

= SMS Kaiser Wilhelm II =

SMS Kaiser Wilhelm II (" His Majesty 's Ship Emperor William II ") was the second ship of the Kaiser Friedrich III class of pre @-@ dreadnought battleships . She was built at the Imperial Dockyard in Wilhelmshaven and launched on 14 September 1897 . The ship was commissioned into the fleet as its flagship on 13 February 1900 . Kaiser Wilhelm II was armed with a main battery of four 24 @-@ centimeter (9 @.@ 45 in) guns in two twin turrets . She was powered by triple expansion engines that delivered a top speed of 17 @.@ 5 knots (32 @.@ 4 km / h ; 20 @.@ 1 mph) .

Kaiser Wilhelm II served as the flagship of the Active Battle Fleet until 1906 , participating in numerous fleet training exercises and visits to foreign ports . She was replaced as flagship by the new battleship SMS Deutschland . After the new dreadnought battleships began entering service in 1908 , Kaiser Wilhelm II was decommissioned and put into reserve . She was reactivated in 1910 for training ship duties in the Baltic , but was again taken out of service in 1912 .

With the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 , Kaiser Wilhelm II and her sisters were brought back into active duty as coastal defense ships in the V Battle Squadron . Her age , coupled with shortages of ship crews , led to her withdrawal from this role in February 1915 , after which she served as a command ship for the High Seas Fleet , based in Wilhelmshaven . Following the end of the war in November 1918 , Kaiser Wilhelm II was stricken from the navy list and sold for scrap in the early 1920s . Her bow ornament is preserved at the Military History Museum of the Bundeswehr in Dresden .

= = Construction = =

Kaiser Wilhelm II was 125 @.@ 3 m (411 ft 1 @.@ 07 in) long overall and had a beam of 20 @.@ 4 m (66 ft 11 @.@ 15 in) . Her draft was 7 @.@ 89 m (25 ft 10 @.@ 63 in) forward and 8 @.@ 25 m (27 ft 0 @.@ 80 in) aft . The ship was powered by three 3 @-@ cylinder vertical triple @-@ expansion steam engines that drove three screw propellers . Steam was provided by four marine @-@ type and eight cylindrical water @-@ tube boilers , all of which burned coal . Kaiser Wilhelm II 's powerplant was rated at 12 @,@ 822 indicated horsepower (9 @,@ 561 kW) , which generated a top speed of 17 @.@ 5 knots (32 @.@ 4 km / h ; 20 @.@ 1 mph) . She had a normal crew of 39 officers and 612 enlisted men ; while serving as the fleet flagship , she carried an additional admiral 's staff of 12 officers and 51 ? 63 enlisted men .

The ship 's armament consisted of a main battery of four 24 cm (9 @.@ 45 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 @.@ 91 inch) SK L / 40 guns and twelve 8 @.@ 8 cm (3 @.@ 46 in) SK L / 30 quick @-@ firing guns mounted in casemates . She also carried twelve 37mm machine cannon , but these were later removed . The armament suite was rounded out with six 45 cm (17 @.@ 72 in) torpedo tubes , one of which was placed in an above @-@ water swivel mount at the stern , with four submerged on the broadside and one submerged in the bow . The ship 's belt armor was 300 mm (11 @.@ 81 in) thick , and the deck was 65 mm (2 @.@ 56 in) thick . The conning tower and main battery turrets were protected with 250 mm (9 @.@ 84 in) of armor plating , and the secondary casemates received 150 mm (5 @.@ 91 in) of armor protection .

= = Service history = =

= = Construction to 1902 = =

Kaiser Wilhelm II 's keel was laid on 26 October 1896 , at the Kaiserliche Werft in Wilhelmshaven , under construction number 24 . Ordered under the contract name Ersatz Friedrich der Grosse , to replace the elderly armored frigate Friedrich der Grosse , she was launched on 14 September 1897 . During the launching ceremony , Konteradmiral (Rear Admiral) Prince Heinrich christened the

ship for his brother , Kaiser Wilhelm II . She was commissioned on 13 February 1900 , assuming the position of fleet flagship , which she held until 1906 . Kaiser Wilhelm II was the first battleship of the German Navy specifically built to serve as a fleet flagship . After completing her sea trials in June 1900 , she was assigned to the II Division of the I Squadron , where she replaced the old armored corvette Bayern in the division and the battleship Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm as flagship of the Active Battle Fleet .

