

three

Warship flags

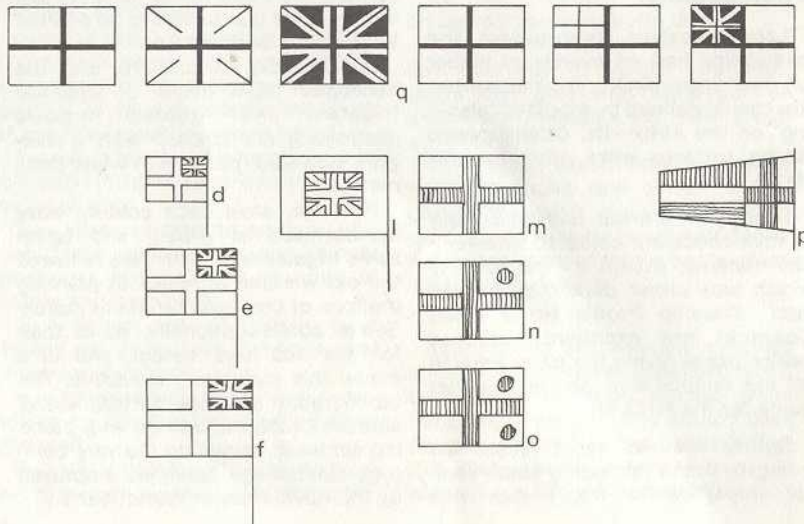
Although flag signalling has been largely overtaken, first by morse lamp and morse key, and later by 'voice' and teleprinter, flags are still used by warships both for ceremonial and operational purposes.

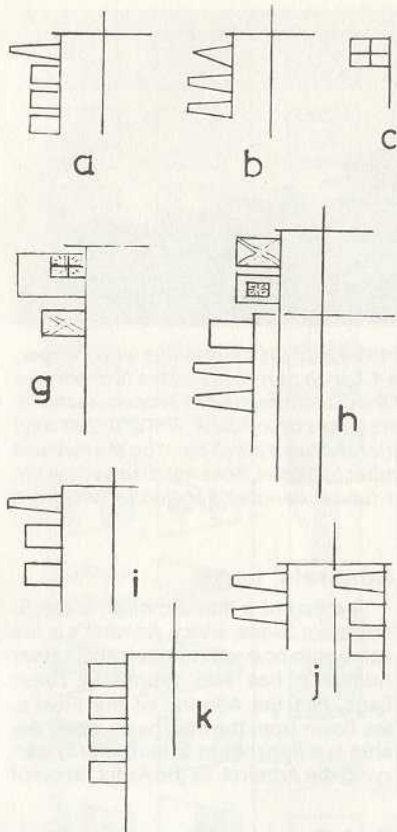
The regulations regarding flags change from time to time and the whole history of this form of signalling is a subject in itself. There are several books about it, and in *Airfix Magazine*, March 1970, I wrote an article called 'Make a Signal' which went into a good deal of detail.

Flags are mentioned in the section on the setting for the model, and the basic ones are, of course, the White Ensign, the Union Flag and the flags denoting the rank of Admirals.

Only Admirals fly a distinguishing

Fig 2. a Typical International Code hoist with 'Code Pennant' superior. **b** Typical pennant numbers hoist. **c** Flag Officers. **d** White Ensign, destroyers and below at 'sea' position. **e** White Ensign, destroyers from Ensign Staff and cruisers at 'sea' position. **f** White Ensign, cruisers and battleships from Ensign Staff, battleships at 'sea' position (**a - f** 1:600 scale). **g** Red Ensign over International 'M', Naval Right of Way, all warships pre-war and mid-1950s for all warships over 4,000 tons. **h** International 'M' over Pilot Jack (fore topyard), Naval Right of Way and typical pennant numbers (fore yard) all warships circa 1946. **i** International Code flag over 'ZV', Naval Right of Way circa 1960. **j** International Code pennant over pennant Zero, Naval Right of Way (left) and Naval 'Desig' over berth letters (right), all warships 1969 onwards. **k** 'Code Letters' flown by warships entering a foreign port (code letters for Daring were GKYK). **l** Design of Pilot Jack. **m** Admiral. **n** Vice Admiral. **o** Rear Admiral. **p** Church Flag, flown during Divine Services. **q** Progressive stages of the simplified Union Flag and White Ensign (**g - q** not to scale).





flag (Commodores fly a Broad Penant), and that is why Admirals are collectively referred to as 'Flag Officers' and their ships as 'Flag Ships'. When a Captain, RN, is promoted to Rear Admiral he is said to 'have got his Flag'.

