of Vice Admiral Franz von Hipper . The eight battleships were to provide cover for the forces engaging the Russian flotilla . The first attempt on 8 August was unsuccessful , as it had taken too long to clear the Russian minefields to allow the minelayer Deutschland to lay a minefield of her own .

On 16 August 1915 , a second attempt was made to enter the gulf : Nassau and Posen , four light cruisers , and 31 torpedo boats managed to breach the Russian defenses . On the first day of the assault , the German minesweeper T 46 was sunk , as was the destroyer V 99 . The following day , Nassau and Posen engaged in an artillery duel with Slava , resulting in three hits on the Russian ship that forced her to retreat . By 19 August , the Russian minefields had been cleared and the flotilla entered the gulf . However , reports of Allied submarines in the area prompted the Germans to call off of the operation the following day . Nassau and Posen remained in the Gulf until 21 August , and while there assisted in the destruction of the gunboats Sivuch and Korietz . Admiral

Hipper later remarked that ,

" To keep valuable ships for a considerable time in a limited area in which enemy submarines were increasingly active , with the corresponding risk of damage and loss , was to indulge in a gamble out of all proportion to the advantage to be derived from the occupation of the Gulf before the capture of Riga from the land side . "

= = = Battle of Jutland = = =

Nassau took part in the inconclusive Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 , in the II Division of the I Battle Squadron . For the majority of the battle , the I Battle Squadron formed the center of the line of battle , behind Rear Admiral Behncke 's III Battle Squadron , and followed by Rear Admiral Mauve 's elderly pre @-@ dreadnoughts of the II Battle Squadron . Nassau was the third ship in the group of four , behind Rheinland and ahead of Westfalen ; Posen was the squadron 's flagship . However , when the German fleet reorganized into a nighttime cruising formation , the order of the ships was inadvertently reversed , and so Nassau was the second ship in the line , astern of Westfalen .

Between 17 : 48 and 17 : 52 , eleven German dreadnoughts , including Nassau , engaged and opened fire on the British 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron ; Nassau 's target was the cruiser Southampton . Nassau is believed to have scored one hit on Southampton , at approximately 17 : 50 at a range of 20 @,@ 100 yd ( 18 @,@ 400 m ) , shortly after she began firing . The shell struck Southampton obliquely on her port side , but did not cause significant damage . Nassau then shifted her guns to the cruiser Dublin , but ceased firing by 18 : 10 . At 19 : 33 , Nassau came into range of the British battleship Warspite ; her main guns fired briefly , but after the 180 degree turn by the German fleet , the British ship was no longer within reach .

Nassau and the rest of the I Squadron were again engaged by British light forces shortly after 22 : 00 , including the light cruisers Caroline , Comus , and Royalist . Nassau followed her sister Westfalen in a 68 ° turn to starboard in order to evade any torpedoes that might have been fired . The two ships fired on Caroline and Royalist at a range of around 8 @,@ 000 yd ( 7 @,@ 300 m ) . The British ships turned away briefly , before turning about to launch torpedoes . Caroline fired two at Nassau ; the first passed close to her bows and the second passed under the ship without exploding .

At around midnight on 1 June , the German fleet was attempting to pass behind the British Grand Fleet when it encountered a line of British destroyers . Nassau came in contact with the destroyer Spitfire , and in the confusion , attempted to ram her . Spitfire tried to evade , but could not maneuver away fast enough , and the two ships collided . Nassau fired her forward 11 @-@ inch guns at the destroyer , but they could not depress low enough for Nassau to be able to score a hit . Nonetheless , the blast from the guns destroyed Spitfire 's bridge . At that point , Spitfire was able to disengage from Nassau , and took with her a 6 m ( 20 ft ) portion of Nassau 's side plating . The collision disabled one of Nassau 's 15 cm ( 5 @.@ 9 in ) guns , and left a 3 @.@ 5 m ( 11 @.@ 5 ft ) gash above the waterline ; this slowed the ship to 15 knots ( 28 km / h ; 17 mph ) until it could be repaired . During the confused action , Nassau was hit by two 4 in ( 10 cm ) shells from the British destroyers , which damaged her searchlights and inflicted minor casualties .

