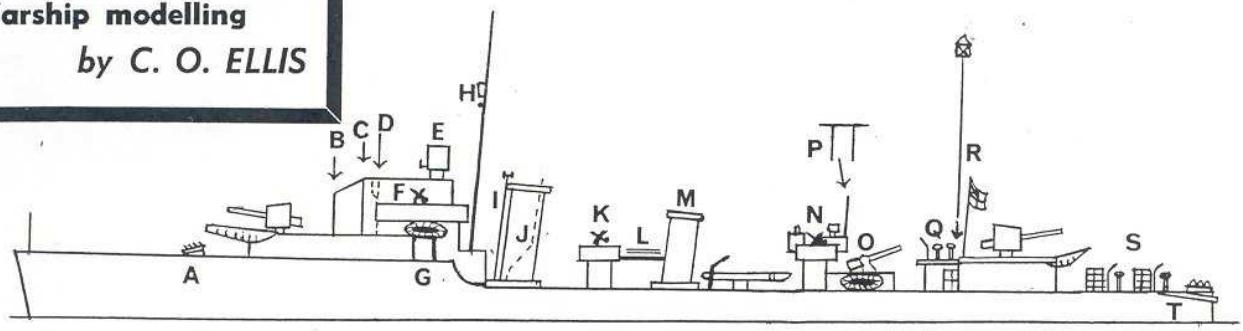
Warship modelling
by C. O. ELLIS



The 'A-I' destroyers

Models from the Airfix HMS 'Hotspur' kit

Drawing (full-size for model) shows retrospective modifications and small differences in 'A-I' destroyer classes. Key: A—'Hedgehog' mortar in place of A gun. B—Angled bridge front for 'I' class and some 'H' class. C—Bridge front for 'E-H' classes. D—Bridge front (dotted) for 'A-D' classes. E—Surface radar aerial in place of director control tower. F—Single 20 mm AA guns in each bridge wing in some ships. G—Carley raft on skids outboard of bridge wings. H—Crows nest in most ships. I—'Charlie Noble' type steam pipe forward of funnel. J—Steam pipe (dotted) to starboard in later ships. K—Machine guns replaced by two single 20 mm. Canvas 'dodgers' round gun platform. L—Gun platform extended aft ('I' class and some others) to provide Carley raft stowage. M—Aft funnel reduced in height. Most ships, but not 'I' class. N—S/L platform with canvas 'dodgers' and wings built port and starboard for single 20 mm guns. O—Single 3 in gun inside circular 'bandstand'. Tubes removed. P—Spreaders for w/t aerials. Q—X gun deck extended forward, .4 depth charge throwers or two 20 mm guns. Depth charges stowed under. R—Pole mast for direction finder or stump mast for ensign. S—Y gun removed. D/c racks and throwers added. Sweep gear removed. T—Stern chute each side in ships fitted as minelayers. Boats, anchors, ladders, etc, omitted for simplicity.

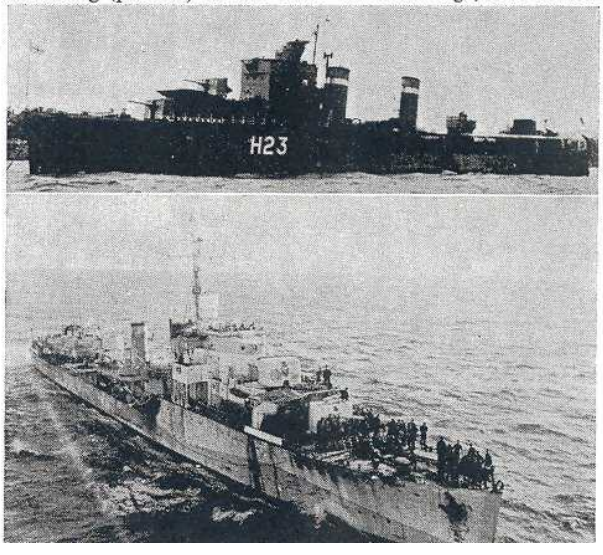
OF all the Airfix warship kits so far produced, HMS *Hotspur* undoubtedly offers most possibilities to the modeller. As a typical representative of the standard pre-war Royal Navy destroyer, *Hotspur* was one of over 70 vessels produced in batches—mostly of eight—authorised by succeeding Naval Estimates during the 1930s. At the building stage, differences between the classes were limited mainly to slight variations in armament and minor structural details, but with the coming of World War 2 the situation changed considerably.

