

NZART ID: 289 Arm Type: Armed Vessel, Date of Draft: (V1) 23 July 2016, Compiled by: Phil Cregeen

Pattern: HMS Gambia (C48), Fiji Class Light Cruiser;

Introduced in to NZ Service: 1943;

Withdrawn: 1946

Builder: Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd, Wallsend-on-Tyne;

Launched 30/11/40,

Commissioned in RN 21/22/42.

Tonnage: 8000; Dimensions: 555.5 x 538 x 62 x 21 ft (169.3 x 164 x 18.9 x 6.4 m)

Machinery: 4 shaft, oil fired steam turbines, 72,500 shp; Speed: 31.5 knots.

Armament: Guns – 12 x 6 in, 8 x 4 in, 10 x 2 Pdr, 20 x 20mm. Torpedo Tubes - 6 x 21 in; Complement: 550.



NZ Service

Gambia was loaned to New Zealand in September 1943 when both *Achilles* and *Leander* were out of service. She remained under Admiralty control until October '44 but was formally transferred to the RNZN in May of that year.

On completion of a refit at Birkenhead, she worked up in UK waters and carried out blockade patrols in the Atlantic before joining the Eastern Fleet at Ceylon in February '44. Here she operated with carrier forces against Japanese targets in the Indian Ocean and Dutch East Indies, before sailing to New Zealand in October. Following a 5 week refit in Auckland she joined the British Pacific Fleet at Sydney in February '45 and was then engaged in the air assaults on Formosa and Okinawa. After a refit at Sydney in June '45 *Gambia* took part in bombardment of the Japanese mainland. Just after the cessation of hostilities had been signalled at noon on 15/8/45 she was nearly struck by a Japanese Kamikaze dive bomber, fortunately it was shot down by a USN Corsair pilot, the bomb landing in the sea close by and part of the plane on the after superstructure narrowly missing 150 men mustered on the aft deck. Having fired some of the last shots in WW II *Gambia* represented New Zealand in the Allied Fleet entry into Sagami Bay and the subsequent occupation of Tokyo Bay and was present at the formal Japanese surrender on 2/9/45, returning to Auckland in October.

Gambia left New Zealand in February '46 returning to the UK via Sydney where the New Zealand crew left and were replaced by hundreds of loan service RN personnel returning home. She continued in service with the RN until December 1960, serving mainly on the Mediterranean and East Indies Station, placed in reserve at Portsmouth and finally broken up at Inverkeithing, Firth of Forth in 1969.

Acknowledgements: New Zealand Naval Vessels by RJ McDougall.