Shortly after 01 : 00 , Nassau and Thüringen encountered the British armored cruiser Black Prince . Thüringen opened fire first , and pummeled Black Prince with a total of 27 heavy @-@ caliber shells and 24 shells from her secondary battery . Nassau and Ostfriesland joined in , followed by Friedrich der Grosse . The heavy fire quickly disabled the British cruiser and set her alight ; following a tremendous explosion , she sank , taking her entire crew with her . The sinking Black Prince was directly in the path of Nassau ; to avoid the wreck , the ship had to steer sharply towards the III Battle Squadron . It was necessary for Nassau to reverse her engines to full speed astern in order to avoid a collision with Kaiserin . Nassau then fell back into a position between the pre @-@ dreadnoughts Hessen and Hannover . At around 03 : 00 , several British destroyers attempted another torpedo attack on the German line . At approximately 03 : 10 , three or four destroyers appeared in the darkness to port of Nassau ; at a range of between 5 @,@ 500 yd ( 5 @,@ 000 m )

to 4 @, @ 400 yd ( 4 @, @ 000 m ) , Nassau briefly fired on the ships before turning away 90 ° to avoid torpedoes .

Following her return to German waters , Nassau , her sisters Posen and Westfalen , and the Helgoland @-@ class battleships Helgoland and Thüringen , took up defensive positions in the Jade roadstead for the night . In the course of the battle , Nassau was hit twice by secondary shells , though these hits caused no significant damage . Her casualties amounted to 11 men killed and 16 men wounded . During the course of the battle , she fired 106 main battery shells and 75 rounds from her secondary guns . Repairs were completed quickly , and Nassau was back with the fleet by 10 July 1916 .

= = = Later operations = = =

Another fleet advance followed on 18 ? 22 August , during which the I Scouting Group battlecruisers were to bombard the coastal town of Sunderland in an attempt to draw out and destroy Beatty 's battlecruisers . As only two of the four German battlecruisers were still in fighting condition , three dreadnoughts were assigned to the Scouting Group for the operation : Markgraf , Grosser Kurfürst ( or Großer Kurfürst ) , and the newly commissioned Bayern . The High Seas Fleet , including Nassau , would trail behind and provide cover . However , at 06 : 00 on 19 August , Westfalen was torpedoed by the British submarine HMS E23 , some 55 nautical miles ( 102 km ; 63 mi ) north of Terschelling ; the ship remained afloat and was detached to return to port . The British were aware of the German plans and sortied the Grand Fleet to meet them . By 14 : 35 , Admiral Scheer had been warned of the Grand Fleet 's approach and , unwilling to engage the whole of the Grand Fleet just 11 weeks after the close call at Jutland , turned his forces around and retreated to German ports .

Another sortie into the North Sea followed on 19 ? 20 October . On 21 December , Nassau ran aground in the mouth of the Elbe . She was able to free herself , however , and repairs were effected in Hamburg at the Reiherstieg Dockyard until 1 February 1917 . The ship was part of the force that steamed to Norway to intercept a heavily escorted British convoy on 23 ? 25 April , though the operation was canceled when the battlecruiser Moltke suffered mechanical damage and had to be towed back to port . Nassau , Ostfriesland , and Thüringen were formed into a special unit for Operation Schlußstein , a planned occupation of St. Petersburg . On 8 August , Nassau took on some 250 soldiers in Wilhelmshaven and then departed for the Baltic . 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 .

Nassau 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 their base in Wilhelmshaven to engage the British Grand Fleet ; Scheer ? by now the Grand Admiral ( Großadmiral ) 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 29 October , sailors on Thüringen and then on several other battleships mutinied . The unrest ultimately forced Hipper and Scheer to cancel the operation .

= = = Fate = = =

Following the German collapse in November 1918 , a significant portion of the High Seas Fleet was interned in Scapa Flow . Nassau and her three sisters were not among the ships listed for internment , so they remained at German ports . During this period , from November to December , Hermann Bauer served as the ship 's commander . On 21 June 1919 , Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , under the mistaken impression that the Armistice would expire at noon that day , ordered his ships be scuttled to prevent their seizure by the British . As a result , the four Nassau @-@ class

ships were ceded to the various Allied powers as replacements for the ships that had been sunk . Nassau was awarded to Japan on 7 April 1920 , though the Japanese had no need for the ship . They therefore sold her in June 1920 to British ship @-@ breakers , who scrapped the ship in Dordrecht .