Cruisers – UK, Germany, Spain, Sweden

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 264 | 1938 | Cruiser | Prinz Eugen | 20 |
| 265 | 1937 | Cruiser | Admiral Hipper | 18 |
| 266 | 1937 | Cruiser | Blucher | 19 |
| 766 | 1928 | Cruiser | Cumberland | 4 |
| 768 | 1930 | Cruiser | Norfolk | 3 |
| 770 | 1941 | Cruiser | Euryalus | 12 |
| 771 | 1938 | Cruiser | Sheffield | 2 |
| 776 | 1934 | Cruiser | Neptune | 9 |
| 777 | 1934 | Cruiser | Achilles | 8 |
| 779 | 1935 | Cruiser | Arethusa | 5 |
| 780 | 1930 | Cruiser | York | 6 |
| 781 | 1932 | Cruiser | Exeter | 7 |
| 908 | 1939 | Cruiser | Belfast | 1 |
| 917 | 1959 | Cruiser | Tiger | 10 |
| 918 | 1961 | Cruiser | Blake | 11 |
| 1272 | 1922 | Armed M'nt Cruiser | HMS Jervis Bay | 14 |
| 1282 | 1907 | Cruiser | Blucher | 25 |
| 1283 | 1909 | Cruiser | Scharnhorst | 26 |
| 1284 | 1902 | Cruiser | Aboukir | 15 |
| 1286 | 1926 | Cruiser | Enterprise | 13 |
| 1326 | 1934 | Cruiser | Nurnberg | 22 |
| 1327 | 1925 | Cruiser | Emden | 23 |
| 1328 | 1929 | Cruiser | Leipzig | 24 |
| 1329 | 1927 | Cruiser | Karlsruhe | 21 |
| 1397 | 1931 | Cruiser | Canarias | 30 |
| 1398 | 1925 | Cruiser | Galicia | 28 |
| 1399 | 1933 | Cruiser | Mundez-Nunez | 16 |
| 1400 | 1920 | Cruiser | Navarra | 17 |
| 1828 | 1963 | cruiser | Deutschland | 27 |
| 1829 | 1949 | cruiser | Gota Lejon | 29 |

The cruiser came into being because of the large extent of empires needing trade protection. Originally it was the frigate which took this role in the age of sail, however, a larger, long range, heavy gunned ship was required to carry naval power to the outer reaches of empire. The German Blucher, 1907 (Model number 1282) and Scharnhorst, 1909 (Model number 1283) and the British Aboukir, 1902 (Model number 1284) represent the early stages of development to the end of WW1. These ships generally mounted a main armament of 8 or 9 inch guns with a smaller secondary armament of 4 or 5 inch. As they were coal-powered they had to have the capacity for a large store of coal for the distances they were to travel. Coaling stations were spread throughout the world where the ships could coal.

None of these ships survived WW1 and the replacement ships were oil fired with a much sleeker design. The Spanish Navarra, 1920 (Model number 1400) and Galicia, 1925 (Model number 1398), the British Enterprise, 1926 (Model number 1286) and the German Emden, 1925 (Model number 1327), Leipzig, 1929 (Model number 1328) and Karlsruhe, 1927 (Model number 1329) are such a development and they still retain some of the features of the older vessels, particularly the hull shape. In Britain a large class of 10,000 ton vessels were constructed of which Cumberland, 1928 (Model number 766) and Norfolk, 1930 (Model number 768) are examples. This 3 funnelled design was very robust and they were the basis of the cruiser fleet throughout WW2. They were armed with 8 8 inch guns in four turrets, 2 fore and 2 aft. York, 1930 (Model number 780) and Exeter, 1932 (Model number 781) were based on the ‘county’ class but were slightly smaller armed with only 6 8 inch guns in 3 turrets, 2 fore and 1 aft.

Neptune, 1934 (Model number 776), Achilles, 1934 (Model number 777) of the numerous Leander class and the slightly different Arethusa, 1935 (Model number 779) were examples of a smaller group of light cruisers, armed with 8 6 inch guns. The Achilles, along with the Ajax a sister ship and the Exeter are renowned for their part in the sinking of the German pocket battleship Graf Spee in 1939. German cruiser development was slightly different and the Nurnberg, 1934 (Model number 1326) represents the single funnelled cruisers developed at the time. Although they were robust, they were thrown away in the invasion of Norway in 1940 and afterwards played little part in WW2. The Spanish Canarias, 1931 (Model number 1397) and Mundez-Nunez, 1933 (Model number 1399) were very similar to their English equivalents but played little part either in their own civil war or in WW2.

Germany developed a class of three heavy cruisers Prinz Eugen, 1938 (Model number 264), Admiral Hipper, 1937 (Model number 265) and Blucher, 1937 (Model number 266). After some initial success these cruisers each ended up as secondary to the U-Boat war. Blucher was sunk during the invasion of Norway – by Norwegian shore batteries in Oslo – and Prinz Eugen and Hipper, after being damaged and repaired ended up locked up in the Norwegian Fjords.

As aircraft took a greater role in war at sea a large class, the Didos, were designed as anti-aircraft cruisers, armed with 10 5 inch high angle guns in 5 turrets, 3 fore and 2 aft. Euryalus, 1938 (Model number 770) was heavily involved in the war in the Mediterranean, particularly protecting convoys to Malta.

The numerous ‘town’ class ships such as Sheffield, 1938 (Model number 771) and Belfast, 1939 (Model number 908) were the mainstay of the war effort alongside the ‘county’ class heavy cruisers and a large number were built. During WW2 a number of passenger liners were armed with 6 inch guns to fill a gap in the provision of cruiser escorts for convoys. The Jervis Bay, 1922 (Model number 1272) was such an armed merchant cruiser and engaged the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer in 1940 while escorting a convoy in the North Atlantic. Although the Jervis bay was sunk by the much more powerful Scheer, the time it took enabled the convoy to scatter and the Scheer only managed to sink 5 of the convoy’s ships. The were only 68 survivors of the crew of 250. The captain was awarded a posthumous VC.

After WW2 Britain built just two advanced ‘town’ class ships – Swiftsure and Superb - and the next development were the ‘Lion’ class – Lion, Tiger, 1959 (Model number 917) and Blake, 1961 (Model number 918). These were very much experimental and were modified to carry helicopters. Subsequently the cruiser disappeared as a warship, replaced by destroyers of a larger size and greater capacity and flexibility. Two ‘cruisers’ were built, the through deck Ark Royal and Invincible, but they were really small aircraft carriers designed to operate harrier VSTOL jump jets and helicopters. Ark Royal played a significant role in the Falklands war but not as a cruiser.

Germany’s Deutschland, 1963 (Model number 1828) and Gote Lejon, 1949 (Model number 1829) are the last gasps of cruiser building in Europe.