Fig 2 shows some flags for 1:600 scale which are easily made and make no end of difference to the appearance of a model. Some kits actually provide a selection, but usually on paper that's a bit too thick. Let's first of all see what flags can be safely used, where they are flown and when.

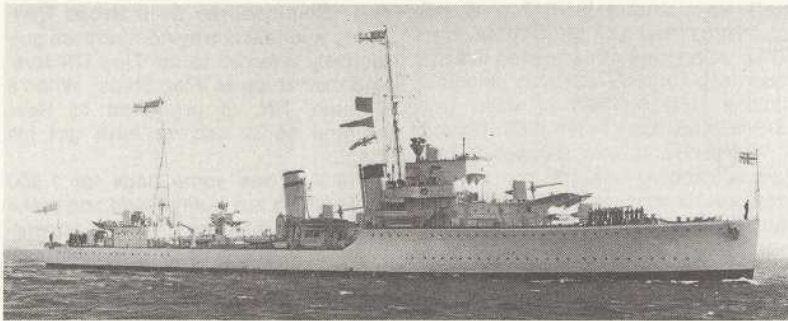
The White Ensign

This famous ensign is the Royal Navy's own flag, but is also flown by yachts belonging to the Royal Yacht Squadron, centred at Cowes in the Isle of Wight. It is flown by warships in commission (but not by those in Reserve) during daylight hours in harbour and continuously at sea. The model 'at sea' must, therefore, be flying the White Ensign (assuming it's not *Bismarck*, of course!).

In harbour it flies from the Ensign Staff at the stern, and at sea either at the same place, or, more usually, from a small gaff on the mast, or perhaps from its own 'stump' mast. It very much depends on the class of war-

The Airfix Suffolk kit makes conversions to a large number of British 8-inch cruisers possible. This is HMS London in February 1937 flying the old 'Right of Way' hoist. The big radial davits of her boats are clearly visible (Wright & Logan).





Before the war, destroyers usually ran in flotillas of eight sister-ships with a larger, ninth 'custom-built' Leader having an extra 4.7-inch gun between the funnels on a 'band stand'. This is the Leader Grenville, of the class immediately preceding the 'H' class, in May 1937, flying three White Ensigns (and a Union Jack, whilst under way) in the Coronation month. Note that as a Leader she has a black band on the forward funnel, and although flying her pennant number by signal, does not display it on the ship's side. The narrow band on the after funnel denotes her flotilla (Wright & Logan).

ship, and on the whole, it is best to look at a suitable photograph.

The Union Flag

This can denote three things. Firstly, as the National flag, it is flown from the Jack staff in the bows (the only time it is really the 'Union Jack') when a ship in Commission is at anchor, moored to a buoy, or alongside. But one must be careful, for it is also flown at sea when the ship is dressed overall for a ceremonial occasion — passing the Royal Yacht at a Review for example. Nevertheless, if your ship is modelled at anchor, she ought to fly the Union Flag from the Jack staff.

