

= SMS Posen =

SMS Posen was one of four battleships in the Nassau class , the first dreadnoughts built for the German Imperial Navy (Kaiserliche Marine) . The ship was laid down at the Germaniawerft shipyard in Kiel on 11 June 1907 , launched on 13 December 1908 , and commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 31 May 1910 . She was equipped with a main battery of twelve 28 cm (11 in) guns in six twin turrets in an unusual hexagonal arrangement .

The ship served with her three sister ships for the majority of World War I. She saw extensive service in the North Sea , where she took part in several fleet sorties . These culminated in the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 , where Posen was heavily engaged in night @-@ fighting against British light forces . In the confusion , the ship accidentally rammed the light cruiser SMS Elbing , which suffered serious damage and was scuttled later in the night .

The ship also conducted several deployments to the Baltic Sea against the Russian Navy . In the first of these , Posen supported a German naval assault in the Battle of the Gulf of Riga . The ship was sent back to the Baltic in 1918 to support the White Finns in the Finnish Civil War . At the end of the war , Posen remained in Germany while the majority of the fleet was interned in Scapa Flow . In 1919 , following the scuttling of the German fleet in Scapa Flow , she was ceded to the British as a replacement for the ships that had been sunk . She was then sent to ship @-@ breakers in the Netherlands and scrapped in 1922 .

= = Construction = =

Posen was ordered under the provisional name Ersatz Baden , as a replacement for the Baden , one of the elderly Sachsen @-@ class ironclads . She was laid down on 11 June 1907 at the Germaniawerft shipyard in Kiel . As with her sister Nassau , construction proceeded under absolute secrecy ; detachments of soldiers guarded the shipyard and also guarded contractors that supplied building materials , such as Krupp . The ship was launched a year and a half later , on 12 December 1908 . Wilhelm August Hans von Waldow @-@ Reitzenstein gave a speech at her launching , and Posen was christened by Johanna von Radolin , the wife of Hugo Fürst von Radolin , a German diplomat who hailed from the ship 's namesake province . Initial trials were conducted through April 1910 , followed by final fitting @-@ out in May . The ship was commissioned into the fleet on 31 May . Sea trials were conducted afterward and completed by 27 August . In total , her construction cost the German government 36 @, @ 920 @, @ 000 marks .

Posen was 146 @. @ 1 m (479 ft 4 @. @ 0 in) long , 26 @. @ 9 m (88 ft 3 @. @ 1 in) wide , and had a draft of 8 @. @ 9 m (29 ft 2 @. @ 4 in) . She displaced 18 @, @ 873 t (18 @, @ 575 long tons) with a standard load , and 20 @, @ 535 t (20 @, @ 211 long tons) fully laden . The ship had a crew of 40 officers and 968 enlisted men . Posen retained three @-@ shafted triple expansion engines with coal @-@ fired boilers instead of more advanced turbine engines . Her propulsion system was rated at 28 @, @ 000 PS (27 @, @ 617 ihp ; 20 @, @ 594 kW) and provided a top speed of 20 knots (37 km / h ; 23 mph) . She had a cruising radius of 8 @, @ 300 nautical miles (15 @, @ 400 km ; 9 @, @ 600 mi) at a speed of 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . This type of machinery was chosen at the request of both Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and the Navy 's construction department ; the latter stated in 1905 that the " use of turbines in heavy warships does not recommend itself . " This decision was based solely on cost : at the time , Parsons held a monopoly on steam turbines and required a 1 million gold mark royalty fee for every turbine engine . German firms were not ready to begin production of turbines on a large scale until 1910 .

Posen carried twelve 28 cm (11 @. @ 0 in) SK L / 45 guns in an unusual hexagonal configuration . Her secondary armament consisted of twelve 15 cm (5 @. @ 9 in) SK L / 45 guns and sixteen 8 @. @ 8 cm (3 @. @ 5 in) SK L / 45 guns , all of which were mounted in casemates . Later in her career , two of the 8 @. @ 8 cm guns were replaced with high @-@ angle Flak mountings of the same caliber for defense against aircraft . The ship was also armed with six 45 cm (17 @. @ 7 in) submerged torpedo tubes . One tube was mounted in the bow , another in the stern , and two on each broadside , on either ends of the torpedo bulkhead . The ship 's belt armor was 300 mm (11

@. @ 8 in) thick in the central portion of the hull , and the armored deck was 80 mm (3 @. @ 1 in) thick . The main battery turrets had 280 mm (11 @. @ 0 in) thick sides , and the conning tower was protected with 400 mm (15 @. @ 7 in) of armor plating .

