

= SMS Wörth =

SMS Wörth (" His Majesty 's Ship Wörth ") was one of four German pre-dreadnought battleships of the Brandenburg class , built in the early 1890s . The class also included Brandenburg , Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm , and Weissenburg . The ships were the first ocean-going battleships built by the Kaiserliche Marine (Imperial Navy) . Wörth was laid down at the Germaniawerft dockyard in Kiel in May 1890 . The ship was launched on 6 August 1892 and commissioned into the fleet on 31 October 1893 . Wörth and her three sisters were the only battleships of their time to carry six heavy guns rather than four . She was named for the Battle of Wörth fought during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 .

Wörth served in the German fleet for the first decade of her career , participating in the normal peacetime routine of training cruises and exercises . She took part in the German naval expedition to China in 1900 to suppress the Boxer Rebellion , though by the time the fleet arrived the siege of Peking had already been lifted , and Wörth saw little direct action in China . She was placed in reserve in 1906 as newer , more powerful vessels had supplanted the Brandenburg class as front-line battleships . Obsolete by the start of World War I , Wörth and Brandenburg served in a limited capacity in the Imperial German Navy as coastal defense ships for the first two years of the war , though they did not see action . By 1916 , Wörth was reduced to a barracks ship , a role in which she served until the end of hostilities . Despite plans to convert her into a freighter after the war , Wörth was scrapped in the port of Danzig in 1919 .

= = Design = =

Wörth was 115 m (379 ft 7 in) long , with a beam of 19 m (64 ft 0 in) and a draft of 7 m (24 ft 11 in) . She displaced 10,013 t (9,855 long tons) as designed , and up to 10,670 t (10,500 long tons) at full combat load . The ship was equipped with two sets of 3-cylinder vertical triple expansion steam engines that produced 10,089 ihp (7,452 kW) and a top speed of 16 knots (31 km / h ; 19 mph) on trials ; steam was provided by twelve coal-fired , transverse cylindrical water-tube boilers . She had a maximum range of 4,300 nautical miles (8,000 km ; 4,900 mi) at a cruising speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . Her crew numbered 38 officers and 530 enlisted men .

Wörth was armed with a main battery of six 28 cm (11 in) guns of two types . The forward and rear turret guns were 40-calibers long , while the amidships guns were only 35-calibers ; this was necessary to allow them to train to either side of the ship . Her secondary armament initially consisted of seven 10.5 cm (4.1 in) guns , though an additional gun was added during the modernization in 1901 . She also carried eight 8.8 cm (3.45 in) guns and six 45 cm (17.7 in) torpedo tubes . The ship was protected with compound armor . Her main belt armor was 400 millimeters (15.7 in) thick in the central section that protected the ammunition magazines and machinery spaces . The deck was 60 mm (2.4 in) thick . The main battery barbettes were protected with 300 mm (11.8 in) thick armor .

= = Service history = =

= = = Construction to 1895 = = =

Wörth was ordered as battleship B , and was laid down at Germaniawerft in Kiel on 3 March 1890 . Initial work on the ship proceeded at the slowest pace of all four vessels in the class ; her hull was not launched until 6 August 1892 , more than eight months after the other three ships . Princess Viktoria , the sister of Kaiser Wilhelm II , christened the ship . Fitting-out work proceeded quickly , and she was commissioned on 31 October 1893 , the first ship of the class to enter active duty . Extensive sea trials followed her commissioning and lasted until April 1894 . During her trials , she was briefly assigned to the maneuver squadron of the Heimatflotte (Home Fleet) to replace her

sister Brandenburg , which was damaged by a boiler pipe explosion . On 1 August 1894 , Wörth was assigned as the flagship of the German fleet for the annual autumn maneuvers , under the command of Admiral Max von der Goltz . Goltz came aboard the new battleship on 19 August with his staff , which included then @-@ Kapitän zur See (Captain at Sea) Alfred von Tirpitz . Toward the end of the maneuvers , which took place in both the North and Baltic Seas , Kaiser Wilhelm II came aboard Wörth and reviewed a fleet parade on 21 September .