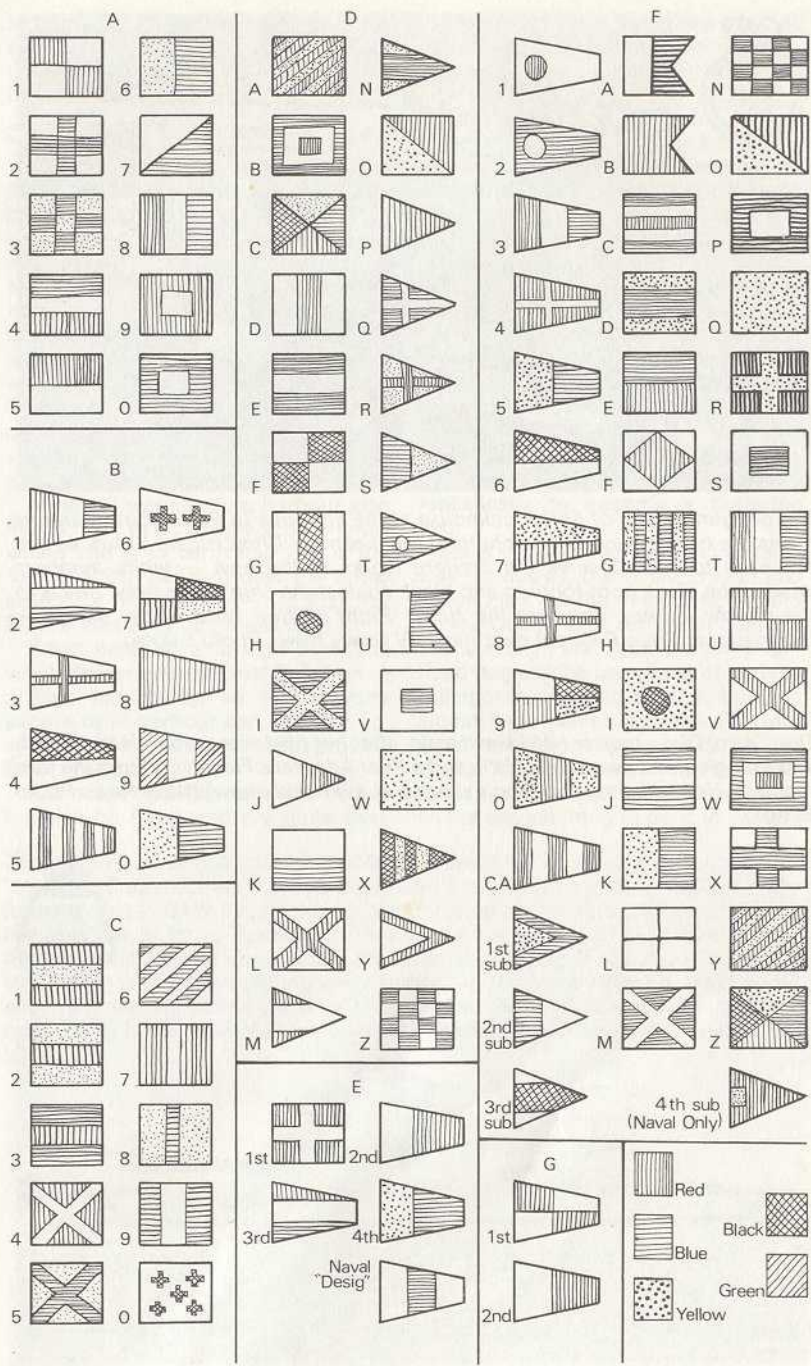
Secondly, the Union Flag is the personal flag of an Admiral of the Fleet, when it is flown at the masthead of his flagship (or even a ship which he is 'visiting'), and thirdly it is flown to show that a court martial is in progress.

At one time, courts martial in Portsmouth were held in Nelson's Flagship, HMS *Victory*, and I have actually seen her flying three Union Flags at the same time: at the Jack staff forward; at the mainmast truck (because C in C Portsmouth was then an Admiral of the Fleet); and from the mizzen gaff, for a court martial.

Admirals' flags

The flag of a 'full' Admiral, is the St George's Cross; a Vice Admiral's is the same with one red roundel; and a Rear Admiral's has two roundels. These flags, like the Admiral of the Fleet's, are flown from the masthead, when the ship is a flagship or is temporarily carrying the Admiral. In the Airfix range of

Fig 3. Panel A — Naval numeral flags up to 1948. **Panel B** — Naval numbered pennants up to 1948. **Panel C** — Naval numeral flags from 1948. **Panel D** — Naval code flags up to 1948. **Panel E** — Naval code flag substitutes up to 1948. **Panel F** — International Code flags and numeral pennants from 1934 and Naval Code from 1948. **Panel G** — Naval numbered pennant substitutes up to 1948. **NB** 'Substitutes' were used when a flag was repeated in the hoist. For example, 'KK' could be signalled either by two identical flags or by K and first substitute, indicating that the first flag was repeated. Note also the confusion of flags between the 'old' Naval Code and the 1934 International Code. For example, flag 'O' is the same in both, but International Flag 'W' is the same design as Naval flag 'B'.





The old gun battery of Fort Blockhouse at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour forms the background to this photo of the 'Leander' Class frigate Sirius, as she proceeds to sea. Observe the draught marks at the bow — white numbers against the black boot-topping and black against the ship's side grey. She is in the narrow fairway, and flies the Naval 'Right of Way' hoist of the period — International Code Pennant over flags ZV (Navy News Photo Series).

The 'Town' Class cruiser HMS Newcastle, after her post-war modernisation, with an awning spread over the fo'c's'le and a Rear Admiral's Flag flying from the fore topmast. Her hull shows a good example of a 'knuckle bow' (Navy News Photo Series).



kits, several ships were, or are, flag-ships, but any ship carrying a Flag Officer — even temporarily — flies his flag.

Other flags

Naval signalling flags are now of the same design as the International Code of Signals used by merchant ships, but have different code meanings. So when a warship signals by flag for all to understand, she flies the Code Pennant first, and the signal group beneath it. A typical example is the special hoist that warships make when entering a naval port like Portsmouth harbour. This hoist is Code Pennant over International 'zero' and gives the warship automatic 'Right of Way' over any merchantman.

