

= SMS Schleswig @-@ Holstein =

SMS Schleswig @-@ Holstein (pronounced [ʃlɛʃvɪç ʰɔlʰta? n]) was the last of the five Deutschland @-@ class battleships built by the German Kaiserliche Marine . The ship , named for the province of Schleswig @-@ Holstein , was laid down in the Germaniawerft dockyard in Kiel in August 1905 and commissioned into the fleet nearly three years later . The ships of her class were already outdated by the time they entered service , being inferior in size , armor , firepower and speed to the new generation of dreadnought battleships .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein fought in both World Wars . During World War I , she saw front @-@ line service in the II Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet , culminating in the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 . Schleswig @-@ Holstein saw action during the engagement , and was hit by one large @-@ caliber shell . After the battle , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was relegated to guard duty in the mouth of the Elbe River before being decommissioned in late 1917 . As one of the few battleships permitted for Germany by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was again pressed into fleet service in the 1920s . In 1935 , the old battleship was converted into a training ship for naval cadets .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein fired the first shots of World War II when she bombarded the Polish base at Danzig 's Westerplatte in the early morning hours of 1 September 1939 . The ship was used as a training vessel for the majority of the war , and was sunk by British bombers in Gotenhafen in December 1944 . Schleswig @-@ Holstein was subsequently salvaged and then beached for use by the Soviet Navy as a target . As of 1990 , the ship 's bell was on display in the Bundeswehr Military History Museum in Dresden .

= = Construction = =

Schleswig @-@ Holstein was laid down on 18 August 1905 at the Germaniawerft dockyard in Kiel . She was launched on 17 December 1906 , the last pre @-@ dreadnought battleship of the German navy . The British battleship HMS Dreadnought ? armed with ten 12 @-@ inch (30 @.@ 5 cm) guns ? had already been commissioned earlier that month , with a revolutionary design that rendered every battleship of the German navy obsolescent , including Schleswig @-@ Holstein . At Schleswig @-@ Holstein 's launching ceremony , she was christened by Augusta Victoria of Schleswig @-@ Holstein , the German Empress ; Wilhelm II was also in attendance . Ernst Gunther , the Duke of Schleswig @-@ Holstein , gave the commissioning speech .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein had a length of 127 @.@ 60 m (418 ft 8 in) , a beam of 22 @.@ 20 m (72 ft 10 in) , and a draft of 8 @.@ 21 m (26 ft 11 in) . She displaced 13 @,@ 200 metric tons (13 @,@ 000 long tons) normally and up to 14 @,@ 218 metric tons (13 @,@ 993 long tons) at combat loading . She was equipped with three triple expansion engines and twelve coal @-@ fired water @-@ tube boilers that produced a rated 16 @,@ 767 indicated horsepower (12 @,@ 503 kW) and a top speed of 19 @.@ 1 knots (35 @.@ 4 km / h ; 22 @.@ 0 mph) . In addition to being the fastest ship of her class , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was the second @-@ most fuel efficient . At a cruising speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) , she could steam for 5 @,@ 720 nautical miles (10 @,@ 590 km ; 6 @,@ 580 mi) . She had a standard crew of 35 officers and 708 enlisted men .

The ship 's primary armament consisted of four 28 cm SK L / 40 guns in two twin turrets ; one turret was placed forward and the other aft . She was also equipped with fourteen 17 cm (6 @.@ 7 in) SK L / 40 guns mounted in casemates and twenty 8 @.@ 8 cm (3 @.@ 5 in) SK L / 35 guns in pivot mounts . The ship was also armed with six 45 cm (18 in) torpedo tubes , all below the waterline . One was in the bow , one in the stern , and four on the broadside . Her armored belt was 240 mm (9 @.@ 4 in) thick amidships , and she had a 40 mm (1 @.@ 6 in) thick armored deck . The main battery turrets had 280 mm (11 in) thick sides .

