

= SMS Zähringen =

SMS Zähringen (" His Majesty 's Ship Zähringen ") was third ship of the Wittelsbach class of pre-dreadnought battleships of the German Imperial Navy . Laid down in 1899 at the Germaniawerft shipyard in Kiel , she was launched on 12 June 1901 and commissioned on 25 October 1902 . Her sisters were Wittelsbach , Wettin , Schwaben and Mecklenburg ; they were the first capital ships built under the Navy Law of 1898 , brought about by Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz .

Zähringen saw active duty in the I Squadron of the German fleet for the majority of her career . The ship was rapidly superseded by new " all-big-gun " warships , however , and as a result served for less than eight years before being decommissioned on 21 September 1910 . After the start of World War I in August 1914 , Zähringen was brought back to active duty in the IV Battle Squadron . The ship saw limited duty in the Baltic Sea against Russian forces , though the threat from British submarines forced the ship to withdraw by 1916 .

Zähringen was converted into a target ship in 1917 for the remainder of the war . In the mid-1920s , Zähringen was heavily reconstructed and equipped for use as a radio-controlled target ship . She served in this capacity until 1944 , when she was sunk in Gotenhafen by British bombers during World War II . The retreating Germans raised the ship and moved it to the harbor mouth where they scuttled it to block the port . Zähringen was broken up in situ in 1949 ? 50 .

= = Description = =

Zähringen was 126 @ 8 m (416 ft 0 in) long overall and had a beam of 22 @ 8 m (74 ft 10 in) and a draft of 7 @ 9.5 m (26 ft 1 in) forward . The ship was powered by three 3 @-cylinder vertical triple expansion engines that drove three screws . Steam was provided by six naval and six cylindrical coal @-fired boilers . Zähringen 's powerplant was rated at 14 @, 000 metric horsepower (13 @, 808 ihp ; 10 @, 297 kW) , which generated a top speed of 18 knots (33 km / h ; 21 mph) . She had a crew of 30 officers and 650 enlisted men .

Zähringen 's armament consisted of a main battery of four 24 cm (9 @ 4 in) SK L / 40 guns in twin gun turrets , one fore and one aft of the central superstructure . Her secondary armament consisted of eighteen 15 cm (5 @ 9 inch) SK L / 40 guns and twelve 8 @ 8 cm (3 @ 4.5 in) SK L / 30 quick @-firing guns . The armament suite was rounded out with six 45 cm (18 in) torpedo tubes , all submerged in the hull ; one was in the bow , one in the stern , and the other four were on the broadside . Her armored belt was 225 millimeters (8 @ 9 in) thick in the central portion that protected her magazines and machinery spaces , and the deck was 50 mm (2 @ 0 in) thick . The main battery turrets had 250 mm (9 @ 8 in) of armor plating .

= = Service history = =

Zähringen 's keel was laid on 21 November 1899 , at Friedrich Krupp 's Germaniawerft dockyard in Kiel . She was ordered under the contract name " E " , as a new unit for the fleet . The Wittelsbach class was the first battleship class built under the terms of the Navy Law of 1898 , the chief proponent of which was Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz . Zähringen was launched on 12 June 1901 , with her launching speech given by Frederick I , Grand Duke of Baden and head of the House of Zähringen ; his wife , Grand Duchess Louise , christened the ship . Zähringen was commissioned on 25 October 1902 , and began her sea trials , which lasted until 10 February 1903 . She thereafter replaced the battleship Brandenburg in the I Squadron of the Active Fleet .

In 1905 the German fleet was reorganized into two squadrons of battleships . Zähringen was assigned to the I Division of I Squadron , alongside her sisters Wettin and Wittelsbach . The German fleet at that time consisted of another three @-ship division in the I Squadron and 2 three @-ship divisions in the II Squadron . This was supported by a reconnaissance division , composed of two armored cruisers and six protected cruisers .

