



In 1952, well-equipped with weaponry and Radars, Modeste typified the final development of the 'Black Swans'.

A more difficult position than that in which the embattled ships found themselves can hardly be imagined. Hemmed in by the steep and lofty mountains fringing the fiords, and with little sea-room in which to manoeuvre, they fought off successive waves of dive-bombers, whose approach they could only hear. If their fire control system was second-best, at least they demonstrated the value of the twin 4 inch HA mounting. No doubt, too, the lessons learned in the ill-fated Norwegian encounter were at least partly instrumental in the re-arming of the 'Tribal' class destroyers.

Referring to one of this month's tables, it will be seen that it was not until 1943 that the ships began to enter service in any significant numbers: and remembering the vital part this class played in helping to win the Battle of the Atlantic, one can only regret that we did not start the war with thirty or forty of them.

From the launch of *Woodpecker* onwards, they moved down the slipways on a more or less monthly basis, and clearly took whatever close-range weapons were available at the time. It is



this as much as anything that makes the group so interesting to model, for the variations were considerable as can be seen from the appropriate table. Added interest lies in the very extensive depth-charge armament of some of the 'Modified' ships, which had as many as eight throwers. The extra units on the forward part of the quarterdeck were angled sharply towards the stern and presumably could be used instead of the after quartet in the standard '10-Pattern' attack or in addition to them in the 'smothering' tactics evolved by Captain Walker.

Some, too, had a 'Slit Hedgehog' mortar on 'B' gundeck. This functioned in the same way as the 'Hedgehog' described in 'River Class Frigates' (*Airfix Magazine* June 1971), but was divided into two separate mountings of twelve spigots each, offset to port and starboard of the centre line. This arrangement was used on ships where there was no space (because of the presence of gun-mountings) for a normal 24-spigot weapon. In the 'Black Swans' this A/S device was sited between 'B' gun and the bridge. The controls were fitted to one 'half' to which the other was connected by mechanical linkages so that both rolled in stabilised movement together. To protect 'B' mounting from the effects of the mortar when it fired, folding wire-mesh screens were raised between the 4 inch and the 'Hedgehog'. The gundeck then became somewhat restricted in space, for there were ready use lockers for both the gun and the mortar as well as the crew shelter. The latter could hardly have held the crews of both at the same time but perhaps the gun's crew stood down when the mortar was in action, with only 'A' gun closed up to take on the U-boat if she was forced to the surface.

Photographs

This month, the photographs show some of the ships discussed and also typical camouflage schemes. *Crane's* hull is white, mid- and very dark grey, with light grey pendant numbers. Her decks were mid-grey. *Lark* has the simplified scheme—off-white with a lightish grey band at quarterdeck level. Her pendant number is

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'counterchanged' and she has very dark grey gun curtains and blast bags. Her decks would be of approximately the same tone as the lower-hull grey. The same off-white has been used on the quarters of *Cygnets*, darkening through light grey to mid-grey for the largest area and for her decks. Notice the pure-white undersides of the whaler—painted thus to neutralise deep cast shadow.



Cygnets features in the variants table. Here, the starboard quad pom-pom is clearly visible abaft the funnel. Notice her tripod foremast and 'crowsnest'. Left: Most famous of the class was *Amethyst*, here seen returning shell-scarred from the Yangtze action in 1949. Note the 'plugged' shell holes near the waterline.

Modelling the ships

Like the 'River' class frigates, these sloops can be made from a *Hotspur* kit hull, with the more difficult fittings—boats, davits, 4 inch mountings, etc, taken from the spare parts box. But for those who prefer to make waterline models (and there is much to be said for this), a complete hull can be made from wood. Obeche is the best, because it is more robust than balsa and is less prone to splinter on sharp edges. A useful scheme is to slightly undercut the depth, so as to be able to cement a plastic deck overlay, upon which the fitting can then be assembled in the usual way.