In early July 1900 , Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm and the other three Brandenburg @-@ class battleships , which were assigned to the I Division of the I Squadron , were ordered to East Asian waters to assist in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion . As a result , Kaiser Wilhelm II and the other ships of the II Division were transferred to the I Division on 8 July , under the command of Konteradmiral Paul Hoffmann . On 15 August the annual autumn maneuvers began ; initially , the fleet practiced tactical maneuvers in the German Bight . A cruise in battle formation through the Kattegat followed , and the maneuvers concluded in the western Baltic on 21 September . During these exercises , Kaiser Wilhelm II served as the umpire ship , and so Hoffmann temporarily transferred his flag to her sister ship Kaiser Friedrich III . He returned to Kaiser Wilhelm II on 29 September after the conclusion of the exercises in Kiel .

On 1 November 1900 , Kaiser Friedrich III replaced Kaiser Wilhelm II as the I Squadron flagship ; the latter , as the fleet flagship , remained assigned to the squadron for tactical purposes . From 4 to 15 December , Kaiser Wilhelm II and the I Squadron went on a winter training cruise to Norway ; the ships anchored at Larvik from 10 to 12 December . At 01 : 30 on 2 January 1901 , she was steaming from Danzig to Kiel with Kaiser Friedrich III when the latter struck an underwater obstacle . The shock from the collision damaged the ship 's boilers and started a fire in the coal bunkers . Kaiser Wilhelm II took her sister in tow , although the engines on Kaiser Friedrich III were restarted along the way . The ships eventually reached Kiel , where temporary repairs were conducted . Kaiser Wilhelm II went into drydock in January 1901 for overhaul and some modernization work . This included the reconstruction of a larger bridge and the removal of some of her searchlights . While the ship was laid up , Admiral Hans von Koester replaced Hoffmann as the fleet commander , a position he would hold until the end of 1906 .

The annual training routine began at the end of March 1901 with squadron exercises in the Baltic . On the night of 1 ? 2 April , Kaiser Friedrich III ran hard aground on the Adlergrund , a shoal to the north of Cape Arkona , and Kaiser Wilhelm II lightly brushed the bottom . After a short inspection , it was determined that Kaiser Wilhelm II was undamaged , and so Prince Heinrich transferred his flag to the ship on 23 April , while Kaiser Friedrich III went into drydock for repairs . In the meantime , on 18 April , Wilhelm II commissioned his son Prince Adalbert aboard Kaiser Wilhelm II . On 27 April , the I Squadron conducted gunnery drills and a landing exercise off Apenrade . By 17 June , Kaiser Wilhelm II 's sister ship Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse had entered service , and so she took over flagship duties for the squadron , while Kaiser Wilhelm II returned to serving as only the fleet flagship . The squadron then went on a cruise to Spain , and while docked in Cádiz , rendezvoused with the Brandenburg @-@ class battleships returning from East Asian waters . The I Squadron was back in Kiel by 11 August , though the late arrival of the Brandenburgs delayed the participation of the I Squadron in the annual autumn fleet training . The maneuvers began with exercises in the German Bight , followed by a mock attack on the fortifications in the lower Elbe . Gunnery drills took place in Kiel Bay before the fleet steamed to Danzig Bay ; there , during the maneuvers , Wilhelm II and Czar Nicholas II of Russia visited the fleet and came aboard Kaiser Wilhelm II . The autumn maneuvers concluded on 15 September . Kaiser Wilhelm II and the rest of I Squadron went on their normal winter cruise to Norway in December , which included a stop at Oslo from 7 to 12 December , when the ship was visited by King Oscar II .

