

= SMS Friedrich der Grosse (1911) =

SMS Friedrich der Grosse was the second vessel of the Kaiser class of battleships of the German Imperial Navy . Friedrich der Grosse 's keel was laid on 26 January 1910 at the AG Vulcan dockyard in Hamburg , her hull was launched on 10 June 1911 , and she was commissioned into the fleet on 15 October 1912 . The ship was equipped with ten 30 @. @ 5 @- @ centimeter (12 @. @ 0 in) guns in five twin turrets , and had a top speed of 23 @. @ 4 knots (43 @. @ 3 km / h ; 26 @. @ 9 mph) . Friedrich der Grosse was assigned to the III Squadron of the High Seas Fleet for the majority of World War I , and served as fleet flagship from her commissioning until 1917 .

Along with her four sister ships , Kaiser , Kaiserin , König Albert , and Prinzregent Luitpold , Friedrich der Grosse participated in all the major fleet operations of World War I , including the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 . Toward the center of the German line , Friedrich der Grosse was not as heavily engaged as the leading German ships , such as the battleships König and Grosser Kurfürst and the battlecruisers of the I Scouting Group ? Friedrich der Grosse emerged from the battle completely unscathed . In 1917 , the new battleship Baden replaced Friedrich der Grosse as the fleet flagship .

After Germany 's defeat in the war and the signing of the Armistice in November 1918 , Friedrich der Grosse and most of the capital ships of the High Seas Fleet were interned by the British Royal Navy in Scapa Flow . The ships were disarmed and reduced to skeleton crews while the Allied powers negotiated the final version of the Treaty of Versailles . On 21 June 1919 , days before the treaty was signed , the commander of the interned fleet , Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , ordered the fleet to be scuttled to ensure that the British would not be able to seize the ships . Friedrich der Grosse was raised in 1936 and broken up for scrap metal . Her bell was returned to Germany in 1965 and is now located at the Fleet Headquarters in Glücksburg .

= = Construction = =

Ordered under the contract name Ersatz Heimdall as a replacement for the obsolete coastal defense ship Heimdall , Friedrich der Grosse was laid down at the AG Vulcan dockyard in Hamburg on 26 January 1910 . She was launched on 10 June 1911 , after which AG Vulcan conducted builder 's trials . At her launching ceremony , Princess Alexandra Victoria performed the christening and Field Marshal Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz gave a speech . She was then transferred to Wilhelmshaven and commissioned into the fleet on 15 October 1912 . Exercises in the Baltic Sea followed ; Friedrich der Grosse then went to Kiel for final fitting @- @ out work . On 22 January 1913 , the ship was finally ready for active service . She cost the German government 45 @, @ 802 @, @ 000 marks .

Friedrich der Grosse was 172 @. @ 40 m (565 ft 7 in) long overall and displaced a maximum of 27 @, @ 000 metric tons (26 @, @ 570 long tons) . The ship had a beam of 29 m (95 ft 2 in) and a draft of 9 @. @ 10 m (29 ft 10 in) forward and 8 @. @ 80 m (28 ft 10 in) aft . She was powered by three sets of AEG Curtis turbines , supplied with steam by 16 coal @- @ fired boilers . On trials , the powerplant produced a top speed of 22 @. @ 4 knots (41 @. @ 5 km / h ; 25 @. @ 8 mph) . She carried 3 @, @ 600 metric tons (3 @, @ 500 long tons) of coal , which enabled a maximum range of 7 @, @ 900 nautical miles (14 @, @ 600 km ; 9 @, @ 100 mi) at a cruising speed of 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . Friedrich der Grosse was protected by heavy Krupp cemented armor ; the main armored belt was 350 mm (14 in) thick amidships and the conning tower had 400 mm (16 in) thick sides . The gun turrets had 300 mm (12 in) sides . As with the other four ships in her class , Friedrich der Grosse carried anti @- @ torpedo nets until after the Battle of Jutland in 1916 .

