

At the outbreak of World War 2 the British Power Boat Co at Hythe had a variety of craft either completing or ordered. Having failed to capture the vital contract for the major Motor Torpedo Boat re-equipment programme, Hubert Scott-Paine obtained orders from the French, Swedish and Dutch navies for his distinctive 'Whaleback' hulled craft. He also sold an example to the American Navy and went to the USA to assist in setting up production lines in both the USA and Canada.

The first of the 'Whaleback' craft were 70 ft in length and powered by three Rolls-Royce Marine Merlin engines of 1,100 hp each. The 70 ft design was followed by a smaller version powered either by two Merlins, two Power Napier Sea Lions or three Sea Lions of 500 hp each. It was the latter which became the Rescue Launch.

In converting the Airfix Rescue Launch kit to a Navy MTB we are actually reversing the full scale development. One thing however remains common to building either craft, that is the acute shortage of maker's plans. It was difficult enough to obtain for some time plans of the RAF craft. Information upon the Naval craft is it seems virtually non-existent. All I have had to base my conversion on is the photograph shown, plus known dimensions, so if any reader can help fill out knowledge of these 63 ft craft in Naval service we would all be most happy to hear from him.

In spite of the above drawbacks I feel I have managed to depict in model and drawing a reasonably accurate version of this craft which will be an important addition to any collection of 1:72 scale naval craft. The craft shown is MGB 43 as it probably looked when first taken over from the builders. Four similar craft were originally ordered for the Royal Netherlands Navy. While under construction they were requisitioned by the Navy as MASBs (Motor Anti Submarine Boats) but were actually completed as MGBs. According to information available, MGBs had a 2 pounder installed aft and twin .5 Vickers MGs in powered turrets either side of the

MGB 43

wheelhouse. From the photograph MGB clearly carried an Oerlikon aft without the usual shield and twin .303 inch unstripped Lewis MGs in each of two open 'dustbin' mountings probably manually operated. Weighing between 20 and 24 tons MGB 40-45 were powered by two Rolls-Royce Marine Merlins which gave them a top speed of 40 knots or 36 knots at continuous cruising. The crew comprised two officers and eight men. In 1944 MGB 44 and 45 became the Polish Navy's S2 and S3.

The main alterations needed are the shortening of the turtle backed superstructure and the substitution of the two open turrets for the aircraft type provided in the kit. To shorten the structure I first of all assembled it after removing the handrails and lower turret collars.

Remove the rear attachment guides from the engine hatch on the deck and assemble the wheelhouse as per kit instructions. The turtle back has now to be cut in two pieces so that when shortened the top curvature is maintained though it becomes more acute. I cut across behind the mast mounting and almost eliminated the section containing the opening for the rear turret. By careful paring and filing, including original side windows a close representation can be achieved of the MGB shape.

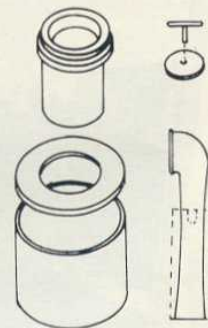
Not having any suitable plastic tube to hand I made up the open turrets by wrapping and gluing very thin plastic card. After cutting

away the superstructure to let in the turrets I made collars out of thick plastic card and used the original kit turret interiors to complete these items.

Careful drilling and filing out is needed to resite the windows higher in the superstructure sides. Note that when refixing the handrails they are placed lower and slope outwards. Blank off the windows and after making up the small box structure for the open bridge, cut away part of the superstructure so enlarging the original front turret aperture. Filling will be needed to tidy this up. A small windbreak is added later.

Note that the engine hatchway opens forwards so the hinges will have to be cut off and fixed on the opposite side of the hatch cover. The mast can be easily adapted from the original and the large ventilators need altering as

Heading: A rare photo of MGB 43 at Portsmouth in 1940, painted overall grey, with pendant number black outlined white, white mast and red/white lifebuoys (Wright & Logan). **Below:** Constructional details for gun tubs, large ventilators, and cleat as described in text.