In January 1902 , Kaiser Wilhelm II went into dock at Wilhelmshaven for her annual overhaul . In mid @-@ March , Wilhelm II and his wife , Augusta Victoria , came aboard the ship and waited in the mouth of the Elbe for Wilhelm 's brother Prince Heinrich , who was returning from the United States . The I Squadron then went on a short cruise in the western Baltic before embarking on a major cruise around the British Isles , which lasted from 25 April to 28 May . Individual and squadron maneuvers took place from June to August , interrupted only by a cruise to Norway in July . During

these maneuvers , three of Kaiser Wilhelm II 's boiler tubes burst , but the damage was repaired by the start of the autumn maneuvers in August . These exercises began in the Baltic and concluded in the North Sea with a fleet review in the Jade . Kaiser Wilhelm II took no active part in the exercises ; she instead served as an observation ship for the commander of the fleet , as well as her namesake , Kaiser Wilhelm II . The regular winter cruise followed during 1 ? 12 December .

= = = 1903 ? 1905 = = =

The first quarter of 1903 followed the usual pattern of training exercises . The squadron went on a training cruise in the Baltic , followed by a voyage to Spain that lasted from 7 May to 10 June . After returning to Germany , Kaiser Wilhelm II participated in the Kiel Week sailing regatta . In July , she joined the I Squadron for the annual cruise to Norway . The autumn maneuvers consisted of a blockade exercise in the North Sea , a cruise of the entire fleet first to Norwegian waters and then to Kiel in early September , and finally a mock attack on Kiel . The exercises concluded on 12 September . Kaiser Wilhelm II finished the year 's training schedule with a cruise into the eastern Baltic that started on 23 November and a cruise into the Skagerrak that began on 1 December . During the latter , the ship stopped in the Danish port of Frederikshavn .

Kaiser Wilhelm II participated in an exercise in the Skagerrak from 11 to 21 January 1904 , after which she returned to Kiel . She then went to the Norwegian city of Ålesund to assist with the major fire that devastated the largely wooden city on 23 January . Squadron exercises followed from 8 to 17 March . A major fleet exercise took place in the North Sea in May , and Kaiser Wilhelm II was again present at Kiel Week in June , where she was visited by Britain 's King Edward VII , Lord William Palmer , and Prince Louis of Battenberg . In June , Kaiser Wilhelm II won the Kaiser 's Schießpreis (Shooting Prize) for excellent gunnery . The following month , the I Squadron and the I Scouting Group visited Britain , including a stop at Plymouth on 10 July . The German fleet departed on 13 July , bound for the Netherlands ; the I Squadron anchored in Vlissingen the following day . There , the ships were visited by Queen Wilhelmina . The I Squadron remained in Vlissingen until 20 July , when they departed for a cruise in the northern North Sea with the rest of the fleet . The squadron stopped in Molde , Norway , on 29 July , while the other units went to other ports .

The fleet reassembled on 6 August and steamed back to Kiel , where it conducted a mock attack on the harbor on 12 August . During its cruise in the North Sea , the fleet experimented with wireless telegraphy on a large scale and searchlights at night for communication and recognition signals . Immediately after returning to Kiel , the fleet began preparations for the autumn maneuvers , which began on 29 August in the Baltic . The fleet moved to the North Sea on 3 September , where it took part in a major landing operation , after which the ships took the ground troops from the IX Corps that participated in the exercises to Altona for a parade for Wilhelm II . The ships then conducted their own parade for the Kaiser off the island of Helgoland on 6 September . Three days later , the fleet returned to the Baltic via the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal , where it participated in further landing operations with the IX Corps and the Guards Corps . On 15 September , the maneuvers came to an end . The I Squadron went on its winter training cruise , this time to the eastern Baltic , from 22 November to 2 December .