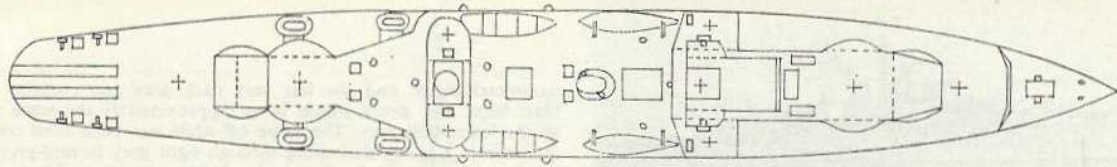
Drawings

Pelican, *Black Swan*, and *Alacrity* were chosen because they are examples of the three main groups but by reference to the Equipment Table, the reader will be able to model a number of Modified variants.

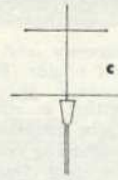
'Egret' class drawing

This shows the appearance of *Pelican* in about 1941-42 as an Atlantic escort, with 'X' 4 inch replaced by a quad pom-pom. At this time she had single Oerlikons on the bridge wings and a second pair on high platforms abreast the Radar 'lantern'. Notice her tripod foremast, crossed by two yards, and particularly that the position of her superstructure units differed slightly from those of the later classes, which were some six feet longer in overall length. As an Atlantic escort, she was painted white with very pale blue-green panels, indicated by the enclosed areas on the hull. Upper and quarter decks were natural wood and all other upward-facing surfaces light grey, including the fo'c'sle forward of the breakwater. The 'Egrets' had large door-type ports in the superstructure below 'B' gun, whose blast shield projected forward—'coal shovel' fashion—with heavy stanchions supporting it. 'A' gun's ready use lockers were positioned under the long overhang. The funnel had the usual twin syrens and two waste steam pipes, set roughly diametrically opposite each other, the forward boiler's to starboard and the after to port. The galley funnel and a diesel exhaust projected through the funnel proper; and a 'Charlie Noble'—from the officer's galley—rose at the break of the fo'c'sle deck. *Pelican* was well equipped with boats—two whalers, a 25 ft motor cutter, a 25 ft Fast Motor Boat, and a 14 ft dinghy under the port seaboard.