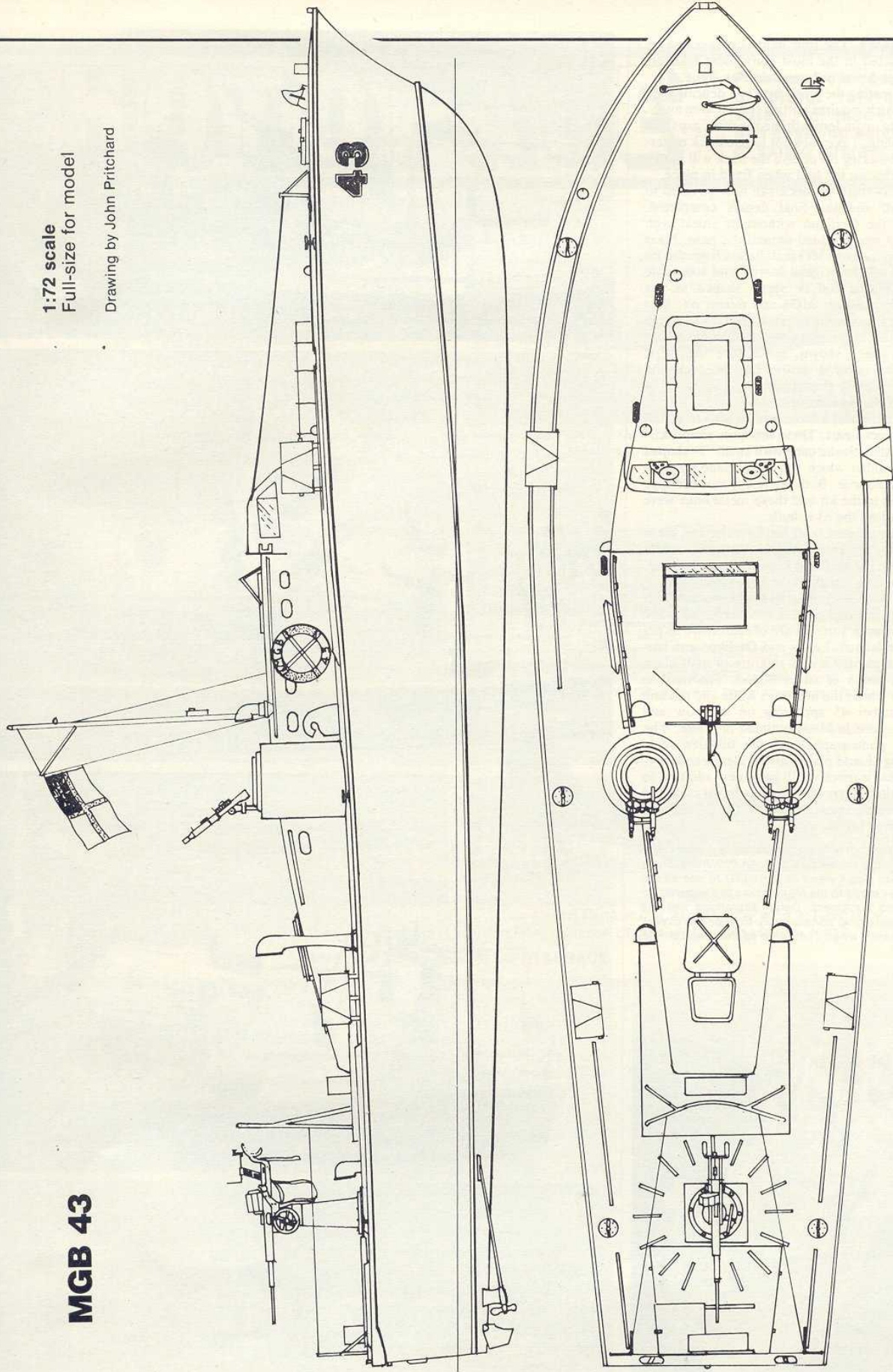
John Pritchard provides details for a simple conversion of the RAF launch to its Royal Navy gunboat equivalent

1:72 scale
Full-size for model

Drawing by John Pritchard

MGB 43

43



per drawing. The four depth charges can be constructed in the most convenient manner, eg, from dowel or large diameter sprue.

Eliminating the crash nets is a delicate process which requires cutting the net area away, blocking up underneath the resulting gaps and then filling. Take care not to use thick material for blocking off or else the deck will not sit accurately on the hull when fixed in place.

At this stage the deck can now be fixed to the hull and the final details completed. Firstly the Oerlikon without its shield with the foot treads added around the base. Next build up the twin MG installation from the kit but cut off the original barrels and substitute either plastic rod or sprue shaped as per unstripped Lewis MGs and mount on short stands. From sprue or plastic rod make up the stern stanchions, place two ready ammunition boxes where shown, make sure the CQR anchor is stowed across the foredeck and place a Carley float from the Vosper kit in front of the wheelhouse.

On my model I have chosen also to install the correct cleats. These are quite simply circles of thin plastic card with small 'T' shaped pieces added which are again made up from stretched sprue. Both the heavy wooden type featured in the kit and these metal ones were installed on the 63 ft hulls.

As the original craft had two engines, fill in the holes where the middle shaft and rudder are normally mounted and eliminate the inner of the two exhausts on the left of the transom.

The whole craft above the waterline is painted in a mid grey, a mixture of matt and gloss. Under surfaces are of red/brown as per Rescue launch. Lewis and Oerlikon gun barrels are painted with a mixture of matt black with a touch of silver added. The mast is mainly white, the lifebuoys white and red and the number 43 appearing on the bow and transom are in black outlined in white. The model photographs and the full-size scale drawing should make this all clear enough — and what is more you'll get a new addition to the limited range of 1:72 scale naval craft and a fine companion to the Airfix E-boat and Vosper MTB.

All the photographs on this page show aspects of the finished conversion by John Pritchard. Study the close detail views in particular to see all the changes made to the major areas like superstructure and armament. Detail alterations like the new cleats help considerably to alter the overall appearance when compared to the original RAF launch.