Kaiser Wilhelm II took part in a pair of training cruises with the I Squadron during 9 ? 19 January and 27 February ? 16 March 1905 . Individual and squadron training followed , with an emphasis on gunnery drills . On 12 July , the fleet began a major training exercise in the North Sea . The fleet then cruised through the Kattegat and stopped in Copenhagen , where Kaiser Wilhelm II was visited by the Danish King Christian IX . The fleet then stopped in Stockholm , where Kaiser Wilhelm II , the battleship Brandenburg , and the armored cruiser Friedrich Carl all ran aground , though only Friedrich Carl was seriously damaged . The summer cruise ended on 9 August , though the autumn maneuvers that would normally have begun shortly thereafter were delayed by a visit from the British Channel Fleet that month . The British fleet stopped in Danzig , Swinemünde , and Flensburg , where it was greeted by units of the German Navy ; Kaiser Wilhelm II and the main German fleet was anchored at Swinemünde for the occasion . The visit was strained by the Anglo @-@ German naval arms race .

As a result of the British visit , the 1905 autumn maneuvers were shortened considerably , from 6 to 13 September , and consisted only of exercises in the North Sea . The first exercise presumed a naval blockade in the German Bight , and the second envisioned a hostile fleet attempting to force the defenses of the Elbe . During October , Kaiser Wilhelm II conducted individual training and , in November , joined the rest of the I Squadron for a cruise in the Baltic . In early December , the I and II Squadrons went on their regular winter cruise , this time to Danzig , where they arrived on 12 December . While on the return trip to Kiel , the fleet conducted tactical exercises .

== 1906 ? 1914 ==

Kaiser Wilhelm II and the rest of the fleet undertook a heavier training schedule in 1906 than in previous years . The ships were occupied with individual , division and squadron exercises throughout April . Starting on 13 May , major fleet exercises took place in the North Sea and lasted until 8 June with a cruise around the Skagen into the Baltic . The fleet began its usual summer cruise to Norway in mid @-@ July . Kaiser Wilhelm II and the I Squadron anchored in Molde , where they were joined on 21 July by Wilhelm II aboard the steamer SS Hamburg . The fleet was present for the birthday of Norwegian King Haakon VII on 3 August . The German ships departed the following day for Helgoland , to join exercises being conducted there . The fleet was back in Kiel by 15 August , where preparations for the autumn maneuvers began . On 22 ? 24 August , the fleet took part in landing exercises in Eckernförde Bay outside Kiel . The maneuvers were paused from 31 August to 3 September when the fleet hosted vessels from Denmark and Sweden , along with a Russian squadron from 3 to 9 September in Kiel . The maneuvers resumed on 8 September and lasted five more days .

On 26 September 1906 , now @-@ Großadmiral (Grand Admiral) von Koester lowered his flag aboard Kaiser Wilhelm II , ending her tenure as the fleet flagship ; the new battleship Deutschland replaced her in this role . Kaiser Wilhelm II was now assigned to the I Squadron , where she served as the second command flagship , under Konteradmiral Max Rollmann . The ship participated in the uneventful winter cruise into the Kattegat and Skagerrak from 8 to 16 December . The first quarter of 1907 followed the previous pattern and , on 16 February , the Active Battle Fleet was re @-@ designated the High Seas Fleet . From the end of May to early June the fleet went on its summer cruise in the North Sea , returning to the Baltic via the Kattegat . This was followed by the regular cruise to Norway from 12 July to 10 August , during which Kaiser Wilhelm II anchored in Trondheim . During the autumn maneuvers , which lasted from 26 August to 6 September , the fleet conducted landing exercises in northern Schleswig with the IX Corps . The winter training cruise went into the Kattegat from 22 to 30 November .

In May 1908 , the fleet went on a major cruise into the Atlantic instead of its normal voyage in the North Sea . Kaiser Wilhelm II stopped in Horta in the Azores . The fleet returned to Kiel on 13 August to prepare for the autumn maneuvers , which lasted from 27 August to 7 September . Division exercises in the Baltic immediately followed from 7 to 13 September . At the conclusion of these maneuvers , Kaiser Wilhelm II was taken out of service . In 1909 ? 1910 , she underwent a major reconstruction in Wilhelmshaven . The superstructure amidships was cut down to reduce top @-@ heaviness , new circular funnels were installed , and the conning tower was enlarged . The fighting tops from the masts were removed , and the secondary battery was significantly revised . Four of the 15 cm guns were removed and two 8 @.@ 8 cm guns were added ; most of the 8 @.@ 8 cm guns were moved from the upper decks into casemates in the main deck . On 14 October 1910 , Kaiser Wilhelm II was recommissioned for service in the Baltic reserve division . She underwent short sea trials from 21 to 23 October before proceeding to Kiel , where she was based with her four sister ships .