The Deutschland @-class battleships ? the most powerful battleships yet built in Germany ? were beginning to enter service by 1907 . This provided the Navy with enough ships to form two full

battle squadrons of eight ships each . The fleet was then renamed the Hochseeflotte (High Seas Fleet) . On 21 September 1910 , Zähringen was decommissioned and her crew was transferred to the new dreadnought Rheinland , which had recently been completed . In 1912 , Zähringen and her sisters were recommissioned as the III Squadron of the High Seas Fleet to augment the forces available for the annual summer fleet maneuvers in the North Sea . The exercises began on 2 September and were conducted in the area between Wilhelmshaven , Helgoland , and Cuxhaven . While on maneuvers southwest of Helgoland on 14 September 1912 , Zähringen accidentally rammed the torpedo boat G171 . The torpedo boat was cut in half and quickly sank ; six men drowned and a seventh died after being pulled from the sea .

= = = World War I = = =

By 1914 , Zähringen and her sisters were removed from active service and placed in the reserve squadron . However , after the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 , Zähringen and the rest of her class were mobilized to serve in the IV Battle Squadron , under the command of Vice Admiral Ehrhard Schmidt . Starting on 3 September , the IV Squadron , assisted by the armored cruiser Blücher , conducted a sweep into the Baltic . The operation lasted until 9 September and failed to bring Russian naval units to battle . In May 1915 , IV Squadron , including Zähringen , was transferred to support the German Army in the Baltic Sea area . Zähringen and her sisters were then based in Kiel .

On 6 May , the IV Squadron ships were tasked with providing support to the assault on Libau . Zähringen and the other ships stood off Gotland in order to intercept any Russian cruisers that might try to intervene in the landings , which the Russians did not attempt . On 10 May , after the invasion force had entered Libau , the British submarines HMS E1 and HMS E9 spotted the IV Squadron , but were too far away to make an attack . Zähringen and her sisters were not included in the German fleet that assaulted the Gulf of Riga in August 1915 , due to the scarcity of escorts . The increasingly active British submarines forced the Germans to employ more destroyers to protect the capital ships .

By 1916 , the increasing threat from British submarines in the Baltic convinced the German navy to withdraw the elderly Wittelsbach @-@ class ships from active service . Zähringen was initially used as a training ship in Kiel . In 1917 , the ship was used to train stokers but then became a target ship .

= = = Reichsmarine and Kriegsmarine = = =

As of April 1919 , Zähringen lay in the harbor in Danzig ; the ship had been decommissioned but retained its armament . According to Article 181 of the Treaty of Versailles , Zähringen and her sisters were to be demilitarized . This would permit the newly reorganized Reichsmarine to retain the vessels for auxiliary purposes . Zähringen was therefore stricken from the navy list on 11 March 1920 and disarmed . She was then used as a hulk in Wilhelmshaven until 1926 .

In 1927 ? 28 , the Reichsmarine rebuilt the ship as a radio @-@ controlled target vessel . The ship had its engine system overhauled ; the three @-@ shaft arrangement was replaced by a pair of 3 @-@ cylinder , vertical triple expansion engines . These were supplied with steam by two naval oil @-@ fired , water @-@ tube boilers . The system was designed to be operated remotely via wireless telegraph . The new propulsion system provided a top speed of 13 @.@ 5 knots (25 @.@ 0 km / h ; 15 @.@ 5 mph) . The superstructure was also cut down and the hull was filled with cork . When the conversion was completed , Zähringen displaced 11 @,@ 800 metric tons (11 @,@ 600 long tons) . While not in use as a target , the ship was manned by a crew of 67 . She served as a target vessel for the Reichsmarine and then the Kriegsmarine , together with the old battleship Hessen .

On 18 December 1944 , the old ship was hit by bombs during an air raid on Gotenhafen and sank in shallow water . She was temporarily refloated and towed to the harbor entrance , where she was scuttled to block the port on 26 March 1945 . The wreck was broken up in situ starting in 1949 ; work

lasted until 1950 .