

= SMS Oldenburg =

SMS Oldenburg was the fourth vessel of the Helgoland class of battleships of the Imperial German Navy . Oldenburg '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 May 1912 . 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 ) . Oldenburg 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 , Ostfriesland , and Thüringen , Oldenburg participated in all of the major fleet operations of World War I in the North Sea against the British Grand Fleet , including the Battle of Jutland on 31 May and 1 June 1916 , the largest naval battle of the war . The ship also saw action in the Baltic Sea against the Imperial Russian Navy . She was present during the unsuccessful first incursion into the Gulf of Riga in August 1915 , though she saw no combat during the operation .

After the German collapse in November 1918 , most of the High Seas Fleet was interned and then scuttled in Scapa Flow during the peace negotiations . The four Helgoland @- @ class ships were allowed to remain in Germany but eventually ceded to the victorious Allied powers as war reparations ; Oldenburg was given to Japan , which sold the vessel to a British ship @- @ breaking firm in 1920 . She was broken up for scrap in Dordrecht in 1921 .

= = Construction = =

Oldenburg was ordered by the German Imperial Navy ( Kaiserliche Marine ) under the provisional name Ersatz Frithjof , as a replacement for the old coastal defense ship Frithjof . The contract for the ship was awarded to the Schichau @- @ Werke shipyard in Danzig under construction number 828 . Her three sisters had been ordered for 1908 , but because of budget constraints , Oldenburg 's order was delayed to 1909 . Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz , the State Secretary of the Navy , gave the contract to Schichau before the 1909 budget had been approved , and the shipbuilder began stockpiling materials to build the ship . This gave the impression that Germany was building more battleships than publicly admitted , which prompted a naval scare in Britain . The British public demanded " we want eight [ new battleships ] and we won 't wait " , and in the span of a year eight new battleships had been laid down in Britain , a major escalation in the international naval arms race . Work began on 1 March 1909 with the laying of her keel , and the ship was launched a little more than a year later on 30 June 1910 . Duchess Sophia Charlotte of Oldenburg christened her , and Friedrich August , the Grand Duke of Oldenburg , gave the speech . After launching , the incomplete ship was transferred to Kiel for fitting @- @ out , including completion of the superstructure and the installation of armament , until August 1911 . Named for the Duchy of Oldenburg in northern Germany , the ship was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 1 May 1912 , just over three years after work commenced , at a cost of 45 @. @ 801 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 vertical triple expansion steam engines and fifteen water @- @ tube boilers . The engines were rated at 28 @, @ 000 metric horsepower ( 27 @, @ 617 ihp ; 20 @, @ 594 kW ) and were capable of producing a top speed of 20 @. @ 8 knots ( 38 @. @ 5 km / h ; 23 @. @ 9 mph ) . Oldenburg stored up to 3 @, @ 200 metric tons ( 3 @, @ 100 long tons ) of coal , allowing 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 burn oil , which would be sprayed on the coal to increase its burn rate ; the ship could carry up to 197 metric tons ( 194 long tons ) . Oldenburg had a crew of 42 officers and 1 @, @ 027 enlisted men .

Oldenburg was armed with a main battery of twelve 30 @. @ 5 cm ( 12 @. @ 0 in ) 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 ; later , an additional two 8 @. @ 8 cm guns were replaced with anti @-@ aircraft guns . This brought the total number of 8 @. @ 8 cm SK L / 45 guns to ten , and the number of 8 @. @ 8 cm anti @-@ aircraft guns to four . Oldenburg was also armed with six 50 cm ( 20 in ) submerged torpedo tubes ; one was in the bow , one in the stern , and two on each broadside . She was protected a main belt that was 300 mm ( 12 in ) thick , with the same thickness of armor on her main battery turrets . She had a deck that was 63 @. @ 5 mm ( 2 @. @ 50 in ) thick .