From 3 to 29 April 1911 , the ship participated in maneuvers off Rügen . Together with the North Sea reserve division , Kaiser Wilhelm II and her sister ships went on a training cruise to Norway , starting on 8 June . During the visit , she stopped in Arendal , Bergen , and Odda . In July , the ship conducted gunnery training near the northern coast of Holstein , followed by training cruises off the coast of Mecklenburg . Kaiser Wilhelm II served as the flagship of the III Squadron , which was

organized for the autumn maneuvers in August . The III Squadron was attached to the High Seas Fleet for the maneuvers , which lasted from 28 August to 11 September . The following day , the III Squadron was disbanded and Kaiser Wilhelm II returned to service with the Baltic reserve division . In February 1912 , Kaiser Wilhelm II was sent to the Fehmarn Belt to assist in freeing several freighters that were stuck in ice . She and her sisters were again decommissioned on 9 May , and remained out of service until 1914 .

= = = World War I = = =

As a result of the outbreak of World War I , Kaiser Wilhelm II and her sisters were brought out of reserve and mobilized as the V Battle Squadron on 5 August 1914 ; Kaiser Wilhelm II served as the flagship of the squadron . The ships were readied for war very slowly , and they were not ready for service in the North Sea until the end of August . They were initially tasked with coastal defense , though they served in this capacity for a very short time . In mid @-@ September , the V Squadron was transferred to the Baltic , under the command of Prince Heinrich . He initially planned to launch a major amphibious assault on Windau , but a shortage of transports forced a revision of the plan . Instead , the V Squadron was to carry the landing force , but this too was cancelled after Heinrich received false reports of British warships having entered the Baltic on 25 September . Kaiser Wilhelm II and her sisters returned to Kiel the following day , disembarked the landing force , and then proceeded to the North Sea , where they resumed guard ship duties . Before the end of the year , the V Squadron was once again transferred to the Baltic .

Prince Heinrich ordered a foray toward Gotland . On 26 December 1914 , the battleships rendezvoused with the Baltic cruiser division in the Bay of Pomerania and then departed on the sortie . Two days later , the fleet arrived off Gotland to show the German flag , and was back in Kiel by 30 December . The squadron returned to the North Sea for guard duties , but was withdrawn from front @-@ line service in February 1915 . Shortages of trained crews in the High Seas Fleet , coupled with the risk of operating older ships in wartime , necessitated the deactivation of Kaiser Wilhelm II and her sisters . During this period , her sister Kaiser Karl der Grosse briefly served as the squadron flagship , but Kaiser Wilhelm II resumed the post starting on 24 February . The following month , on 5 March , her crew was reduced and she steamed to Wilhelmshaven , where she was converted into the headquarters ship for the commander of the High Seas Fleet , commencing on 26 April . The ship had its wireless equipment modernized for use by the commander when the fleet was in port .

After the end of the war , Kaiser Wilhelm II continued in her role as headquarters ship for the fleet commander and his staff , along with the commander of the minesweeping operation in the North Sea . She was decommissioned for the last time on 10 September 1920 . The naval clauses of the Treaty of Versailles , which ended the war , limited the capital ship strength of the re @-@ formed Reichsmarine to eight pre @-@ dreadnought battleships of the Deutschland and Braunschweig classes , of which only six could be operational at any given time . As a result , Kaiser Wilhelm II was stricken from the navy list on 17 March 1921 and sold to shipbreakers . By 1922 , Kaiser Wilhelm II and her sisters had been broken up for scrap metal . The ship 's bow ornament is preserved at the Military History Museum of the Bundeswehr in Dresden .