

# 'ALGERINE' CLASS MINESWEEPER

Unusual addition to any 1:600 scale model ship collection from R. W. Liddiard

THE 'Algerine' class ocean minesweepers came into being as a result of the earlier 'Bangor' class minesweeper being too small to accommodate the equipment required to counter magnetic and acoustic, as well as moored mines.

Altogether, 110 were built, 29 of them fitted with turbines, the remainder with standard reciprocating engines. The majority of the reciprocating engine versions were built in Canada, some of them for the USN, but these were loaned to the RN for the duration of the war.

Apart from the differences in machinery and hence displacement, the main difference between the two types was in their armament. As built, all were armed with a 4 inch HA gun forward. Secondary armament consisted of either four single hand-operated 20 mm Oerlikons, two in the bridge wings and two on the after gun deck; 8 x 20 mm Oerlikons in four twin power-operated mounts; or four single power-operated 40 mm Bofors. All ships had four depth charge throwers and four racks, while those vessels employed solely as escorts had depth charge rails at the stern. Post-war, a few ships had their 4 inch gun replaced by a triple-barrelled Squid mortar.

Other external differences were confined to the bridge radar and searchlight positions, and the rangefinder position aft.

The ship I chose to model was HMS *Romola* as she appeared post-war. HMS *Romola* was a reciprocating engine vessel built in Canada at Port Arthur and launched in May 1945. She was scrapped at Plymouth in 1957.

## Main assembly

The model is based on the Airfix HMS *Hotspur* hull. As it stands, the *Hotspur* hull is a bit too narrow, *Hotspur* being 32½ feet beam, as compared with the *Algerine's* 35½ feet. The 1/12 inch difference in the model's beam probably wouldn't be very noticeable, but I decided to widen the hull anyway. This is simply done by inserting a piece of 30 thou plastic card between the hull halves at the bow, stern and keel. This is then allowed to dry, and the next stage, shortening of the hull, can begin.

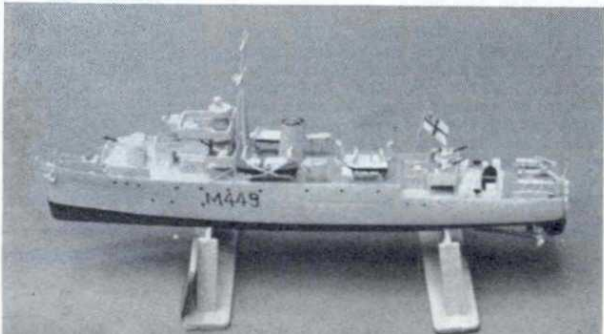
First, cut squarely through the hull at the foc's'le break. Next, cut the front 1½ inches from the rear half of the hull. This piece is discarded. Finally, cut ½ inch from the stern.

Now we are left with the foc's'le and about 2½ inches of the after deck. Cement these together (a few pieces of scrap plastic in the hull will help reinforce the join).

Next, the foc's'le must be extended aft. This is achieved by two pieces of 30 thou card, one port and one starboard, each ¾ inch long and approximately ¼ inch high. When these pieces have set thoroughly, any slight difference in height between the kit foc's'le and the extended pieces should be eliminated with file and abrasive paper.

The last item on the hull is the stern. A 20 thou piece of card is glued over the end, allowed to dry, then cut and filed to shape.

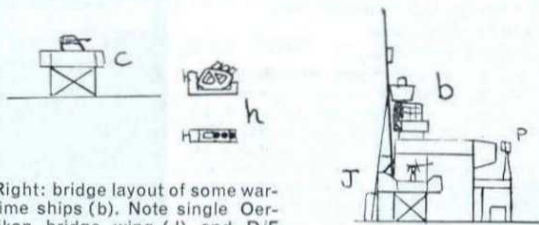
The decks can now be fitted. In the interests of simplicity and strength, 20 thou card was cemented on top of the foc's'le and



HMS *Laertes* in 1952, probably at the time of the death of King George VI since the flags are all at half-mast.

the after deck. When dry it was trimmed to shape. Finally, a piece of 20 thou card was fitted across the break of the foc's'le. This method results in a very strong hull/deck combination.

All that remains then is to trim the widening plastic in the keel and bows to conform to the shape of the hull, then rub the hull down with wet-and-dry paper and Duraglit to give it a smooth finish.



Right: bridge layout of some wartime ships (b). Note single Oerlikon bridge wing (J) and D/F aerial (p). Above: enlarged bridge wing gun deck for power-operated twin 20 mm Oerlikons (c); and Squid A/S mortar (h). All drawings to 1:600 scale.

## Layout and fittings

Starting right forward, the jackstaff is made from plastic sprue. The anchors from the kit can be used, but I preferred to use a pair from a *Cossack* kit.

The anchor winch is made from a square of 10 thou card and a piece of mast from the spares box.

The splinter shield is made from 10 thou card. Small triangular webs fitted inside the shield greatly enhance the realism while at the same time strengthening the structure, as in the real ship. Protected by the shield are a number of mushroom ventilators. The 4 inch gun shield can be made from scrap card, but mine was made from the after end of *Hotspur's* 'X' gundeck superstructure. The plastic of this component is just thick enough to allow all the curves to be filed. The barrel is straight from the kit, with a plastic padding 'canvas bag' built up around the elevating gear. The guncrew shelter abaft the gun is made from plastic card, as is the entire bridge structure. A D/F aerial projects forward from the bridge front and a searchlight platform is at the after end of the bridge. The Bofors guns in the bridge wings are made from scrap, as are the after gundeck Bofors.