During this period , Wörth was commanded by Prince Heinrich , the younger brother of Wilhelm II ; the senior watch officer aboard the ship in 1894 was Franz von Hipper , who went on to command the German battlecruiser squadron during World War I and later the entire High Seas Fleet . On 1 November , Czar Alexander III of Russia died ; Wilhelm II initially planned to send his brother to St. Petersburg to represent Germany at the funeral aboard his flagship . But General Bernhard Franz Wilhelm von Werder suggested that sending a warship named for the Battle of Wörth of the still @-@ recent Franco @-@ Prussian War of 1870 ? 71 would antagonize the French delegation and would be unwise , given the recently signed Franco @-@ Russian Alliance . Wilhelm II agreed , and so Prince Heinrich traveled to the funeral by train . After her sister Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm entered service , she replaced Wörth as the fleet flagship . Wörth was thereafter assigned to the I Division of the I Squadron , in turn replacing the old ironclad Deutschland .

Wörth and the rest of the squadron attended ceremonies for the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal at Kiel on 3 December 1894 . The squadron subsequently began a winter training cruise in the Baltic Sea ; this was the first such cruise by the German fleet . In previous years , the bulk of the fleet was deactivated for the winter months . The I Division anchored in Stockholm from 7 to 11 December , during the 300th anniversary of the birth of Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus . Further exercises were conducted in the Baltic before the ships had to put into their home ports for repairs . From 19 December to 27 March 1895 , Wörth returned to her old duty as fleet flagship while Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm was in dock for repairs . The ship was occupied with individual and divisional training in early 1895 . In May , more fleet maneuvers were carried out in the western Baltic , concluding with a visit by the fleet to Kirkwall in Orkney . The squadron returned to Kiel in early June , where preparations were underway for the opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal . Tactical exercises were carried out in Kiel Bay in the presence of foreign delegations to the opening ceremony .

On 1 July , the German fleet began a major cruise into the Atlantic ; on the return voyage in early August , the fleet stopped at the Isle of Wight for the Cowes Regatta . While there on 6 August , Wilhelm II held a remembrance ceremony for the 25th anniversary of Wörth 's namesake battle . This was sharply criticized in the British press . The fleet returned to Wilhelmshaven on 10 August and began preparations for the autumn maneuvers that would begin later that month . The first exercises began in the Helgoland Bight on 25 August . The fleet then steamed through the Skagerrak to the Baltic ; heavy storms caused significant damage to many of the ships and the torpedo boat S 41 capsized and sank in the storms ? only three men were saved . The fleet stayed briefly in Kiel before resuming maneuvers , including live @-@ fire exercises , in the Kattegat and the Great Belt . The main maneuvers began on 7 September with a mock attack from Kiel toward the eastern Baltic . Subsequent maneuvers took place off the coast of Pomerania and in Danzig Bay . A fleet review for Wilhelm II off Jershöft concluded the maneuvers on 14 September .

== = 1896 ? 1900 == =

The year 1896 followed much the same pattern as the previous year . Individual ship training was conducted though April , followed by squadron training in the North Sea in late April and early May . This included a visit to the Dutch ports of Vlissingen and Nieuwediep . Additional maneuvers , which lasted from the end of May to the end of July , took the squadron further north in the North Sea , frequently into Norwegian waters . The ships visited Bergen from 11 to 18 May . During the maneuvers , Wilhelm II and the Chinese viceroy Li Hongzhang observed a fleet review off Kiel . On 9 August , the training fleet assembled in Wilhelmshaven for the annual autumn fleet training . The following month , Czar Nicholas II of Russia visited the fleet in Kiel , boarding Wörth on 8 September

. The ship won the Kaiser 's Schießpreis (Shooting Prize) for excellent gunnery in the I Squadron during 1896 .

Wörth and the rest of the fleet operated under the normal routine of individual and unit training in the first half of 1897 . The ship represented Germany during the Fleet Review for Queen Victoria 's Diamond Jubilee in June 1897 . The typical routine was interrupted in early August when Wilhelm II and Augusta went to visit the Russian imperial court at Kronstadt ; both divisions of the I Squadron were sent to accompany the Kaiser . They returned to Neufahrwasser in Danzig on 15 August , where the rest of the fleet joined them for the annual autumn maneuvers . The maneuvers were completed by 22 September in Wilhelmshaven . In early December , the I Division conducted maneuvers in the Kattegat and the Skagerrak , though they were cut short due to shortages in officers and men .