= = Service history = =

After completing her trials in August 1910 , Posen left Kiel for Wilhelmshaven , where she arrived on 7 September . As the German Imperial Navy had chronic shortages of trained sailors , many of the crew were then assigned to other ships . These crewmembers were replaced with personnel from the old pre @-@ dreadnought Wittelsbach , which was decommissioned on 20 September . After their commissioning , all four Nassau @-@ class ships served as a unit , the II Division of I Battle Squadron , with Posen as the flagship .

Posen participated in several training exercises with the rest of the fleet before the outbreak of war . In late 1910 the fleet conducted a training cruise into the Baltic Sea . The following year the fleet conducted maneuvers in May ; the annual summer cruise to Norway followed in July . The fleet participated in another round of fleet exercises in the Baltic in September , followed by another set at the end of the year . The next year followed a similar pattern , though the summer cruise to Norway was interrupted by the Agadir crisis ; as a result , the summer cruise only went into the Baltic . The September exercises were conducted off Helgoland in the North Sea ; another winter cruise into the Baltic followed at the end of the year . The training schedule returned to normal for 1913 and 1914 , and the summer cruises again went to Norway . For the 1914 cruise , the fleet departed for Norwegian waters on 14 July , some two weeks after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo . The probability of war cut the cruise short ; Posen and the rest of the fleet were back in Wilhelmshaven by 29 July .

= = = World War I = = =

At midnight on 4 August , the United Kingdom declared war on Germany . Posen and the rest of the fleet conducted several advances into the North Sea to support Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper 's I Scouting Group battlecruisers . The battlecruisers raided British coastal towns in an attempt to lure out portions of the Grand Fleet where they could be destroyed by the High Seas Fleet . The first such operation was the raid on Scarborough , Hartlepool and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 . On the evening of 15 December , the German battle fleet of 12 dreadnoughts ? including Posen and her three 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 the German fleet commander , Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , that he was faced with the Grand Fleet , now deployed in its battle formation . Under orders from Kaiser Wilhelm II to avoid risking the fleet unnecessarily , von Ingenohl broke off the engagement and turned the battlefleet back toward Germany .

= = = Battle of the Gulf of Riga = = =

In August , a special unit from the German fleet attempted to clear the Russian @-@ held Gulf of Riga in order to assist the German Army , which was planning an assault on Riga . To do so , the German planners intended to drive off or destroy the Russian naval forces in the Gulf , which included the pre @-@ dreadnought battleship Slava and some smaller gunboats and destroyers . The German battle fleet was accompanied by several mine @-@ warfare vessels . These ships were tasked with clearing Russian minefields and laying a series of their own minefields in the northern entrance to the gulf , to prevent Russian naval reinforcements from reaching the area . The assembled German flotilla included Posen and her three sister ships , the four Helgoland @-@ class battleships , the battlecruisers Von der Tann , Moltke , and Seydlitz , and several pre @-@ dreadnoughts , operating under the command of von Hipper , now a Vice Admiral . The eight battleships were to provide cover for the forces engaging the Russian flotilla . The first attempt on 8

August was unsuccessful , as it had taken too long to clear the Russian minefields to allow the minelayer Deutschland to lay a minefield of her own .