= = Service history = =

After her commissioning on 1 May 1912 , Oldenburg conducted sea trials in the Baltic . On 17 July , she was assigned to the I Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet , alongside her sisters . After individual ship training exercises , she joined I Squadron maneuvers and then fleet maneuvers in November . The annual summer cruise in July and August , which typically went to Norway , was interrupted by the Agadir Crisis . As a result , the cruise only went into the Baltic , in order to keep the fleet closer to Germany . Oldenburg 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 peace @-@ time training .

The annual summer cruise to Norway began on 14 July 1914 , despite the rising international tensions following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria . During the last peacetime cruise of the Imperial Navy , the fleet conducted drills in the Skagerrak before proceeding to the Norwegian fjords on 25 July . The following day the fleet began to steam back to Germany due to Austria @-@ Hungary 's ultimatum to Serbia . On 27 July , the entire fleet assembled off Cape Skudenenes before returning to port , where they 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 Oldenburg and the rest of I Squadron were back in Wilhelmshaven .

= = = World War I = = =

Oldenburg was present during the first sortie by 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 in order 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 eight pre @-@ dreadnoughts and twelve dreadnoughts , including Oldenburg and her three sisters , came to within 10 nmi ( 19 km ; 12 mi ) of an isolated squadron of six British battleships . Skirmishes between the rival destroyer screens in the darkness convinced von Ingenohl that he was faced with the entire Grand Fleet , so von Ingenohl broke off the engagement and turned the battle fleet back toward Germany , under orders from Kaiser Wilhelm II to avoid risking the fleet unnecessarily .

The Battle of Dogger Bank , in which Vice Admiral David Beatty 's 1st and 2nd Battlecruiser Squadrons ambushed the I Scouting Group battlecruisers , occurred on 24 January 1915 . Oldenburg and the rest of I Squadron were 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 they 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 an ammunition fire . As a result , Kaiser Wilhelm II removed von Ingenohl from his post and replaced him with Admiral Hugo von Pohl on 2 February .

From 22 February to 13 March 1915 , I Squadron was in the Baltic for unit training . 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 . The fleet was largely inactive until 4 August , when I Squadron returned to the Baltic for another round of training maneuvers . From there , 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 . Oldenburg and the majority of the other big ships of the High Seas Fleet remained outside the Gulf for the entirety of the operation , to prevent possible intervention by the Russian fleet outside the Gulf . 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 . Weakened by hepatic cancer and unable to carry out his duties , he was replaced by 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 his next operation , Oldenburg 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 , they 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 the retreat of the I Scouting Group . 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 = = = =

Oldenburg 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 , Oldenburg was the fourth ship in the I Division of I Squadron and the twelfth ship in the line , directly astern of her sister ship Helgoland and ahead of Posen . At the center of the German line was I Squadron , 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 .

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 the 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 .

At first , Oldenburg was too far away to effectively engage any British ships . Shortly before 18 : 30 , the German line came across the British destroyers Nestor and Nomad , which had been disabled

earlier in the engagement . Naval historian John Campbell states that " Thüringen and Helgoland , and possibly Oldenburg and Posen , fired turret guns " , as well as secondary weapons , at Nestor . The ship was destroyed by several large explosions and sank at 18 : 35 ; most of her crew was rescued by German torpedo boats . Shortly after 19 : 15 , the British dreadnought Warspite came into range ; she was the first major warship Oldenburg could engage . She fired her 30 @. @ 5 cm guns briefly during the 180 @- @ degree turn ordered by Scheer to disengage from the British fleet . Oldenburg claimed to have straddled Warspite once , though her gunners had difficulty discerning the British battleship in the growing haze .

At around 23 : 30 , the German fleet reorganized into the night cruising formation . Oldenburg was now the fifth ship , stationed toward the front of the 24 @- @ ship line . At around 01 : 10 , the German line encountered the six destroyers of the British 4th Destroyer Flotilla . Oldenburg fired on several of the destroyers at close range , including Fortune and Porpoise . Fortune scored a single hit on Oldenburg with her 4 @- @ inch guns . The shell struck a forward searchlight above the bridge and caused serious casualties . The officer responsible for directing the 8 @. @ 8 cm guns was killed , along with three other officers on the bridge . The helmsman was incapacitated and the ship 's commander , Captain Höpfner , was wounded . Oldenburg was briefly steaming unsteered , and was in danger of ramming Posen and Helgoland until Captain Höpfner managed to reach the wheel and take control of the ship . Oldenburg and several other battleships then took Ardent under fire ; the destroyer was reduced to a flaming wreck . In the darkness , Fortune and Ardent were sunk and the remaining four ships were scattered .