With so many vessels involved, it is obviously not possible within these pages to cover every 'A-I' class model that could be built, and therefore I have taken a representative cross-section covering both pre-war and post-war variations, in addition to the wartime modifications.

Before describing these in detail, however, there are one or two points worth mentioning that apply to all models. First of these concerns the davits, which are sited too far inboard in the kit. Destroyer-type davits are, in fact, situated on the extreme deck edge, so before cementing the deck section in place, 'plug' the original davit locating holes and drill new ones outboard at the same spacing. The improvement in overall appearance when this is done is considerable. By the same token, it is worth substituting bristles for the masts and bent pins or wire for the torpedo and depth charge davits. A typical destroyer characteristic was the canvas 'dodger' surrounding gun and searchlight platforms. No provision is made for 'dodgers' in the kit, but they can be easily represented by cementing 2 mm wide strips of paper round the platform edges.

HMS *Ambuscade* is the first conversion in chronological order, and she represents one of the two prototypes launched in 1926, from which all succeeding 'A-I' classes were developed. In actual fact, she differed dimensionally by a few feet, but this is hardly noticeable in such a small scale. *Ambuscade* had abbreviated half-shields on the 4.7 guns and this effect is achieved simply by sawing off the lower half of each gun moulding. The thin after funnel is taken from a *Campbeltown* kit, cut down to 11 mm and raked to match the fore funnel.

The most notable difference between *Ambuscade* and her successors, however, was the small bridge set well forward. To get the correct appearance here, saw off the B gun-deck moulding (part 10) 20 mm from the front edge, and cement



HMS Echo *(top right) in pre-war days shows typical early appearance. By comparison, HMS* Inconstant *(bottom right) in* 1944 *displays later modifications, including bridge radar and* 20 *mm guns. Note angled bridge front. (Photos by Real Photographs Co Ltd.)*

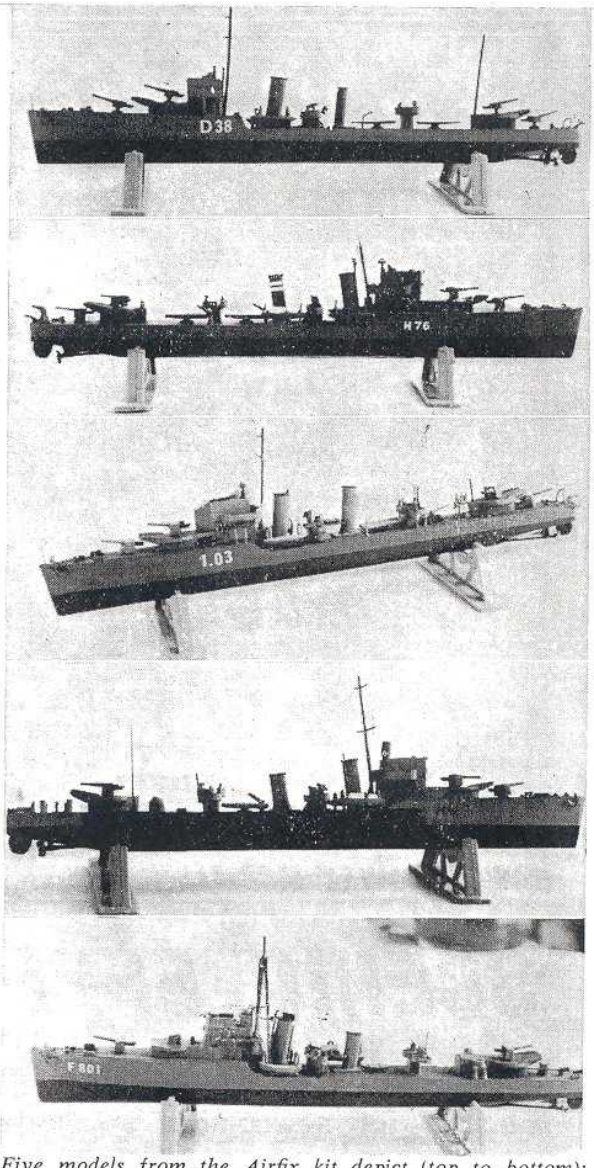
a small square bridge, made from card and measuring 9 mm (length) x 7 mm (height) x 8 mm, on the after end. Bridge wings are cut from the part supplied in the kit. Triple torpedo tubes were fitted, easily made by reducing the quadruple torpedo tubes in the kit, and single 2-pounders were carried on the gun platform instead of 0.5 in machine guns. There should be no director control tower—*Ambuscade* had the earlier optical rangefinder which can be made by cutting a T-shaped piece, 6 mm high, at the point where the yardarm crosses on the original mast moulding. If you don't have a spare *Campbeltown* funnel, make HMS *Amazon*, the other prototype, which was similar to *Ambuscade* but with a normal after funnel. In this case the pennant number should be D39 and the pole mainmast should be slightly lower, with a yardarm.