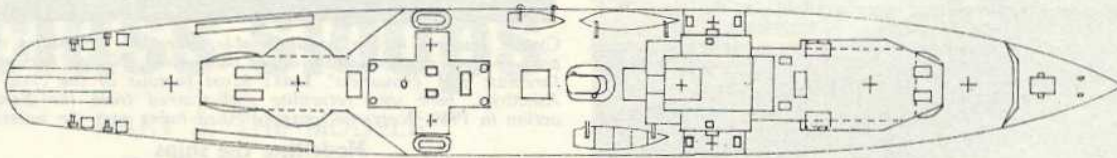
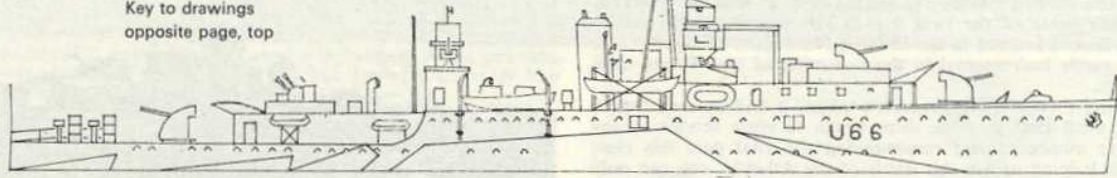
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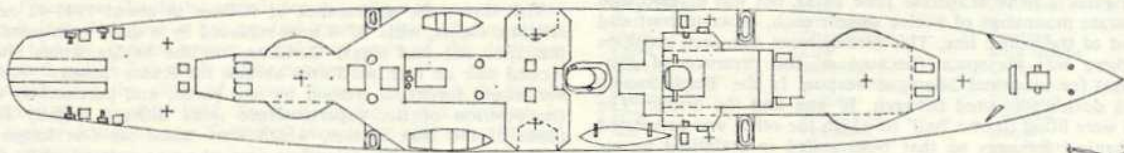
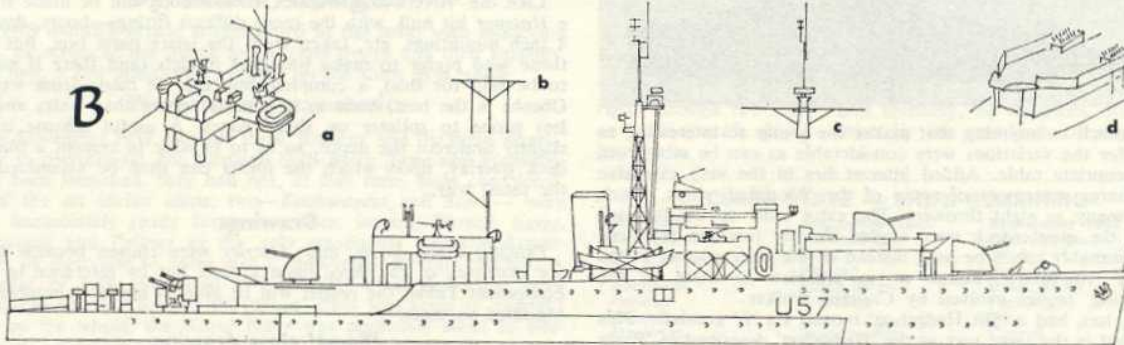
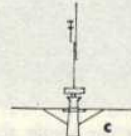
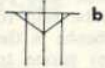
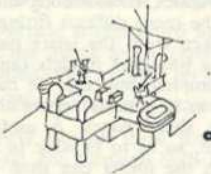
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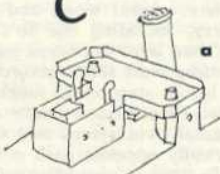
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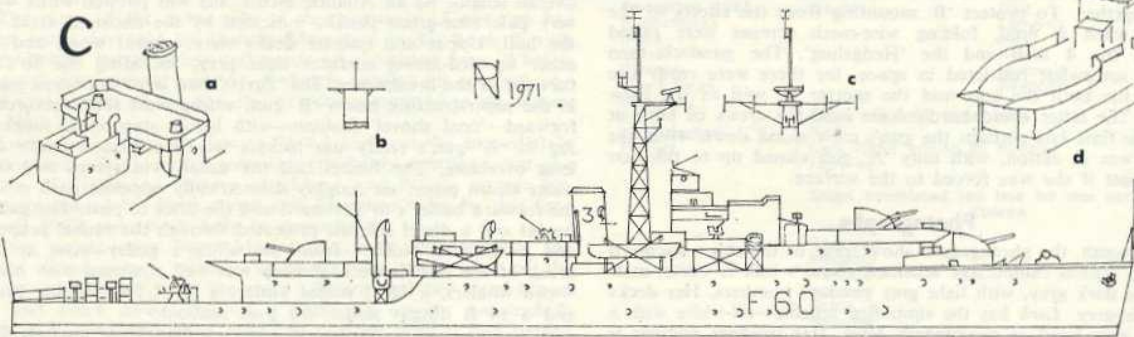
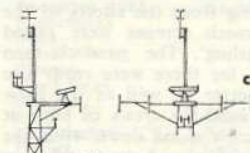
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KEY TO 1:600 SCALE DRAWING: (A) Plan and elevation of Pelican: (a) Oerlikon gundeck, (b) Main yard, (c) Fore yard, (d) 'B' gundeck. (B) Plan and elevation of Black Swan: (a) Oerlikon gundeck, (b) Mainmast and 'goalpost' frame, (c) Fore yard, (d) 'B' gundeck, with squared-off 'bandstand', for Split Hedgehog mortars. (C) Plan and elevation of Alacrity: (a) Midship close range gundeck, (b) 'Goalpost' frame, (c) Fore yard, (d) 'B' gundeck for non-Hedgehog fitted ships; otherwise as for Black Swan

