

= HMS Philomel (1890) =

HMS Philomel , later HMNZS Philomel , was a Pearl @-@ class cruiser . She was the fifth ship of that name and served with the Royal Navy . After her commissioning in 1890 , she served on the Cape of Good Hope Station and later with the Mediterranean Fleet .

In 1914 , she was loaned to New Zealand for service with what would later become the Royal New Zealand Navy . During the early stages of the First World War she performed convoy escort duties and then carried out operations in the Mediterranean against the Turks . She later conducted patrols in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf .

By 1917 , she was worn out and dispatched back to New Zealand where she served as a depot ship in Wellington Harbour for minesweepers . In 1921 she was transferred to the Devonport Naval Base in Auckland for service as a training ship . Decommissioned and sold for scrap in 1947 , her hulk was scuttled in 1949 .

= = Design and description = =

HMS Philomel was laid down on 9 May 1889 at HM Naval Dockyard in Devonport , Plymouth . Her name is derived from Philomela , in Greek mythology the daughter of Pandion I , King of Athens , and was the fifth ship to be so named .

The ship had an overall length of 278 feet (84 @.@ 7 m) , a beam of 41 feet (12 @.@ 5 m) and a draught of 17 feet 6 inches (5 @.@ 3 m) . She displaced 2 @,@ 575 long tons (2 @,@ 616 t) . Propulsion was through 3 @-@ cylinder triple @-@ expansion steam engines , driving two shafts , which produced a total of 7 @,@ 500 indicated horsepower (5 @,@ 600 kW) and gave a maximum speed of 19 knots (35 km / h ; 22 mph) . She was also rigged for sail and when installing the foremast , workmen noticed it was stamped " Devonport Dockyard 1757 " . Her main armament consisted of eight QF 4 @.@ 7 inch (120 mm) guns with a secondary armament of eight 3 @-@ pounders . As well as four machine guns , the ship also mounted two submerged 14 @-@ inch (360 mm) torpedo tubes .

Philomel was launched on 28 August 1890 , and completed the following March . After completing sea trials , she was commissioned in the Royal Navy on 10 November 1891 . Commanded by Captain Charles Campbell , she was assigned to the Cape of Good Hope Station although fitting work and working up trials meant that Philomel did not arrive in South Africa until June 1892 .

= = Operational history = =

For six years , Philomel served on station , intercepting slave traders along the coast of Africa . In 1896 , she participated in the Anglo @-@ Zanzibar War , during which rebels murdered the Sultan of Zanzibar and seized his palace . Along with the three gunboats and HMS St George , she bombarded the palace fortress and the only ship of the Zanzibar Navy , the HHS Glasgow . This action lasted less than an hour and resulted in the routing of the rebels . The following year , Philomel was transferred to the West Africa Station and participated in the Benin Expedition .

A refit was completed in 1898 after which Philomel returned to Cape of Good Hope Station . She served throughout the Second Boer War . Some of her complement of 220 men served in the field with the Naval Brigade . Two of her 4 @.@ 7 inch guns were disembarked and used in the Battle of Colenso . After the war , she returned to Devonport and was paid off on 22 March 1902 . She was laid up in the Firth of Forth for several years before a refit was carried out in 1907 at Haulbowline Dock in Ireland . During her tow to Ireland she went adrift for a night in the North Sea when the rope to the towing vessel , the HMS Hampshire , broke .

Philomel was recommissioned in February 1908 for service with the Mediterranean Fleet under the command of Captain John Seagrave . She provided assistance in the wake of the earthquake at Messina in Sicily . The following year she served with the East Indies Station , running patrols from Aden in the Persian Gulf for two years .

== Transfer to New Zealand ==

In 1913 the Admiralty agreed to lend Philomel to New Zealand as a seagoing training cruiser to form the nucleus of the newly established New Zealand Naval Forces , which was a new division of the Royal Navy . This was in response to the desire of the New Zealand Minister of Defence at the time , James Allen , who wanted to establish a local naval force which would co - operate with the fledgling Royal Australian Navy .

Philomel was recommissioned in October 1913 in Singapore and later sailed for New Zealand to join HMAS Psyche and HMAS Pyramus , both Pelorus - class cruisers serving on the New Zealand Station . The Philomel was commissioned for New Zealand service on 15 July 1914 , under the command of Captain Percival Hall - Thompson . Although mainly crewed by Englishmen , she was the country 's first warship .