The 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' classes which succeeded the prototypes differed structurally from the later classes by having a slightly smaller bridge (D in the drawing). This is achieved in the model by cutting 2 mm off the front end of the bridge moulding (part 19) and re-siting the compass accordingly. As built, the first two classes had the same sort of optical range-finder as *Ambuscade*, and all had the single 2-pounders—easily made from a bristle on a piece of scrap plastic—in place of machine guns. A typical pre-war appearance was *Acheron* (H45), in light grey with three black bands on the after funnel. In 1941 *Beagle* (H30) had the rangefinder replaced by a director and a 3 in AA gun in place of the after tubes. Four extra depth charge throwers were situated between the gun and the after superstructure, but otherwise she was unaltered in appearance. Colour was dark grey with the pennant number in white 'blocked' to the right with black.

The 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' classes come next, and typical models could represent *Echo* in 1939 (see photo), *Fury* in 1940, with two white funnel bands, and *Gloworm* (H92) in 1937, with *quintuple* torpedo tubes, made by cutting additional tubes from a spare quadruple set. At this period *Gloworm* was light grey with black pennant numbers and a single black band on the after funnel. All had the 'Charlie Noble' steam-pipe on the fore-funnel.

During World War 2, all vessels so far mentioned were subjected to some, if not all, of the modifications seen in the drawing. *Hotspur*, for instance, differed greatly from her early days as represented in the Airfix kit. The alterations, shown in the model photograph, included removal of Y gun to give space for depth charge racks, bridge radar, cut-down after funnel, and the fitting of a 'hedgehog' anti-submarine mortar in the after tube space. This fired ahead over the forward superstructure, unlike the arrangement in most ships which usually had the 'hedgehog' on the fo'c's'le in place of A gun. *Hotspur* was also given a 3 in AA gun in the after tube space but at the period depicted in the model, this had been removed subsequent to her employment as an anti-submarine training ship. Colour scheme at this time was very light grey ('sky') with a light blue panel and pennant number also in light blue.

Later vessels of the 'H' class were built with the handsome angled bridge front, which can be made by simply substituting card parts for the flat bridge front supplied with the kit. A typical model could represent *Hero* (H99) in 1938-39, finished in light grey with two black bands on the after funnel, and one black band on the fore funnel. A colourful touch at this period was given by the red, white and blue vertical stripes carried on the sides and top of B gun as a neutrality identification sign for the Spanish Civil War.