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 . A few hours later , the fleet arrived in the Jade ; Thüringen , Helgoland , Nassau , and Westfalen took up defensive positions in the outer roadstead and Kaiser , Kaiserin , Prinzregent Luitpold , and Kronprinz anchored just outside the entrance locks to Wilhelmshaven . Oldenburg and the other seven remaining dreadnoughts entered port , where those that were still in fighting condition restocked ammunition and fuel . In the course of the battle , Oldenburg fired fifty @- @ three 30 @. @ 5 cm , eighty @- @ eight 15 cm , and thirty 8 @. @ 8 cm shells . The hit from Fortune was the only damage the ship incurred from enemy action , though a misfire occurred in the Number 4 port @- @ side 15 cm gun . In total , Oldenburg 's crew suffered eight men killed and fourteen wounded .

== == Subsequent operations == ==

After Jutland , Oldenburg was assigned to guard duties in the German Bight . The damage incurred at Jutland was quickly repaired in Wilhelmshaven from 30 June to 15 July . On 18 August , Admiral Scheer attempted a repeat of the 31 May operation . Moltke and Von der Tann , the two serviceable German battlecruisers , were supported by three dreadnoughts in a mission to bombard the coastal town of Sunderland in an attempt to draw out and destroy Beatty 's battlecruisers . The rest of the fleet , including Oldenburg , would trail behind and provide cover . On the approach to the English coast , Scheer turned north and aborted the bombardment after receiving a false report from a zeppelin about a British unit in the area . 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 , Oldenburg and the rest of I Squadron covered an advance conducted by the II Führer der Torpedoboote ( Leader of Torpedo Boats ) to the Terschelling Bank . Scheer conducted another fleet operation on 18 ? 20 October in the direction of the Dogger Bank , though again they failed to find British forces . For the majority of 1917 , Oldenburg 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 , Oldenburg 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 29 October . On 2 November the operation was completed and Oldenburg and her sisters began the voyage back to the North Sea . A final abortive fleet sortie took place on 23 ? 24 April 1918 . Scheer had intended to intercept a British convoy to Norway and destroy the escorting battleships . During the operation , the battlecruiser Moltke

suffered mechanical problems and had to be towed back to port . Oldenburg took the ship in tow , and the main body of the fleet turned back to Germany while Hipper searched in vain for the convoy . German intelligence had incorrectly placed the date for the scheduled convoy on 24 April , and after several hours of fruitless steaming , Hipper turned for port as well . By 18 : 37 , the fleet was outside the Jade and Moltke had been repaired enough to allow her to enter port under her own power .

= = = Fate = = =

Oldenburg 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 . Informed of the situation , the Kaiser stated " I no longer have a navy " .

Following the capitulation of Germany in November 1918 , the most modern capital ships of the High Seas Fleet , under the command of Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , were interned in the British naval base in Scapa Flow , but Oldenburg , commanded by Hermann Bauer , and the rest of I Squadron remained in Germany . On the morning of 21 June 1919 , the British fleet left Scapa Flow to conduct training maneuvers , and in their absence Reuter ordered the crews to scuttle the ten battleships and five battlecruisers interned at Scapa Flow . Oldenburg was stricken from the naval register on 5 November 1919 and placed out of commission . The fate of the eight remaining German battleships was determined in the Treaty of Versailles , which stated that the ships were to be disarmed and surrendered to the governments of the principal Allied powers . She was surrendered to Japan as " M " on 13 May 1920 . The Japanese Navy had no need for the ship ; she was sold to a British ship @-@ breaking firm in June 1920 and broken up for scrap the following year in Dordrecht .