

= SS Kommandøren =

SS Kommandøren was a steel @-@ hulled passenger / cargo steamship built in Norway in 1891 . She served as a communications link between the regional capital of Western Norway , Bergen , and the various communities of Sogn og Fjordane county .

Following the 9 April 1940 German invasion of Norway , she was requisitioned by the Norwegian authorities and carried troops for the Norwegian war effort until the forces in Western Norway ceased fighting on 2 May 1940 .

After a brief stint in German service , she returned to her civilian duties later in 1940 , and was accidentally torpedoed and sunk by a German E @-@ boat in Bergen on 29 March 1945 .

= = Construction and characteristics = =

Kommandøren was one of four passenger / cargo steamships built for Nordre Bergenhus Amt's Dampskibe at Norwegian shipyards around the turn of the 20th century . The four ships were constructed to supplement four smaller vessels built decades earlier at British shipyards . In addition to Kommandøren , which was seen as the flagship of the company 's fleet , Lærdal , Balder and Stavenes were built between 1876 and 1904 . The company sailed on cargo / passenger routes in Western Norway . Kommandøren was the largest of the new @-@ builds , and was considered the grandest of the company vessels .

Delivered on 30 June 1891 , Kommandøren was yard number 132 at Akers Mekaniske Værksted in Kristiania (modern @-@ day Oslo) , Norway . The steel @-@ hulled ship measured 433 gross register tons (GRT) , had a length of 50 @. @ 8 metres (167 ft) , a beam of 7 @. @ 5 metres (25 ft) and a draught of 3 @. @ 9 metres (13 ft) . Her 600 indicated horsepower / 116 nominal horsepower 3 @-@ cylinder triple expansion steam engine could propel the ship at 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . Kommandøren cost the company NOK 264 @, @ 000 to build and could take up to 249 passengers .

Although much newer than the first ships operated by Nordre Bergenhus Amt's Dampskibe , Kommandøren and the three other ships were only around 2 knots (3 @. @ 7 km / h ; 2 @. @ 3 mph) faster than the mid @-@ 19th century vessels used by the company .

The new ship was named Kommandøren by Nordre Bergenhus amt county council , after the affectionate nickname of the county 's shipping company 's first executive director , Hugo Lous , who had held the rank of kommandørkaptein (English : commander) in the Royal Norwegian Navy . To name the new ship after the executive director was an unusual decision , as most Norwegian ships of the era were named after place names , historical figures or royalty .

Built not only to carry people and cargo between the towns and villages of Western Norway , but also for the tourist trade , Kommandøren was fitted with a comparatively luxurious first class section . The 10 @-@ cabin , 36 @-@ bed , first class featured a smoking salon , a women 's salon and a dining salon for the first class passengers and ship officers . A promenade deck gave views in all directions . The third class passengers had two salons , one on the main deck and one on the orlop (lowest) deck . On Kommandøren , the third class section was expanded and improved in comparison with earlier vessels , after complaints from passengers to the county council . The third class section of Kommandøren was described by the newspaper Sogns Tidende as " large , spacious and almost comfortably equipped . Kommandøren was home ported in Bergen . She had her maiden passenger voyage from Bergen to Sogn on 5 July 1891 .

= = Passenger / cargo and tourist service = =

In the summer season , Kommandøren served the tourist trade in Sogn , while she sailed the regular passenger / cargo routes during the winter months . Kommandøren was generally used as an express route ship , often carrying patients on their way to treatment . Amongst the cargo carried by was often live animals , including horses , cattle and sheep . During one of her trips , Kommandøren ran aground on 20 October 1900 near Tjugum in Balestrand . The ship was also at

times employed to transport important dignitaries in the region , like she did in September 1920 , when she brought politicians to Vik to inspect the area for a proposed railway project . Shortly after delivery , in September 1892 , Kommandøren provided transport support to a large @-@ scale Norwegian Army field exercise in Western Norway . She was tasked with transporting troops from Gudvangen to Lærdalsøyri after the completion of the exercises .

In 1910 , Kommandøren was modernized at Stavanger Støberi & Dok in Stavanger , gaining a new boiler for the steam engine and being painted white . In January the next year , she ran aground at Rongevær in the Fensfjord . She ran aground again in 1913 , in Herdlefjorden , and again in Bårdsundet off Tysnesøy in 1928 .

A rebuild in 1922 saw the ship 's well deck built over , creating a flush deck profile . In 1930 the ship was refurbished and modernized . By this time , Kommandøren measured 543 GRT and 315 NRT .