The mast is from the kit but the yards are thinned down a bit. A small radar aerial is mounted on a platform on the mast. The boats include a 27 foot whaler and a 25 foot motor launch, which come straight from the kit, and a 16 foot dinghy which is converted from a whaler. All davits are of the gravity type, two sets coming from the kit, the other set from the spares box.

The funnel presented a bit of a problem as nothing seemed to fit the bill. Eventually, however, I found a funnel from a scrapped *Tiger* kit which was filed down to fit.

A large number of ventilators and hatches appear at the after end of the foc's'le deck, and around the funnel. The four mercantile type ventilators are made from plastic rod, heated and bent, then cut on the bend to give the belled mouth of the vent.

Two Carley floats are fitted with the boats. They came from a *Cossack* kit and are positioned on skids made from bent fuse wire.

The mainmast is a diminutive affair made from sprue.

Under the forward part of the after gundeck is a crew shelter, but under the guns themselves is an exposed area containing a cable reel. Mine was a modified Airfix *Daring* after funnel. The winch controls are made from scrap and the winch itself is made from four gun mount retaining studs. A frame of fuse wire is made around the winch. This is support for a protective cover.

In this area there are four depth charge racks and four throwers. Fortunately, in peacetime the racks were normally covered with a white canvas cover, and this greatly simplifies matters.

Two minesweeping davits appear at the stern, these coming directly from the kit.

The paravanes, of which there are four, in pairs, are made from plastic rod. They are protected by 10 thou plastic card splinter shields. The paravanes themselves are torpedo-shaped devices which, when towed by the ship, run just under the surface, the tow wires cutting mine mooring cables, allowing the mine to float to the surface to be destroyed by gunfire. The paravane is used in conjunction with a device known as the 'Otter' or 'Kite', a number of which are attached to the stern.

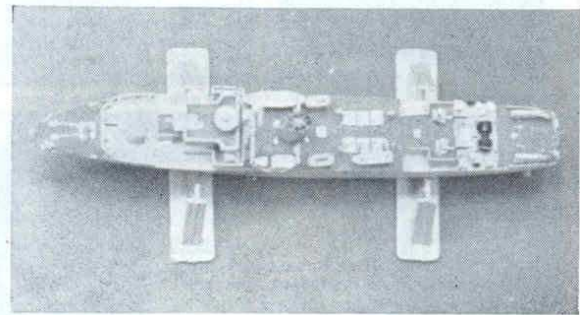
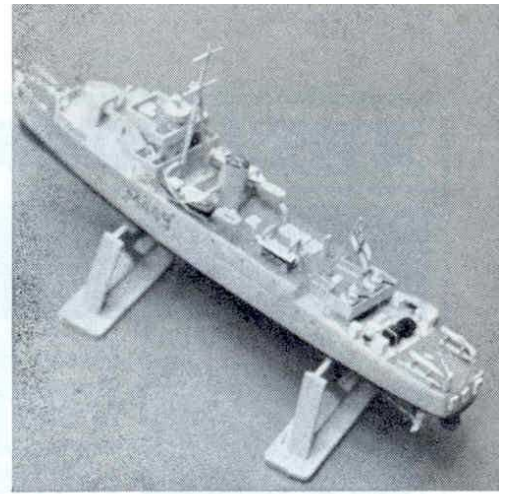
The Kite is a frame, approximately 7 feet x 4 feet in which a number of vanes are fitted (see drawing G). The device is fitted to the paravane sweep wire in such a way that the water flow through the vanes pulls the sweep wire out from the ship's side, rather than allow it to stream astern and foul the propeller. Another Kite on the wire near the paravane, with its vanes set horizontally maintains the paravane at the required depth. This device is rather like that used by trawlers to hold their nets in position. My Kites are simply rectangles of card with the vanes painted on.

A small flagstaff appears at the stern.

Finally, if a full hull model is required, the kit propellers, shafts and rudder may be fitted.

(A) Bridge layout in postwar and some wartime ships. (D) Rangefinder tower fitting to wartime vessels. (E) After gun deck for single Oerlikons. Note: only manually operated Oerlikons had mechanical deflectors as shown to stop gunner damaging his own ship. Power operated guns had electrical cut-outs. (F) Twin 20 mm power operated Oerlikons. (G) 'Otter' or 'Kite' (see text). (K) Paravanes. (L) Single Bofors bridge wing. (M) 40 mm gun deck. (N) Cable reel. (O) Winch. (P) D/F aerial.

Two views of the author's model of HMS Romola.



## Finishing

The hull and superstructure is light grey. The foc's'le deck, forward of the 4 inch gun shield, and the hull below the boot topping is brick red. The foc's'le deck from the splinter shield to just abaft bridge, and lower deck from the break of the foc's'le to just forward of paravanes is natural wood. All other decks are dark grey. Boats can be any colour; mine, for instance, are blue. The Carley floats are bright yellow or white.

Gun barrels, depth charges, winch and boot topping are all black. Ventilators and hatches are white. The paravanes are light grey.