A man o' war entering harbour also flies a hoist to let people ashore know where she is to berth and this is the 'Designation' pennant over the initial letters of the berth — 'M.S.J.' for Middle Slip Jetty, is an example.

When entering a foreign port, she would fly her International Call Sign — a four flag group so that anyone ashore or in harbour can 'call her up' — and some kits, in fact, provide such groups.

Examples of these flags are shown full size on Fig 2 and are quite easy

to make. Choose a thin piece of white paper — 'airmail' letter paper is fine — and lightly mark out the flag design on one side in pencil. Taking the very necessary White Ensign as an example, draw the main red cross on the paper in red ink; then the small red cross in the top Union Flag part with slightly thinner lines; and finally add just dots of blue ink to make up the Union Flag quarter.

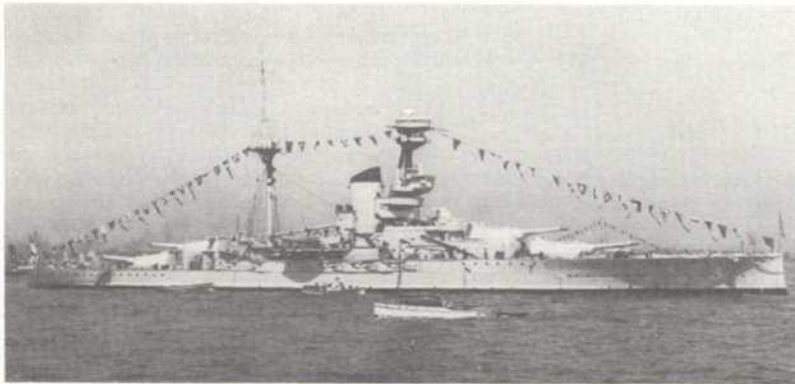
For the Union Flag, simply do the same thing and notice from the figure that white 'borders' are achieved and that the diagonal red lines of St Patrick have been added. When the ink is dry, turn the flag over and repeat the design on the other side. With thin white paper, it's just a matter of tracing, and the paper will 'crumple' very realistically to become a fluttering flag.

Make up the other flags in the same way (obviously, the White Ensign and Union Flag are the most difficult) and for the Code Flags, use water colours.

The Ensign and Jack and any mast-head flag can be cemented directly to the appropriate staff or mast, but with signal flags (which fly from the yard arms), a different approach is needed. Signal halyards are very light — certainly far too small to try to model — so the easiest thing to do is to cement

There was a strong family resemblance between the 'Daring' Class and the 'Weapon' Class, not so much in their main armament as in their hull form and funnels. This is HMS Scorpion, newly completed by J. Samuel White of Cowes, Isle of Wight, entering Portsmouth Harbour on September 29 1947. She is flying two signal hoists. The upper one is the International flag M over the Pilot Jack (a Union Flag with a surrounding white border) — the Naval 'Right of Way' signal, and from her starboard yardarm she flies her pennant number — the Naval code flag G of the period above number 6 Pennant and number 4 Pennant (P. A. Vicary).





The British battleship Resolution at anchor in 1935 — the Silver Jubilee Year of King George V. She is 'dressed overall' — an intriguing task for the modeller who has a fancy for making flags (P. A. Vicary).



The 'Leander' Class frigate HMS Arethusa entering Grand Harbour, Valletta, Malta in 1966. She carried the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean (Admiral Sir John Hamilton) from Gibraltar to Malta, and his temporary flagship flew the personal flag of a full Admiral from the fore topmast. On the port yardarm is her International Call Sign GHXH, and on the starboard, her berthing designation — Designation Pennant over PW. Her pennant number on the stern is beneath the sonar 199 well (A. & J. Pavia).

the signal hoist on to a very thin length of stretched plastic sprue. Leave a tiny piece of sprue above the uppermost flag and cement this to the yard-arm, cutting off any sprue below the lowest flag. Fig 2 shows the Naval 'Right of Way' hoist and gives the general idea.

Finally, do remember to position all the flags so that they are blowing in the same direction or someone will be

bound to spot the mistake!

As far as the *direction* is concerned remember that if a ship is steaming at 20 knots with a following wind of 20 knots, the flags won't flutter at all; and if she is slowly entering harbour with a following breeze, they may very well blow forwards. Of course, once she is steaming into the wind, they blow straight astern, but making sure they all blow the same way is the most important thing.