On 16 August 1915 , Posen and Nassau led a second attempt to breach the defenses of the gulf , with Posen as Admiral Schmidt 's flagship . The two dreadnoughts were accompanied by 4 light cruisers and 31 torpedo boats . On the first day of the assault the Germans broke through the Russian forces , but two German light craft ? the minesweeper T46 and the destroyer V99 ? were sunk . Posen and Nassau engaged a pair of Russian gunboats , Sivuch and Korietz . Sivuch was sunk that day and Korietz was severely damaged ; the ship managed to limp away but had to be scuttled the following day . On the 17th , Posen and Nassau engaged Slava at long range ; they scored three hits on the Russian ship and forced her to return to port . By 19 August , the Russian minefields had been cleared and the flotilla entered the Gulf . Reports of Allied submarines in the area prompted the Germans to call off the operation the following day . Admiral Hipper later remarked , " To keep valuable ships for a considerable time in a limited area in which enemy submarines were increasingly active , with the corresponding risk of damage and loss , was to indulge in a gamble out of all proportion to the advantage to be derived from the occupation of the Gulf before the capture of Riga from the land side . " In fact , the battlecruiser Moltke had been torpedoed that morning . On 21 August , Schmidt had his flag hauled down from Posen and disbanded the special unit .

== == Return to the North Sea == ==

By the end of August Posen and the rest of the High Seas Fleet had returned to their anchorages in the North Sea . The next operation conducted was a sweep into the North Sea on 11 ? 12 September , though it ended without any action . Another fleet sortie followed on 23 ? 24 October without encountering any British forces . On 4 March 1916 , Posen , Nassau , Westfalen , and Von der Tann steamed out to the Amrumbank to receive the auxiliary cruiser Möwe , which was returning from a raiding mission .

Another uneventful advance into the North Sea took place on 21 ? 22 April . A bombardment mission followed two days later ; Posen joined the battleship support for Hipper 's battlecruisers while they attacked 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 . Due to the poor visibility , the operation was soon called off , leaving the British fleet no time to intercept the raiders .

== == Battle of Jutland == ==

Admiral Reinhard Scheer , who had succeeded Admirals von Ingenohl and Hugo von Pohl as the fleet commander , immediately planned another attack on the British coast . The damage to Seydlitz and condenser trouble on several of the III Battle Squadron dreadnoughts delayed the plan until the end of May . The German battlefleet departed the Jade at 03 : 30 on 31 May . Posen was assigned to the II Division of the I Battle Squadron as the flagship of Rear Admiral W. Engelhardt . Posen was the first ship in the division , ahead of her three sisters . The II Division was the last unit of dreadnoughts in the fleet ; they were followed by only the elderly pre @-@ dreadnoughts of the II Battle Squadron .

Between 17 : 48 and 17 : 52 , Posen and ten other German battleships engaged the British 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron , though the range and poor visibility prevented effective fire . Shortly thereafter , two British destroyers ? Nomad and Nestor ? came under intense fire from the German line . Posen fired at Nestor with both her main battery and secondary guns . At 18 : 35 , Nestor exploded and sank under the combined fire of eight battleships . By 20 : 15 , the German fleet had faced the Grand Fleet for a second time and was forced to turn away ; in doing so , the order of the German line was reversed . Posen was now the fourth ship in the line , astern of her three sisters .

At around 21 : 20 , Posen and her sister ships were engaged by the battlecruisers of the 3rd Battlecruiser Squadron . Posen was the only ship on the I Battle Squadron to be able to make out a

target , which turned out to be the battlecruisers HMS Princess Royal and Indomitable . Posen opened fire at 21 : 28 at a range of 10 @, @ 000 m (11 @, @ 000 yd) ; she scored one hit on Princess Royal at 21 : 32 and straddled Indomitable several times , surrounding her with a salvo of shells , before ceasing fire at 21 : 35 .

At about 00 : 30 , the leading units of the German line encountered British destroyers and cruisers . A violent firefight at close range ensued ; the leading German battleships , including Posen , opened fire on several British warships . In the confusion , the light cruiser Elbing passed through the German line directly in front of Posen and was rammed . Posen was undamaged , but both of Elbing 's engine rooms were flooded and the ship came to a halt . Two and a half hours later , Elbing spotted several approaching British destroyers , and her captain gave the order to scuttle the ship .

Shortly before 01 : 00 , the German line engaged a flotilla of British destroyers . Posen spotted the destroyers Fortune , Porpoise , and Garland at very close range ; she opened fire on the first two ships at ranges between 800 and 1 @, @ 600 m (870 and 1 @, @ 750 yd) , seriously damaging Porpoise . Fortune quickly sank under fire from Posen and several other battleships , but not before firing two torpedoes which Posen had to evade . At 01 : 25 , Westfalen illuminated the destroyer Ardent and opened fire ; Posen joined her shortly thereafter and reported several hits at ranges of 1 @, @ 000 to 1 @, @ 200 m (1 @, @ 100 to 1 @, @ 300 yd) .