'Black Swan' class drawing

Black Swan herself is shown, as she appeared c 1944, with the quarterdeck pom-pom, twin Oerlikons abreast the bridge and sided singles further aft. These were sited on a deck structure similar to that in *Pelican*, but it was extended between the two sets of ventilators—a sort of fore-and-aft flying bridge, with canvas wind dodgers laced to its guard rails. The bridge construction should be noted, especially the long outward extension for the signal lamps. This ship had a split Hedgehog and extended canvas side-screens on her hand-worked 4 inch mountings. Just below the whaler, there were double-door style storing hatches on each side, but the forward pair—as seen in *Pelican*—were omitted. Notice that she had a peacetime outfit of scuttles in the ship's side. Her topmast has a slim TBS aerial and a Radar 291; lower down, she had a small 'cheese'—probably Radar 276—with its own aerial wave guide trunk. The hull had the late-war simplified camouflage scheme; overall white with a very pale blue panel. Like *Pelican*, she had wooden decks and light grey horizontal surfaces.

Modified 'Black Swan' class drawing

This is *Alacrity* in 1952, with single Oerlikons abreast the bridge, two single hand-worked Bofors abaft the funnel and a further pair on the quarterdeck. She had no split Hedgehog, but a rather heavier lattice mast than *Black Swan*, carrying the type



Pelican, off Portsmouth in 1954, re-armed with single Bofors, but retaining her tripod foremast.

293 aerial cheese on a projecting platform. Prior to 1950, her appearance was similar except that she then had twin Oerlikons abreast the funnel, no close-range weapons on the quarterdeck and no parbuckle stowages for her four depthcharge throwers. The midship gundeck was designed to carry quite heavy twin Bofors or quad pom-poms and small upper deck compartments were built immediately below it to support their weight. The port side was used as the joiner's workshop and the starboard side became the Chief Bosun's mate's 'caboose'. A scrap sketch shows the general arrangements, including the ventilator hatch underneath the gundeck. *Alacrity's* colour scheme at this time was overall light grey, with green decks throughout. Her boats were black above the waterline and white below, except for the 14 ft sailing dinghy which was varnished. This was stowed beneath the whaler on the starboard side which, like the 25 ft motor cutter, had screw-jack davits. Balancing the cutter, there was a 16 ft motor dinghy in radial davits on the port side. Some ships of this group had a second whaler on the port side corresponding to the starboard boat, but this—and its davits—were omitted in *Alacrity*.

1945 onwards

When the war in Europe ended, the ships were deployed to the Far East, and in August 1945, with *Enchantress* as 'Command and HQ Ship, Escorts', seventeen of them were on the strength

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Scotts of Greenock built Lark and Lapwing, which were virtually identical. Lark has a lattice foremast and an all-Oerlikon close range armament in this 1945 photo.

of the British Pacific Fleet, leaving only *Pelican*, *Wild Goose*, *Magpie*, *Mermaid* and *Peacock* elsewhere.

At the same time, the six RIN units were in the East Indies Fleet, having supported the land forces advancing against the Japanese in Burma and Malaya.

After the war, the British Pacific Fleet was dispersed and most departed for service on other stations. *Enchantress* was quick to go. She was sold into commercial service in 1947, before being scrapped five years later. *Starling* and *Redpole* were disarmed, to become tenders to the Navigation School at Portsmouth, as were *Junna* and *Sutlej* before their conversion to RIN survey ships.

