

**Pattern: HMS Achilles (C70), Leander (C75), Neptune (C20), Leander Class Light Cruiser;**

Introduced in to NZ Service: 1936; Withdrawn: 1946

**Achilles** Builder: Cammel Laird & Co, Belfast; launched 1/9/32, commissioned in RN 5/10/33

**Leander** Builder: HM Dockyard, Devonport; launched 24/9/31, commissioned in RN 23/3/33

**Neptune** Builder: HM Dockyard, Portsmouth; launched 31/1/33, commissioned in RN 23/2/34

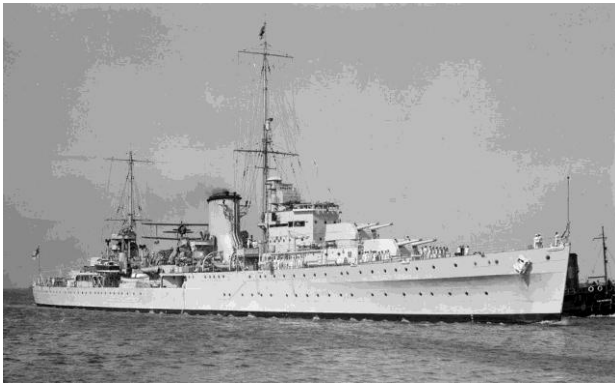
Tonnage: Achilles 7030, Leander 7270, Neptune 7151; Dimensions: 554.5x530x55.3x20 ft (169x161.5x16.9x6.1m)

Machinery: 4 shaft, oil fired steam turbines, 72,000 shp; Speed: 32 knots.

Armament: Guns – 8 x 6 in, 4 x 4 in, 4 x 3 Pdr, 8 x 2 Pdr, MGs, In WW II MGs replaced by 20mm & 40 mm AA guns.

Torpedo Tubes - 8 x 21 in; Aircraft: 1 x Supermarine Walrus, removed in early 1940s.

Complement: 550.



HMS Achilles



HMS Leander

#### NZ Service

**Achilles** commissioned into NZ Service at Chatham on 31/3/36 and arrived at Auckland 6/9/36. **Leander** commissioned into NZ service at Devonport on 30/4/37 and arrived at Auckland 18/8/37. Both ships toured New Zealand and engaged in exercises in home waters, Australia and South Pacific.

Returning from a visit to England **Achilles** was diverted to the South Atlantic Station following the outbreak of WW II and was involved in the destruction of the German raider *Admiral Graf Spee* off the River Plate in December 1939. She suffered one near miss from an 11 in shell, the splinters killing 4 and injuring 7 crew. After refitting in Auckland in Mid 1940 Achilles was employed searching for German raiders and escorting troop ships to the Pacific Islands, working with Australian and US warships. While in the Solomon Is. in January 1943 she suffered a direct hit from a Jap bomb which destroyed X turret and killed 13 and injured 8 others. She sailed to England arriving in March 1943 for refit where her X turret was removed, more AA and dual purpose guns were fitted and the pole mast replaced by a tripod. The refit was protracted due to a fuel tank explosion that killed 14 workmen and cause serious structural damage. Achilles finally sailed for the Mediterranean in August 1944, then on via Australia to join the British Pacific Fleet in 1945 in the final push against Japan. She made a final tour of New Zealand in June 1946 before returning to England prior to refit and sale to the Royal Indian Navy. Serving as *INS Delhi* until 1978 she was broken up at Bombay, and her Y turret (now at Devonport Naval Base) and honours board were presented to New Zealand.

After landing a small garrison on Fanning Island in September '39 **Leander** was employed on escort duties to Australia before proceeding to the Indian Ocean and Red Sea in mid 1940. She was engaged in a short encounter with two Italian destroyers off Massawa in October 1940 and also had to fend off a number of Italian aircraft and submarines. In mid '41 she joined the Mediterranean Fleet where she was involved in skirmishes with French destroyers off Vichy French Syria. She arrived back at Wellington in September '41. From this point on she was employed in the Pacific working with Australian and US ships on escort duties to the Solomon Islands. In July 1943 while in the Kula Gulf off New Georgia, she was hit in No 1 boiler room by a Jap torpedo, killing 28 and injuring 15. Patched up she returned to Auckland and then to Boston for major repairs and rearming in 1944/45. She returned to RN service in May 1944 and her crew transferred to Achilles after her refit at Portsmouth. After a 21 month refit at

Boston and Newcastle Leander joined the Med. Fleet in 1946, was paid off in December '47 and scrapped at Blythe in 1950.

**Neptune** was not loaned to New Zealand but remained an RN ship; from May '41 she was partly manned by 150 New Zealanders. En route to New Zealand where she was to replace Leander, she spent time in the Mediterranean, and on 19/12/41 off Tripoli she ran into an enemy mine field and was sunk with the loss of over 750 men. Only 16 men got off the ship before she capsized and sank but only one survived and was picked up six days later by an Italian ship.



HMS Neptune – note Walrus aircraft aft of funnel

*Acknowledgements: New Zealand Naval Vessels by RJ McDougall.*