= = Service history = =

Upon completion , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was commissioned for sea trials on 6 July 1908 . Her

crew largely came from her sister ship Schlesien . On 21 September the ship was assigned to the II Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet , alongside her sister ships . In November , fleet and unit exercises were conducted in the Baltic Sea . The training regimen in which Schleswig @-@ Holstein participated followed a similar pattern over the next five years . Fleet maneuvers were conducted in the spring , followed by a summer cruise to Norway , and additional fleet training in the fall . This included another cruise into the Atlantic , from 7 July to 1 August 1909 . Starting in September 1910 , Friedrich Boedicker took command of the ship , a position he held for the next three years . On 3 October 1911 , the ship was transferred back to the II Squadron . Due to the Agadir Crisis in July , the summer cruise only went into the Baltic . In 1913 , she won the Kaiser 's Schiesspreis (Gunnery Award) . On 14 July 1914 , the annual summer cruise to Norway began , but the threat of war in Europe cut the excursion short ; within two weeks Schleswig @-@ Holstein and the rest of the II Squadron had returned to Wilhelmshaven .

= = = World War I = = =

At the outbreak of war in July 1914 , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was assigned to guard duty in the mouth of the Elbe River while the rest of the fleet mobilized . In late October , she and her sisters were sent to Kiel to have improvements made to their underwater protection system to make them more resistant to torpedoes and mines , after which the II Battle Squadron rejoined the fleet . The squadron covered Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper 's battlecruisers of the I Scouting Group while they bombarded Scarborough , Hartlepool , and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 . During the operation , the German battle fleet of some 12 dreadnoughts and 8 pre @-@ dreadnoughts came to within 10 nmi (19 km ; 12 mi) of an isolated squadron of six British battleships . However , skirmishes between the rival destroyer screens convinced the German commander , Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , that he was confronted with the entire Grand Fleet , and so he broke off the engagement and turned the fleet for home . In April 1916 , the ship had two of her 8 @.@ 8 cm guns removed and replaced with 8 @.@ 8 cm Flak guns .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein then participated in a fleet advance to the Dogger Bank on 21 ? 22 April 1915 . On 11 ? 12 September , the II Reconnaissance Group conducted a minelaying operation off the Swarte Bank with the II Squadron in support . This was followed by another sweep by the fleet on 23 ? 24 October that ended without result . The II and III Battle Squadron dreadnoughts conducted an advance into the North Sea on 5 ? 7 March 1916 ; Schleswig @-@ Holstein and the rest of the II Squadron remained in the German Bight , ready to sail in support . They then rejoined the fleet during the operation to bombard Yarmouth and Lowestoft on 24 ? 25 April . During this operation , the battlecruiser Seydlitz was damaged by a British mine and had to return to port prematurely . Visibility was poor , so the operation was quickly called off before the British fleet could intervene .

= = = Battle of Jutland = = =

The commander of the High Seas Fleet , Admiral Reinhard Scheer , immediately planned another advance into the North Sea , but the damage to Seydlitz delayed the operation until the end of May . As the last ship assigned to the IV Division of the II Battle Squadron , the rearmost German formation , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was the last battleship in the line . The II Battle Squadron was commanded by Rear Admiral Franz Mauve . During the " Run to the North " , Scheer ordered the fleet to pursue the retreating battleships of the British 5th Battle Squadron at top speed . Schleswig @-@ Holstein and her sisters were significantly slower than the dreadnoughts and quickly fell behind . During this period , Admiral Scheer directed Hannover to place herself behind Schleswig @-@ Holstein so he would have a flagship on either end of the formation . By 19 : 30 , the Grand Fleet had arrived on the scene and confronted Admiral Scheer with significant numerical superiority . The German fleet was severely hampered by the presence of the slower Deutschland @-@ class ships ; if Scheer had ordered an immediate turn towards Germany , he would have had to sacrifice the slower ships to make his escape .

Admiral Scheer decided to reverse the course of the fleet with the Gefechtskehrtwendung , a maneuver that required every unit in the German line to turn 180 ° simultaneously . Having fallen behind , the ships of the II Battle Squadron could not conform to the new course following the turn , and fell to the disengaged side of the German line . Admiral Mauve considered moving his ships to the rear of the line , astern of the III Battle Squadron dreadnoughts , but decided against it when he realized the movement would interfere with the maneuvering of Hipper 's battlecruisers . Instead , he attempted to place his ships at the head of the line . But by the time the II Squadron reached its position at the head of the line , Scheer had ordered another Gefechtskehrtwendung , which placed them at the rear of the German fleet . By 21 : 00 , Scheer had turned the fleet around a third time , but the slow speed of Schleswig @-@ Holstein and her squadron mates caused them to fall out of position , to the disengaged side of the fleet .