A few 'Black Swans' remained on the station—including the name-ship—and did not come home until the early 1950s, having by then seen further war service off Korea. *Amethyst*, in fact, returned to Devonport in 1949 after her escape from the Yangtze, but went back to the 'Far Flung' after her action damage had been repaired.

Pelican led *Magpie*, *Mermaid* and *Peacock* in the Mediterranean for some years, and was involved in the Haifa patrols. Later, the 2nd Flotilla passed through the Suez Canal for Aqaba patrol duties. When she was in the Red Sea, the double storing hatches in her side provided much sought-after extra ventilation. When the 2nd Flotilla returned to Home waters in 1952, *Pelican* went to her base port, Chatham, for refit. There, she exchanged her Oerlikon mountings for single Bofors, but only lasted one more commission before being sold for scrap in 1958.

Wren and *Wild Goose* both served in the Persian Gulf and, like *Flamingo*, had much of their armament suppressed—the latter pair then receiving extra upper deck accommodation superstructure reminiscent of *Enchantress* in her early days.

The last ship actively employed in the RN was *Crane*, who finally returned to Portsmouth in 1961, where she reduced to reserve before going to the breakers. But perhaps the most poignant memories were invoked when *Starling* paid off for the last time in November 1959. This occasion was attended by the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, who, with several ex-commanding officers of the famous 2nd Support Group, paid tribute to the memory of the late Captain F. J. 'Johnny' Walker, CB, DSO and three Bars, RN, and his splendid 'Black Swans'.

BLACK SWAN GROUP CLOSE RANGE WEAPON VARIANTS

Ship	Bridge (sided)	Abaft funnel (sided)	Fo'c'sle (sided)	Break of quarter-deck (sided or centre-line)	Remarks
*Cygnets '43	2xSO	2xQF7	—	—	8x DC throwers
Redpole '43	2xSO	2xTB4	—	1xTOS	Disarmed post war
*Whimbrel '43	2xSO	2xTB4	—	2xTOS	8x DC throwers
Amethyst '43	2xSO	2xSO	—	2xTOS	2xTB4 later
Lapwing '44	2xSO	2xTOS	—	2xTOS	—
Flamingo '45	2xSO	—	2xSO	1xQF7	QF7 later removed
Modeste '46	2xSB3	2xTB(US)	—	2xSB3	See also below
*Opossum '47	2xSO	2xTB(US)	—	—	Later as Modeste '52
Cauvery '48	2xSB3	2xSB3	—	—	—
*Snipe '48	2xSB7	2xTB5	—	—	—
Pheasant '49	2xSO	2xTOS	—	2xSB3	Cygnets similar, '53
*Alacrity '50	2xSO	2xSB3	—	1xQF7	—
Black Swan '51	2xTOS	—	2xSO	1xQF7	—
Modeste '52	2xSB7	2xTB5	—	2xSB7	—
*Pelican 1939	—	—	1xQV3	'X' gun-deck (twin 4 inch)	—
1942	2xSO	—	2xSO	1xQF7	—
1950	2xSO	—	2xTOS	1xQF7	—
1954	2xSB3	—	2xSB3	1xQF7	—
Notes:					
QF7	Quad 2 pdr pom-pom Mk 7(P) (powered)				
SO	Single 20 mm Oerlikon (hand)				
TOS	Twin 20 mm Oerlikon Mk 5 (powered)				
SB3	Single 40 mm Bofors Mk 3 (hand)				
TB4	Twin 40 mm Bofors (Hagemeyer) Mk 4 (powered auto-follow)				
TB5	Twin 40 mm Bofors RP50 Mk 5 (RPC)				
TB7	Single 40 mm Bofors Mk 7 (powered)				
TB(US)	Twin 40 mm Bofors (United States) (RPC)				
QV3	Quad 0.5 inch Vickers machine gun Mk 3				
TB5 and TB(US) had associated light-weight directors abaft and inboard of their 'stave' gunmountings.					
All with Hedgehog except ships marked *					