The ship was armed with a main battery of ten 30 @. @ 5 cm SK L / 50 guns in five twin turrets . She disposed with the inefficient hexagonal turret arrangement of previous German battleships ; instead , three of the five turrets were mounted on the centerline , with two of them arranged in a superfiring pair aft . The other two turrets were placed en echelon amidships , such that both could fire on the broadside . The ship was also armed with fourteen 15 cm (5 @. @ 9 in) SK L / 45 guns in casemates amidships , eight 8 @. @ 8 cm (3 @. @ 5 in) SK L / 45 guns in casemates ; these

were removed during the war and replaced with four 8 @. @ 8 cm L / 45 anti @-@ aircraft guns . Her armament was rounded out by five 50 cm (20 in) torpedo tubes , all mounted in the ship 's hull .

= = Service history = =

After her commissioning in January 1913 , Friedrich der Grosse conducted sea trials before becoming the fleet flagship on 2 March , replacing Deutschland . The ship participated in her first round of fleet maneuvers in February 1913 , which were conducted in the Kattegat and the North Sea . The next month saw another round of exercises , from 12 to 14 March . The ship went into dock for periodic maintenance in April , and was ready for artillery training by the end of the month . Extensive fleet maneuvers were conducted in the North Sea from 5 to 27 May . Friedrich der Grosse , as the Navy 's newest battleship , was sent to Kiel for Kiel Week in June . While there , she was visited by the Italian king Victor Emmanuel III and his wife Elena . In mid @-@ July , the fleet conducted its annual summer cruise to Norway , which lasted until mid @-@ August . During the cruise , Friedrich der Grosse visited Balholmen , Norway . The autumn maneuvers followed after the fleet returned ; they lasted from 31 August to 9 September . Unit drills and individual ship training were conducted in October and November .

In early 1914 , Friedrich der Grosse participated in additional ship and unit training . The annual spring maneuvers were conducted in the North Sea at the end of March . Further fleet exercises followed in April and May in the Baltic and North Seas . The ship again went to Kiel Week that year . Despite the rising international tensions following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June , the High Seas Fleet began its summer cruise to Norway on 13 July . During the last peacetime cruise of the Imperial Navy , the fleet conducted drills off Skagen before proceeding to the Norwegian fjords on 25 July . The following day the fleet began to steam back to Germany , as a result of Austria @-@ Hungary 's ultimatum to Serbia . On the 27th , 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 the following day , and in the span of a week all of the major European powers had joined the conflict .

= = = World War I = = =

The High Seas Fleet , including Friedrich der Grosse , conducted a number of sweeps and advances into the North Sea . The first occurred on 2 ? 3 November 1914 , though no British forces were encountered . Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , the commander of the High Seas Fleet , adopted a strategy in which the battlecruisers of Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper 's I Scouting Group raided British coastal towns to lure out portions of the Grand Fleet where they could be destroyed by the High Seas Fleet . The raid on Scarborough , Hartlepool and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 was the first such operation . On the evening of 15 December , the German battle fleet of some twelve dreadnoughts ? including Friedrich der Grosse and her four sisters ? and eight pre @-@ dreadnoughts 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 . Under orders from Kaiser Wilhelm II to avoid risking the fleet unnecessarily , von Ingenohl broke off the engagement and turned the battle fleet back toward Germany .

Following the loss of SMS Blücher at the Battle of Dogger Bank in January 1915 , the Kaiser removed Admiral von Ingenohl from his post on 2 February . Admiral Hugo von Pohl replaced him as commander of the fleet . Admiral von Pohl conducted a series of fleet advances in 1915 in which Friedrich der Grosse took part ; in the first one on 29 ? 30 March , the fleet steamed out to the north of Terschelling and return without incident . Another followed on 17 ? 18 April , where Friedrich der Grosse and the rest of the fleet covered a mining operation by the II Scouting Group . Three days later , on 21 ? 22 April , the High Seas Fleet advanced toward Dogger Bank , though again failed to meet any British forces .