Later on the first day of the battle , Hipper 's badly damaged battlecruisers were being engaged by their British rivals . Schleswig @-@ Holstein and the other so @-@ called " five @-@ minute ships " came to their aid by steaming in between the opposing battlecruiser squadrons . These ships were very briefly engaged , owing in large part to the poor visibility . The visibility was so bad , the gunners aboard Schleswig @-@ Holstein could not make out a target , and she did not fire her main guns . At 21 : 35 a heavy caliber shell struck the ship on the port @-@ side , punching a hole approximately 40 cm (16 in) wide before exploding against the inner casemate armor . It tore apart 4 @. @ 50 m (14 @. @ 8 ft) of the superstructure deck and disabled one of the port side casemate guns . Three men were killed and nine were wounded . Admiral Mauve halted the fight against the much more powerful battlecruisers and ordered an 8 @-@ point turn to starboard .

Late on the 31st , the fleet re @-@ formed for the night voyage back to Germany , with Schleswig @-@ Holstein towards the rear of the line , ahead of Hessen , Hannover , and the battlecruisers Von der Tann and Derfflinger . Around 03 : 00 , British destroyers conducted a series of attacks against the fleet , some of which were directed towards Schleswig @-@ Holstein . Shortly thereafter , Pommern was struck by at least one torpedo from the destroyer Onslaught ; the hit detonated an ammunition magazine , destroying the ship in a tremendous explosion . During the attack , Schleswig @-@ Holstein was forced to turn away to avoid the destroyers ' torpedoes . Shortly after 05 : 00 , Hannover and several other ships fired repeatedly at what they falsely believed to be British submarines .

Despite the ferocity of the night fighting , the High Seas Fleet punched through the British destroyer forces and reached Horns Reef by 4 : 00 on 1 June . The German fleet reached Wilhelmshaven a few hours later , where the undamaged dreadnoughts of the Nassau and Helgoland classes took up defensive positions . Over the course of the battle , Schleswig @-@ Holstein had fired only twenty 17 cm rounds .

= = = Later actions = = =

Schleswig @-@ Holstein was put into dock for repairs 10 ? 25 June 1916 . The Navy then decided to withdraw the four remaining Deutschland @-@ class ships , owing to their obsolescence and vulnerability to underwater attacks , as demonstrated by the loss of Pommern . Thereafter , the ship was used as a target for U @-@ boats , except during 12 ? 23 February 1917 when she was used as a guard ship . In April Schleswig @-@ Holstein was sent to Altenbruch at the mouth of the Elbe ; here she was decommissioned on 2 May . Schleswig @-@ Holstein was then disarmed and assigned to the 5th U @-@ boat Flotilla to be used as a barracks ship in Bremerhaven . In 1918 the ship was moved to Kiel , where she remained for the rest of the war .

= = = Inter @-@ war years = = =

Following the German defeat in World War I , the German navy was reorganized as the Reichsmarine according to the Treaty of Versailles . The new navy was permitted to retain eight pre @-@ dreadnought battleships under Article 181 ? two of which would be in reserve ? for coastal defense . Schleswig @-@ Holstein was among the ships that were retained , along with her sisters

Hannover and Schlesien and several of the Braunschweig @-@ class battleships . Schleswig @-@ Holstein was recommissioned as the new fleet flagship on 31 January 1926 following an extensive refit , with new fire controls and an enlarged aft superstructure for the admiral 's staff . The secondary 17 cm guns were replaced with 15 @-@ centimeter (5 @-@ 9 in) pieces and four 50 cm torpedo tubes were fitted in main deck casemates fore and aft , replacing the submerged tubes .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein and her sister Hannover went on a training cruise into the Atlantic that lasted from 14 May to 17 June 1926 ; while on the cruise , she visited Palma de Mallorca in the Mediterranean from 22 to 30 May . She stopped in Barcelona with Elsass from 1 to 7 June , and then proceeded to Vigo from 12 to 14 June , where she joined Hessen , Elsass , and Hannover . There , the chief of the fleet , Vice Admiral Konrad Mommsen , met with King Alfonso XIII . Schleswig @-@ Holstein went on another training cruise between 30 March and 14 June 1927 into the Atlantic . She visited a series of Iberian ports , including Lisbon , Portugal , where Mommsen was greeted by Óscar Carmona , the president of Portugal . In December 1927 Schleswig @-@ Holstein went back into dock , re @-@ emerging in January 1928 with her forefunnel trunked back into the second and both remaining funnels heightened , as had previously been done with her sister Schlesien .