The fleet followed the normal routine of individual and fleet training in 1898 without incident , though a voyage to the British Isles was also included . The fleet stopped in Queenstown , Greenock , and Kirkwall . The fleet assembled in Kiel on 14 August for the annual autumn exercises . The maneuvers included a mock blockade of the coast of Mecklenburg and a pitched battle with an " Eastern Fleet " in the Danzig Bay . While steaming back to Kiel , a severe storm hit the fleet , causing significant damage to many ships and sinking the torpedo boat S 58 . The fleet then transited the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal and continued maneuvers in the North Sea . Training finished on 17 September in Wilhelmshaven . In December , the I Division conducted artillery and torpedo training in Eckernförde Bay , followed by divisional training in the Kattegat and Skagerrak . During these maneuvers , the division visited Kungälv , Sweden , from 9 to 13 December . After returning to Kiel , the ships of the I Division went into dock for their winter repairs .

On 25 November 1899 , Wörth was conducting gunnery training in Eckernförde Bay when she struck a rock . It tore a 22 ft (6 @.@ 7 m) wide hole in the hull , flooding three of her watertight compartments . The ship was sent to Wilhelmshaven for repair work . Before repairs could be begun , about 500 t (490 long tons) of coal had to be unloaded to lighten the ship . Temporary steel plates were riveted to cover the hole on the starboard side , while the hull plates on the port side had to be re @-@ riveted . The work lasted from December 1899 until February 1900 ; she was therefore unavailable for the normal winter cruise of the I Squadron .

= = = Boxer Rebellion = = =

During the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 , Chinese nationalists laid siege to the foreign embassies in Peking and murdered Baron Clemens von Ketteler , the German minister . The widespread violence against Westerners in China led to an alliance between Germany and seven other Great Powers : the United Kingdom , Italy , Russia , Austria @-@ Hungary , the United States , France , and Japan . Those soldiers who were in China at the time were too few in number to defeat the Boxers ; in Peking there was a force of slightly more than 400 officers and infantry from the armies of the eight European powers . At the time , the primary German military force in China was the East Asia Squadron , which consisted of the protected cruisers Kaiserin Augusta , Hansa , and Hertha , the small cruisers Irene and Gefion , and the gunboats Jaguar and Iltis . There was also a German 500 @-@ man detachment in Taku ; combined with the other nations ' units the force numbered some 2 @,@ 100 men . Led by the British Admiral Edward Seymour , these men attempted to reach Peking but were forced to stop in Tientsin due to heavy resistance . As a result , the Kaiser determined an expeditionary force would be sent to China to reinforce the East Asia Squadron . The expedition would include Wörth and her three sisters , six cruisers , ten freighters , three torpedo boats , and six regiments of marines , under the command of Generalfeldmarschall (General Field Marshal) Alfred von Waldersee .

On 7 July , Konteradmiral Richard von Geißler , the expeditionary force commander , reported that his ships were ready for the operation , and they left two days later . The four battleships and the aviso Hela transited the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal and stopped in Wilhelmshaven to rendezvous with the rest of the expeditionary force . On 11 July , the force steamed out of the Jade Bight , bound for China . They stopped to coal at Gibraltar on 17 ? 18 July and passed through the Suez Canal on 26

? 27 July . More coal was taken on at Perim in the Red Sea , and on 2 August the fleet entered the Indian Ocean . On 10 August , the ships reached Colombo , Ceylon , and on 14 August they passed through the Strait of Malacca . They arrived in Singapore on 18 August and departed five days later , reaching Hong Kong on 28 August . Two days later , the expeditionary force stopped in the outer roadstead at Wusong , downriver from Shanghai . From there , Wörth was detached to cover the disembarkation of the German expeditionary corps outside the Taku Forts .

By the time the German fleet had arrived , the siege of Peking had already been lifted by forces from other members of the Eight @-@ Nation Alliance that had formed to deal with the Boxers . Wörth left Taku to coal at Tsingtau , the German naval base in China , and on 25 October returned to Wusong via Yantai . There , she joined the blockade of the Yangtze River . Since the situation had calmed , the four battleships were sent to Hong Kong or Nagasaki , Japan , in late 1900 and early 1901 for overhauls ; Wörth went to Nagasaki from 30 November to the end of December . She returned to Wusong on 27 December , where she remained until 18 February 1901 , when she moved to Tsingtau for division exercises and gunnery drills . Wörth and the rest of the fleet then stayed in Shanghai in April and May .