The II Scouting Group performed another minelaying operation on 17 ? 18 May , and Friedrich der Grosse and the rest of the fleet steamed out in support . Less than two weeks later on 29 ? 30 May , the fleet attempted to conduct a sweep in the North Sea , but inclement weather forced Pohl to cancel the operation some 50 nmi (93 km ; 58 mi) off Schiermonnikoog . The fleet remained in port until 10 August , when it sortied to Helgoland to cover the return of the auxiliary cruiser Möwe . A month later , on 11 ? 12 September , the fleet covered another mine @-@ laying operation off the Swarte Bank . The last operation of the year , conducted on 23 ? 24 October , was an advance without result in the direction of Horns Reef .

On 11 January 1916 , Admiral Reinhard Scheer replaced von Pohl , who was suffering from liver cancer . A week later on the 18th , Scheer hoisted his flag aboard Friedrich der Grosse . Scheer proposed a more aggressive policy designed to force a confrontation with the British Grand Fleet ; he received approval from the Kaiser in February . The first of Scheer 's operations was conducted the following month , on 5 ? 7 March , with an uneventful sweep of the Hoofden . On 25 ? 26 March , Scheer attempted to attack British forces that had raided Tondern , but failed to locate them . Another advance to Horns Reef followed on 21 ? 22 April .

On 24 April , the battlecruisers of Von Hipper 's I Scouting Group conducted a raid on the English coast . Friedrich der Grosse and the rest of the fleet sailed in distant support . 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 artillery 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 = = =

Soon after the Lowestoft raid , Scheer began planning another foray into the North Sea . He had initially intended to launch the operation in mid @-@ May , by which time the mine damage to Seydlitz was scheduled to be repaired ? Scheer was unwilling to embark on a major raid without his battlecruiser forces at full strength . On 9 May , several battleships developed problems with their engines , which delayed the operation further , to 23 May . By 22 May , Seydlitz was still not fully repaired and the operation was again postponed , to 29 May . At noon on 29 May , the repairs to Seydlitz were finally completed , and the ship returned to the I Scouting Group . The plan called for Hipper 's battlecruisers to steam north to the Skagerrak , with the intention of luring out a portion of the British fleet so it could be destroyed by Scheer 's waiting battleships .

Friedrich der Grosse was the eighth ship in the German line ; the four König @-@ class ships of the V Division , III Battle Squadron , led the line , followed by four Kaiser @-@ class ships in the VI Division , III Battle Squadron . Friedrich der Grosse was the last ship in her division , directly astern of Prinzregent Luitpold and ahead of Ostfriesland , the flagship of Vice Admiral Schmidt 's I Division , I Battle Squadron . The eight Helgoland- and Nassau @-@ class battleships constituted the I Squadron , which was followed by the six elderly pre @-@ dreadnoughts of Rear Admiral Franz Mauve 's II Squadron . Hipper 's five battlecruisers , the scouting force for the fleet , left the Jade estuary at 02 : 00 on 31 May ; Scheer and the High Seas Fleet followed an hour and a half later .

Shortly before 16 : 00 the battlecruisers of I Scouting Group encountered the British 1st Battlecruiser Squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Sir 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 , König 's crew 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 the accompanying fast battleships of the 5th Battle Squadron ; a minute later , he gave the order to open fire .

Friedrich der Grosse was still out of range of both the British battlecruisers and the 5th Battle Squadron , and so held her fire initially . Between 17 : 48 and 17 : 52 , Friedrich der Grosse and ten other battleships engaged the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron , though only Nassau managed to score a hit during this period . Shortly after , the German battle line came across the disabled destroyers Nestor and Nomad . Friedrich der Grosse and her three sisters targeted Nomad and quickly sank her . Nestor was similarly dispatched by the I Squadron ships . Shortly after 19 : 00 , a melee between the German line and British cruisers took place . The center of the action was the damaged German cruiser Wiesbaden , which had been disabled by a shell from the British battlecruiser Invincible . Rear Admiral Behncke in König attempted to maneuver the III Squadron to cover the stricken cruiser . Simultaneously , the British 3rd and 4th Light Cruiser Squadrons began a torpedo attack on the German line ; while advancing to torpedo range , they smothered Wiesbaden with fire from their main guns . The eight III Squadron battleships fired on the British cruisers , but even the sustained fire from the battleships ' main guns failed to drive off the British cruisers . The armored cruisers Defence , Warrior , and Black Prince joined in the attack on the crippled Wiesbaden . While most of the III Squadron battleships rained heavy fire upon the attacking armored cruisers , Friedrich der Grosse and the I Squadron ships engaged the battleship Warspite at ranges from 9 @,@ 600 to 12 @,@ 500 yd (8 @,@ 800 to 11 @,@ 400 m) , until Warspite disappeared in the haze . In this period , Warspite was hit by 13 heavy shells , though the ships that fired them are unknown .