With the delivery of the new Deutschland @-@ class Panzerschiffe (armored ships) beginning in 1933 , the older battleships were gradually withdrawn from front @-@ line service . In May 1935 , the Reichsmarine was reorganized as the Kriegsmarine by the reforms instituted by Adolf Hitler that created the Wehrmacht . Schleswig @-@ Holstein ceased to be fleet flagship on 22 September 1935 , and was refitted as a cadet training ship during January ? March and May ? July 1936 . The changes included removing her remaining upper deck 15 cm guns and her torpedo tubes , and her two aft boiler rooms were converted to oil @-@ firing models , although the forward boilers remained coal @-@ fired . The ship 's standard complement was also reduced from 35 officers and 708 enlisted men to 31 officers and 565 sailors . The crew was supplemented by 175 cadets , who were taken on long cruises in Schlesien and Schleswig @-@ Holstein , the latter sailing in October 1936 on a six @-@ month voyage to South America and the Caribbean . The following year , her cruise took her around Africa , and the 1938 ? 39 cruise went back to South American and Caribbean waters . Gustav Kieseritzky served as the ship 's commander from June 1938 until April 1939 .

In the mid @-@ 1930s , Hitler began pursuing an increasingly aggressive foreign policy ; in 1936 he re @-@ militarized the Rhineland , and in 1938 completed the Anschluss of Austria and the annexation of Czechoslovakia . He then demanded German control over the city of Danzig , which had become a free city after World War I.

= = = World War II = = =

Early on 1 September 1939 , Germany launched an invasion of Poland . Schleswig @-@ Holstein had been positioned in the port of Danzig , moored close to the Polish ammunition depot at Westerplatte under the guise of a ceremonial visit in August . At 04 : 47 on 1 September , Schleswig @-@ Holstein opened fire with her main battery at the Polish positions on the Westerplatte , and in doing so fired the first shots of World War II . These shots were the signal for ground troops to begin their assault on the installation ; though the first German ground attack in the Battle of Westerplatte was repelled shortly thereafter . A second assault began later that morning , again supported by Schleswig @-@ Holstein , though it too had failed to break into the installation by around noon .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein was joined on 4 September by the torpedo boats T196 and Von der Gröben . A force of German infantry and army engineers went ashore to take the fortress , with heavy fire support from Schleswig @-@ Holstein . The Poles managed to hold off the Germans until they were forced to surrender on 7 September at 10 : 30 . Following the Polish surrender , Schleswig @-@ Holstein began shelling Polish positions at Hel and Red?owo ; these operations lasted until 13 September . Between 25 and 27 September , the old battleship returned to Hel with her sister Schlesien ; both vessels conducted further bombardments of Polish positions there .

The German military then turned its attention westward , and in April 1940 invaded Denmark .

Schleswig @-@ Holstein was assigned to the naval component of the invasion force . During the invasion , the ship was briefly grounded off the Danish coast . Following the operation , she was transferred back to training duties , as the flagship of the Chief of Training Units . At the end of 1943 , the reactivation of Schleswig @-@ Holstein was once again contemplated . In her favor was the fact that she retained some coal @-@ fired boilers , given the ever @-@ worsening oil @-@ supply situation . Thus , on 1 February 1944 she was once again recommissioned , at first taking up her old role as a cadet training ship , then later in the year docking at Gotenhafen (Gdynia) for a refit . She was to be converted into a convoy escort ship with a greatly enhanced anti @-@ aircraft armament , but after being hit three times by Royal Air Force bombers on 18 December 1944 , she eventually foundered in shallow water . As the ship was permanently disabled , her crew was sent ashore to assist in the defense of Marienburg .

Following the Soviet capture of that city , the remaining crew detonated scuttling charges in the wreck on 21 March to further destroy the ship . After the war , the ship was raised during 1945 ? 46 by the Soviet Navy and transferred to Tallinn . Although reference books long stated that she was scrapped there or in Marienburg , in actuality she was towed out in 1948 and beached for long @-@ term use as a target in shallow water off the island of Osmussaar in the Gulf of Finland . Last used for target practice around 1966 , the remains are now submerged . Her bell was held in the collection of the Military History Museum of the Bundeswehr in Dresden as of 1990 .