On 26 May , the German high command recalled the expeditionary force to Germany . The fleet took on supplies in Shanghai and departed Chinese waters on 1 June . The ships stopped in Singapore from 10 to 15 June and took on coal before proceeding to Colombo , where they stayed from 22 to 26 June . Steaming against the monsoons forced the fleet to stop in Mahé , Seychelles , to take on more coal . The ships then stopped for a day each to take on coal in Aden and Port Said . On 1 August they reached Cadiz , and then met with the I Division and steamed back to Germany together . They separated after reaching Helgoland , and on 11 August , after reaching the Jade roadstead , the ships of the expeditionary force were visited by Admiral von Koester , who was now the Inspector General of the Navy . The following day the expeditionary fleet was dissolved . In the end , the operation cost the German government more than 100 million marks .

= = = 1901 ? 1914 = = =

Following her return from China , Wörth was taken into the drydocks at the Kaiserliche Werft (Imperial Dockyard) in Wilhelmshaven for an overhaul that lasted from 14 to 17 August . She then joined the fleet for autumn maneuvers . In the meantime , Wörth and her sisters , which had been assigned to the I Division before their expedition to China , had been transferred to the II Division of the I Squadron following their return . On 24 November , Wörth was decommissioned for a major reconstruction at the Kaiserliche Werft in Wilhelmshaven ; she was the first member of her class to be modernized . During the modernization , a second conning tower was added in the aft superstructure , along with a gangway . Wörth and the other ships had their boilers replaced with newer models , and also had their superstructure amidships reduced . The work lasted until December 1903 .

After her modernization , Wörth returned to service on 27 September 1904 assigned to the II Squadron , where she replaced the old coastal defense ship Beowulf . She served briefly as the flagship of Konteradmiral Alfred Breusing from September until December , when she was replaced in that role by Braunschweig . On 16 February 1905 , Wörth ran aground in the Kieler Förde . She was pulled free two days later after enough coal and ammunition were thrown overboard to lighten the ship . She then steamed into Kiel and entered drydock , where her bottom was found to be slightly dented . A second accident occurred on 5 July , when the torpedo boat S 124 ran across Wörth 's bow . The battleship could not turn in time and rammed the torpedo boat , damaging it severely . One of S 124 's boiler rooms flooded and the rush of steam from the boilers badly burned three men .

On 4 July 1906 , Wörth was transferred to the Reserve Formation of the North Sea . She initially served as the flagship of the unit , but on 1 October she was replaced by Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm . She was then decommissioned and her crew reduced to only a maintenance staff . Over the next eight years , she was reactivated only twice , from 2 August to 13 September in 1910 and from 31 July to 15 September the following year ; both periods were during the annual autumn maneuvers .

She served with the III Squadron in both exercises , and was the flagship of the second command admiral for the squadron , Konteradmiral Heinrich Sass . She returned to reserve status on 15 September , and a month later was docked in the Kaiserliche Werft in Kiel to maintain her for future service .

= = = World War I = = =

On 5 September 1914 , shortly after the outbreak of World War I , Wörth was assigned to the V Battle Squadron under the command of Vizeadmiral (Vice Admiral) Max von Grapow . The squadron was initially used for coastal defense in the North Sea . From 19 to 26 September , Wörth and the rest of the V Squadron went on a sortie into the eastern Baltic but encountered no Russian forces . The ships subsequently returned to the North Sea and resumed their guard duties . Wörth was briefly transferred to the VI Battle Squadron from 16 January to 25 February 1915 to strengthen the defenses of the Jade Bight and the mouth of the Weser . On 5 March , she was moved to Kiel , where her crew was reduced . After a short period of rest , her crew was restored and she and Brandenburg were transferred to Libau . She served as the flagship of Konteradmiral Alfred Begas , the new commander of the V Squadron . In Libau , they were assigned as guard ships in the recently conquered Russian harbor .

The two old battleships were initially moored outside the harbor while it was cleared of wrecks . During this period , the ships prepared for an expected attack by the new Russian Gangut @-@ class battleships , but the assault did not materialize . On 12 July , the crews of both ships were reduced again . On 15 January 1916 , the V Squadron was disbanded and Begas removed his flag from Wörth . She left Libau on 7 March and arrived in Neufahrwasser the following day . On 10 March she was decommissioned in Danzig to free her crew and guns for other uses . Some of her main battery guns were converted into " Kurfürst " railroad guns , though they were not ready for service until early 1918 . Wörth herself was employed as a barracks ship in Danzig until the end of the war in November 1918 . Both Wörth and Brandenburg were struck from the naval register on 13 May 1919 and sold for scrapping . The two ships were purchased by Norddeutsche Tiefbaugesellschaft ; Wörth was initially to be rebuilt into a freighter , but the planned reconstruction did not eventuate . Instead , Wörth was broken up for scrap in Danzig .