== First World War ==

The Philomel was on a short shakedown voyage to Picton on 30 July 1914 , prior to taking on its first complement of New Zealand cadets , when it was recalled to Wellington Harbour in anticipation of the outbreak of war . Largely crewed by personnel from the Royal Navy , volunteers were brought on board to bring the ship up to full strength and after stocking up with supplies , she departed for Auckland to await further instructions . On 15 August 1914 she formed part of the ocean escort for the New Zealand forces which was dispatched to occupy German Samoa (now Samoa) . The escort would have been unlikely to offer much resistance to the German cruisers SMS Scharnhorst and SMS Gneisenau that were known to be in the area . Fortunately , the convoy did not encounter the German ships . Philomel then steamed for the Kingdom of Tonga to deliver news of the hostilities with Imperial Germany before returning to New Zealand .

By now the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force , formed for service overseas , were ready to embark from Wellington on a convoy for the Middle East . Philomel escorted the convoy as far as Western Australia . Then , along with Pyramus , she sailed northeastwards for Singapore in search of the German cruiser SMS Emden , which was then carrying out raids in the Indian Ocean . The two ships , which would have been outgunned by the more modern Emden , had reached Christmas Island when they received news of the Emden 's sinking by HMAS Sydney . They arrived in Singapore on 12 November from where Philomel continued onto Port Said , escorting three French troopships .

From late 1914 , Philomel , needing maintenance and an update of equipment , was berthed at Malta and underwent an overhaul . This was completed by late January 1915 and she then started operations in the Mediterranean against the Turks . On 8 February she landed an armed party in Southern Turkey where a large force of Turkish soldiers were encountered , resulting in three seamen being killed and three wounded . This action marked the first deaths in the war of New Zealanders serving with a New Zealand formation .

Subsequently Philomel was deployed in the Red Sea and in the Persian Gulf for much of the remainder of the year . In December 1915 she sailed to Bombay for maintenance work but was back in the Persian Gulf in January 1916 , continuing her patrolling . By the end of the year , her engines were giving trouble and her stern glands were worn out . A lengthy and costly refit was required and rather than incur this cost for a ship which was nearly at the end of her operational life , the Admiralty decided to gift her to New Zealand and dispatched her home to be paid off . She duly arrived in Wellington Harbour in March 1917 . A large portion of her Royal Navy crew were returned to England to be assigned to other berths . Armament removed , Philomel was recommissioned as a depot ship in Wellington , supporting minesweeping operations until May 1919 .

== Postwar service ==

In March 1921 , on the creation of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy , Philomel was recommissioned as a training base . She steamed from her berth at Wellington to the dockyard at

the Devonport Naval Base in Auckland . Moored alongside the training jetty , she was operated as a training facility for new recruits to the naval service , under the command of a series of officers from the Royal Navy including , for nearly six months in 1923 , Commander Augustus Agar VC . Training armament was installed and in 1925 , her boilers and engines were removed to create more accommodation space . Further accommodation , in the form of wooden cabins , was later constructed on her deck . In October 1941 , on the creation of the Royal New Zealand Navy , Philomel was recommissioned as the training base HMNZS Philomel .

= = = Fate = = =

Philomel was paid off and decommissioned on 17 January 1947 and her name transferred to the Devonport Naval Shore Establishment . On the day of her decommissioning , the New Zealand Naval Board sent a signal to Philomel which stated :

" ... their regret at the passing from the service of the first of His Majesty ' s New Zealand Ships , a ship that has meant so much to all who served in her . She goes as many good ships have gone before her , but when HMNZS Philomel ' s colours are hauled down at sunset this evening , the tradition which she has established during her long career will live on in the depot to which she has given her name . "

The hulk of the Philomel was sold to the Strongman Shipping Company , based in Coromandel . She was towed and deliberately ran aground in Coromandel harbour , near the wharf . After her fittings and parts were removed , she was towed out to sea and sunk near Cuvier Island on 6 August 1949 . Much of the teak timber and some fittings went into a newly built coaster named Coromel , an amalgamation of Coromandel and Philomel . Her crest is mounted to the gate of the Devonport Naval Base .