Despite the ferocity of the night fighting , the High Seas Fleet punched through the British destroyer forces and reached Horns Reef by 04 : 00 on 1 June . The German fleet reached Wilhelmshaven a few hours later , where Posen and several other battleships from the I Battle Squadron took up defensive positions in the outer roadstead . Over the course of the battle , the ship had fired fifty @-@ three 28 cm shells , sixty @-@ four 15 cm rounds , and thirty @-@ two 8 @. @ 8 cm shells . The ship and her crew emerged from the battle completely unscathed by enemy fire .

Beginning in June 1917 , Wilhelm von Krosigk served as the ship 's commanding officer ; he held this position until the end of the war in November 1918 .

= = = = Expedition to Finland = = = =

In February 1918 , the German navy decided to send an expedition to Finland to support German army units to be deployed there . The Finns were engaged in a civil war ; the White Finns sought a conservative government free from the influence of the newly created Soviet Union , while the Red Guards preferred Soviet @-@ style communism . On 23 February , two of Posen 's sister ships ? Westfalen and Rheinland ? were assigned as the core of the Sonderverband Ostsee (Special Unit Baltic Sea) . The two ships embarked the 14th Jäger Battalion . They departed for the Åland Islands on the following morning . Åland was to be a forward operating base , from which the port of Hanko would be secured . From Hanko , the German expedition would assault the capital of Helsingfors . The task force reached the Åland Islands on 5 March , where they encountered the Swedish coastal defense ships HSwMS Sverige , Thor , and Oscar II . Negotiations ensued , which resulted in the landing of the German troops on Åland on 7 March ; Westfalen then returned to Danzig , where Posen was stationed .

On 31 March Posen and Westfalen left Danzig ; the ships arrived at Russarö , which was the outer defense for Hanko , by 3 April . The German army quickly took the port . The task force then proceeded to Helsingfors ; on 11 April the ship passed into the harbor at Helsingfors and landed the soldiers . This included a detachment from the ship which was landed two days later on 13 April . During the operation , Posen 's crew suffered four men killed and twelve wounded . From 18 to 20 April , Posen assisted with the efforts to free Rheinland , which had been grounded . Two days later , Posen struck a sunken wreck in Helsingfors harbor , which caused minor damage . On 30 April the ship was detached from the Sonderverband Ostsee . The ship returned to Germany , reaching Kiel by 3 May , where she entered drydock . Repair work lasted until 5 May .

= = = = Later actions in the North Sea = = = =

On 11 August 1918 , Posen , Westfalen , Kaiser , and Kaiserin sortied from Wilhelmshaven to

support torpedo boats on patrol off Terschelling . On 2 October , Posen moved out into the outer roadsteads of the Jade to provide cover for the returning U @-@ boats of the Flanders Flotilla . Posen was to have taken part in the last fleet operation of the war , planned for 30 October . The operation was intended to inflict as much damage as possible on the British navy , in order to retain a better bargaining position for Germany , whatever the cost to the fleet . War @-@ weary sailors mutinied , which led to the operation being canceled . In an attempt to suppress the spread of mutinous sentiments , Admiral Hipper ordered the fleet dispersed . Posen and the other ships of the I Battle Squadron were sent out into the roadstead on 3 November , then returned to Wilhelmshaven on 6 November .

= = = Fate = = =

On 11 November 1918 , the Armistice took effect ; according to its terms , eleven battleships and five battlecruisers were to be interned in Scapa Flow for the duration of negotiations for the peace treaty . Posen was not among the ships interned , and she was instead decommissioned on 16 December . The ships in Scapa Flow were scuttled by their crews on 21 June 1919 to prevent them from being seized by the Allies . As a result , Posen and the other battleships that remained in Germany were seized as replacements for the ships that had been lost . On 5 November , Posen was stricken from the German navy list to be handed over to Great Britain . The ship was transferred on 13 May 1920 ; the British subsequently sold her to ship @-@ breakers in the Netherlands . Posen was broken up in Dordrecht in 1922 .