After successfully withdrawing from the British , Scheer ordered the fleet to assume night cruising formation , though communication errors between Scheer aboard Friedrich der Grosse and Westfalen , the lead ship , caused delays . The series of reversals in course and confused maneuvers disorganized the fleet and inverted the sequence of ships , but by 23 : 30 the fleet had reached its cruising formation . Friedrich der Grosse was now the ninth ship in a line of twenty @-@ four , headed by the eight I Squadron ships . Shortly after 01 : 00 , the British cruiser Black Prince stumbled into the German line . Searchlights aboard Thüringen illuminated the target ; Friedrich der Grosse , Thüringen , Nassau , and Ostfriesland hammered the cruiser at point @-@ blank range with main and secondary guns . In the span of a few minutes Black Prince exploded and sank , taking her entire crew of 857 with her .

After a series of night engagements between the I Squadron battleships and British destroyers , the High Seas Fleet punched through the British light forces and reached Horns Reef by 04 : 00 on 1 June . The German fleet reached Wilhelmshaven a few hours later ; five of the I Squadron battleships took up defensive positions in the outer roadstead , and Kaiser , Kaiserin , Prinzregent Luitpold , and Kronprinz stood ready just outside the entrance to Wilhelmshaven . The rest of the fleet entered Wilhelmshaven , where Friedrich der Grosse and the other ships still in fighting condition replenished their stocks of coal and ammunition . In the course of the battle , Friedrich der Grosse had fired 72 main battery shells and 151 rounds from her secondary guns . She emerged from the battle completely undamaged .

= = = = Subsequent North Sea operations = = = =

On 18 August 1916 , Friedrich der Grosse took part in an operation to bombard Sunderland . Admiral Scheer attempted a repeat of the original 31 May plan : the two serviceable German battlecruisers , Moltke and Von der Tann , augmented by three faster dreadnoughts , were to bombard the coastal town of Sunderland in an attempt to draw out and destroy Beatty 's battlecruisers . Scheer , in Friedrich der Grosse , would trail behind with the rest of the fleet and provide support . Scheer turned north after receiving a false report from a zeppelin about a British unit in the area . As a result , the bombardment was not carried out , and by 14 : 35 , Scheer had been warned of the Grand Fleet 's approach and so turned his forces around and retreated to German ports .

Another fleet operation took place on 18 ? 19 October , though it ended without encountering any British units . The fleet was reorganized on 1 December ; the four König @-@ class battleships remained in III Squadron , along with the newly commissioned Bayern , while the five Kaiser @-@ class ships , including Friedrich der Grosse , were transferred to IV Squadron . In March 1917 the

new battleship Baden , built to serve as fleet flagship , entered service ; on the 17th , Scheer hauled down his flag from Friedrich der Grosse and transferred it to Baden . On 4 ? 5 July , crewmen aboard Friedrich der Grosse staged a hunger strike in protest over the poor quality and insufficient quantity of the food they were given . The ship 's officers relented , fed the crew a meal of groat soup and agreed to form a Menagekommission , a council that gave the enlisted men a voice in their ration selection and preparation . Further insubordination on several vessels followed on 11 July , and the ringleaders were arrested and put on trial . Max Reichpietsch , a stoker from Friedrich der Grosse was sentenced to death and executed by firing squad on 5 September in Cologne .