Kommandøren ran aground yet again in April 1938 , when she ran into the island Segløya while en route from Skjerjehamn to Eivindvik . The incident caused severe damage to the bottom of the hull .

= = Second World War = =

= = = Norwegian Campaign = = =

= = = = Troop ship = = = =

When Norway was invaded by Nazi Germany on 9 April , Kommandøren was not in the areas immediately captured by the invading Germans . She was thus able to continue her service in the Sognefjord for much of the month of April 1940 . On 9 April 1940 , Kommandøren was en route to Bergen , but was stopped at Høyanger and ordered to Sogn to assist in the mobilization of Norwegian Army units to oppose the Germans .

Kommandøren was directed to transport troops from Dingja via several smaller villages to Nordeide and Gudvangen . Together with the steamer Gudvangen , she set out in the early morning of 10 April to retrieve troops . Kommandøren and the other ships of the company fleet were later praised by the regional police commander for their important role in the successful mobilization in Sogn og Fjordane .

= = = = Bombing in the Sognefjord = = = =

On 25 April 1940 , Kommandøren steamed in the Sognefjord , carrying regular passengers , as well as a load of around 100 soldiers bound for Gudvangen and Voss for service with the Norwegian Army 's 4th Division . The soldiers brought in that day belonged to an older age group not called up in the initial mobilization drive . While en route from Vik to Balestrand , the steamer was bombed and strafed by a German bomber . The bombs did not hit the ship , and the machine gun bullets only did minor damage and caused no casualties .

After calling at Balestrand , Kommandøren proceeded to Leikanger , where the soldiers on board disembarked . While Kommandøren was docked at Leikanger , the village was attacked by a German aircraft . The aircraft dropped 11 bombs in three series on the area , before strafing people and cars on the ground . Amongst the targets were the soldiers unloaded by Kommandøren , the troops being on the march to nearby Hermansverk . The attack killed a travelling salesman from Bergen outright , and wounded a 16 @-@ year @-@ old local boy and the boy 's mother , restaurateur Isak Roksvåg from Kommandøren and the ship 's captain , Thorvald Johannessen . While on the way to hospital in Lærdal with Kommandøren , Captain Johannessen died from his wounds .

= = = = End of the campaign = = = =

For the remaining week of the fighting in South Norway , Kommandøren was docked at Kvamsøya , immobilized by a damaged axle . As part of the ceasefire agreement accepted by the Norwegians in Western Norway in the evening of 1 May 1940 , Kommandøren was to be handed over to the Germans , along with the ferry Lærdal and 40 smaller boats . The transfer of the ships occurred at Lærdal on 2 May , and the ceasefire was announced on 3 May . The Germans used Kommandøren and the other vessels for a limited period to transport troops to occupy various places in Western Norway . When released by the Germans , Kommandøren was repaired before re @-@ entering service .

= = = During the German occupation = = =

By the autumn of 1940 , Kommandøren was back in regular service , providing an important link between Bergen and the smaller town and villages in the region . By 1944 , Kommandøren had been assigned the code letters LEGO .

She remained in service until 8 February 1945 , when she ran aground in the Alverstraumen narrows . Kommandøren remained aground for five weeks , and was filled by sea water before being salvaged and towed to Bergen to await repairs . Although the ship 's hull was intact , the interior and engine were heavily water damaged .

= = = Sinking = = =

During the night of 29 March 1945 , Kommandøren was docked at the remains of Søndre Nykirkekai in Bergen . At around 01 : 00 the ship was struck by one of two torpedoes accidentally fired by a German torpedo boat anchored on the opposite side of Vågen bay . The torpedo explosion threw debris from Kommandøren over a wide area , and left the ship lying on the harbour bed . Only the mast and a section of the bow remained above water . The midship and aft sections of the ship were completely destroyed by the torpedo . The only crew member on board at the time , Able Seaman Alf Larsen , was killed in the incident .

Before discovering that the incident had been caused by the accidental launch of two torpedoes by a drunken German crewman on the E @-@ boat S @-@ 13 , the German authorities in Bergen launched a search for saboteurs in the city . Kommandøren was the only total loss suffered by Fylkesbaatane i Sogn og Fjordane (the formerly named Nordre Bergenhus Amts Dampskibe) during the Second World War .

The wreck of Kommandøren was raised in April 1946 and towed to Kjøkkelvik in Askøy . Kommandøren was sold for scrap in November 1946 .