Five models from the Airfix kit depict (top to bottom): HMS Ambuscade, *one of the prototype designs, in* 1935; *HMS* Fury *in* 1939; *HMS* Icarus *in* 1941, *fitted as minelayer; HMS* Hotspur *in* 1944. *Netherlands frigate* Marnix *at present time.*

Last of the line were the 'I' class ships, all with the angled bridge front, prominent steam pipes on the fore funnels, quintuple torpedo tubes and the machine gun platform extended aft. As built, these were the only differences from the 'H' class, and a typical pre-war model could represent *Ilex* (D61) in 1939. She had three black bands on the after funnel and the red/white/blue flash on B gun. With the commencement of hostilities most of the 'I' class were fitted as minelayers, and *Icarus* (I03) is a good example. In 1941, she had a 3 in AA gun in the after tube space, mining rails and chutes, depth charge throwers on an extended X gun deck, and 20 mm AA guns on a widened searchlight platform. I used 2 mm wide strips of paper, laid each side of the deck as far as the machine gun platform, to represent the mining rails, and made stern chutes from styrene sheet.

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Icarus carried only a whaler (port) and a motor-boat (starboard), this same arrangement applying also to *Ambuscade* and a good many war-modified vessels, such as *Hotspur*, where the second whaler was removed to reduce top-weight. Note that *Icarus* carries a good number of Carley rafts, in this particular case painted in red and yellow stripes, and these have to be cut from card, styrene sheet or scrap plastic. *Icarus* had a very dark grey hull with light grey upper-works, and the same colour scheme, with the addition of a white band on the fore-funnel, was applied to the very similar *Intrepid* (I10) at the same period.

Later in World War 2, most 'I' class ships were modified for convoy escort work, similar to *Inconstant* (H49) as illustrated. In 1944 this ship was camouflaged in 'sky' and light blue, and the pattern can be seen from the photograph. *Inconstant* was not fitted for mining, had the Y gun removed in favour of extra depth charges, and had her motor boat set well aft on the starboard side. She also carried two 20 mm AA guns on the extended X gundeck.

In post-war years, most 'A-I' class ships, worn out by strenuous war service, went rapidly to the scrapyards, but a few of these old-timers linger on. HMS *Garland*, for instance, was taken into the Royal Netherlands Navy as *Marnix* (F801), in whose service she is used as an anti-submarine training frigate. With only two main guns, no coaming on the bridge wings, a 'hedgehog' on B gun-deck, no tubes, and a lattice-mast, she differs considerably from her original appearance. The distinctive clinker screen on the fore funnel is made from a strip of paper, while four bristles are quite effective in representing the tall lattice mast. The after superstructure needs to be extended forward by 8 mm, and other small details can be seen in the photograph.

Hotspur herself and *Fame* were sold to Dominica, where they are now known as *Duarte* (D101) and *Sanchez* (D102), respectively. Present appearance is reminiscent of pre-war days, but the after tubes and Y gun are now removed, while both ships still have the shortened after funnel as a reminder of wartime modifications. They also have a primitive looking rangefinder on the bridge, similar to that described for *Ambuscade*.

For a very simple but authentic conversion, try finishing a model as one of the 'Buenos Aires' class. These were 'export versions' built pre-war for the Argentine Navy and similar in every respect to the standard design. Typical vessels would be *San Juan* (T9) and *Santa Cruz* (T12). Appearance is unaltered from pre-war days, so no structural modification is required, although a distinctive feature in these ships is the Carley raft lashed *vertically* on each side of the bridge wings. Colour is medium grey with white pennant numbers.

For those who require further details and photographs of other vessels not covered in this necessarily brief survey, there are two useful publications readily available at the present time. These are Ian Allan's 'Warships of World War 2' and Putnam's 'The British Destroyer', by Captain T. D. Manning. 'Jane's Fighting Ships' for the relevant period is also, of course, an invaluable aid to the modeller, when copies can be obtained.

Churchill bridgelayer. Pressure of space in the June issue, when we covered this model, caused me inadvertently to cut the sentence giving the width of the bridge ramps. Although this dimension could be deduced it should, in fact, be 10 mm. Apologies to anyone inconvenienced by this omission.