= = = = Operation Albion = = = =

In early September 1917 , following the German conquest of the Russian port of Riga , the German navy decided to eliminate the Russian naval forces that still held the Gulf of Riga . The Admiralstab (Navy High Command) planned an operation to seize the Baltic island of Ösel , and specifically the Russian gun batteries on the Sworbe Peninsula . The Admiralstab issued orders on 18 September for a joint operation with the army to capture Ösel and Moon Islands ; the primary naval component was to comprise the flagship , Moltke , and the III and IV Battle Squadrons of the High Seas Fleet . Along with nine light cruisers , three torpedo boat flotillas , and dozens of mine warfare ships , the entire force numbered some 300 ships , supported by over 100 aircraft and six zeppelins . The invasion force amounted to approximately 24 @, @ 600 officers and enlisted men . Opposing the Germans were the old Russian pre @-@ dreadnoughts Slava and Tsesarevich , the armored cruisers Bayan , Admiral Makarov , and Diana , 26 destroyers , and several torpedo boats and gunboats . The garrison on Ösel numbered some 14 @, @ 000 men .

The operation began on the morning of 12 October , when Moltke and the III Squadron ships engaged Russian positions in Tagga Bay while Friedrich der Grosse and the rest of IV Squadron shelled Russian gun batteries on the Sworbe Peninsula on Ösel . The coastal artillery in both locations were quickly silenced by the battleships ' heavy guns . On the morning of the 14th , Friedrich der Grosse , Kaiserin , and König Albert were detached to support German troops advancing toward Anseküll . The three ships fired on the battery at Zerel for an hour , which prompted most of the Russian gun crews to flee their posts .

By 20 October , the fighting on the islands was winding down ; Moon , Ösel , and Dagö were in German possession . The previous day , the Admiralstab had ordered the cessation of naval actions and the return of the dreadnoughts to the High Seas Fleet as soon as possible . On 27 October , Friedrich der Grosse was detached from the Baltic and returned to the North Sea . Upon her return , she resumed guard duties . The ship participated in the fruitless advance to Norway on 23 ? 25 April 1918 . Afterward , she went into drydock for extensive maintenance , which lasted from 26 July to 28 September .

= = = Fate = = =

Friedrich der Grosse and her four 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 Grossadmiral (Grand Admiral) of the fleet ? intended to inflict as much damage as possible on the British navy , to ensure a better bargaining position for Germany , despite the expected casualties . However , many of the war @-@ weary sailors felt 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 . On the 30th , crewmen aboard Friedrich der Grosse engaged in forms of passive resistance , including a " go @-@ slow " while replenishing the ship 's coal stock . 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 , most of the High Seas Fleet , under the

command of Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter , were interned in the British naval base in Scapa Flow . Prior to the departure of the German fleet , Admiral Adolf von Trotha made clear to Von Reuter that he could not allow the Allies to seize the ships , under any conditions . The fleet rendezvoused with the British light cruiser Cardiff , which led the ships to the Allied fleet that was to escort the Germans to Scapa Flow . The massive flotilla consisted of some 370 British , American , and French warships . Once the ships were interned , their guns were disabled through the removal of their breech blocks , and their crews were reduced to 200 officers and enlisted men .

The fleet remained in captivity during the negotiations that ultimately produced the Treaty of Versailles . Von Reuter believed that the British intended to seize the German ships on 21 June 1919 , which was the deadline for Germany to sign the peace treaty . Unaware that the deadline had been extended to the 23rd , Reuter ordered the ships to be sunk at the next opportunity . On the morning of 21 June , the British fleet left Scapa Flow to conduct training maneuvers , and at 11 : 20 Reuter transmitted the order to his ships . Friedrich der Grosse capsized and sank at 12 : 16 . In 1936 , the ship was raised and broken up for scrap ; the work was completed by 29 April 1937 . On 30 August 1965 , Britain returned the ship 's bell to Germany via the frigate Scheer ; it now resides at the Fleet Headquarters of the German Navy in Glücksburg .