

The early 40's modernisation of ~

HMS HOOD

~ by MW Williams

Introduction

With the recent release of the Airfix 1:600 scale *King George V*, I can now complete my series of conversions on their veteran in the range, HMS *Hood*. These conversions have covered her initial 'Admiral' class origins and her 1920, 1931 and 1941 appearance, this short series will now end with a brief description of her projected early 1940s extensive modernisation, to eventually represent in model form a collection of examples of this memorable ship at different periods during her long eventful career in the Royal Navy.

The first mention of a large refit for the *Hood* was in December 1938, by which time work had actually started on some other elderly capital ships. The aim was to provide the fleet with the necessary ships to counter the modern and modernised units of Germany and Italy until the commissioning of the new 'King George V' class, the first of which was not due until 1940, which would greatly strengthen the battle fleet.

The veterans involved in this first period of modernisation were the battleships *Warspite*, *Valiant*, *Queen Elizabeth* and the battlecruiser *Renown*. It was planned that the *Hood* and possibly the other two members of the 'Queen Elizabeth' class would follow this first group and receive this long overdue work at a later date, to eventually equip the Royal Navy with a considerable number of modernised capital ships to accompany the new KGVs and form a battle fleet second to none.

It was intended that the *Hood* should be taken in hand for this very necessary work in March 1942 and it was expected that this would take at least three years. But with the outbreak of war in September 1939 any thought of removing the fleet's largest unit from the naval front line for such a refit, no matter how urgent, was clearly impossible, so her intended 1942-45 modernisation was never realised. Her loss in May 1941 clearly indicated the areas of weakness that this work would have rectified.

The large repair

The extensive work required to bring the old *Hood* up to modern standards was very obvious, her protection — especially her horizontal armour — had to be increased to enable her to defeat, or at least improve her resistance to the threat of, very long range plunging shell-fire and aerial bombs. Great alterations to her machinery would save weight, increase SHP and allow further internal subdivision to be worked into the

hull. Her obsolete and dangerous UP mountings, along with the seven twin 4 inch mounts which comprised the main part of her secondary armament, were to be replaced by an outfit of eight of the new fully enclosed 5.25 inch dual purpose twin turrets, with the most modern directors and radar equipment to back up this improved secondary armament and untouched eight 15 inch main guns. All torpedo equipment was to be removed which would save weight, but primarily this would mean the removal of a considerable amount of explosive material from a rather exposed position. Initially aircraft and an athwartship catapult with hangars and cranes were to be fitted in the new *Hood*, and it is this early modernisation layout which I have decided to represent in my project to utilize as much of the excellent detail in the KGV as possible. It should be noted, however, that if this reconstruction had taken place various changes to this design would most certainly have occurred, for instance the aircraft equipment would have been suppressed in favour of extra crew accommodation and increased AA guns.

Another point to mention in my project was my decision to retain the positions of the *Hood's* funnels; the boilers and engines would have been altered and improved but their location in the hull would have remained unchanged. Therefore the funnel uptakes and the new KGV funnels are in the *Hood's* old positions, involving the placing of the hangar with its funnel, amidships, while transferring the funnel from the aft superstructure to the new scratch-built structure just aft of the bridge.

The result of all these alterations will finally produce a *Hood* quite different from any I have previously modelled representing as it does her lost future and the initial layout of her projected early 1940s modernisation.

Conversion

This seemingly daunting conversion is in actual fact the simplest that I have attempted in my series on the 'Mighty Hood', being basically the marriage of the entire KGV superstructure and secondary armament onto the *Hood's* hull. It will be appreciated however that in a subject such as this, with reference to material often quoting different specifications, it is impossible to claim total accuracy in the final result, but what I have certainly achieved is a reasonable impression of how she might have looked.

From my 1:600 scale artwork I hope the full extent of the conversion and the involvement of the new KGV will be easily seen and understood.

Stage One. After the joining together of the *Hood's* hull, forecastle and quarter decks (parts 1, 2, 3 and 4), remove all the screens and 5.5 inch bases filling in all the old location holes and any sinkage marks. Follow this by positioning the screens parts 5 and 6 aft, and carefully cut and file down these to the new flush forecastle deck level. Add the deck extension aft (40 thou plastic card supported by a couple of spacers), after all these items have set, sand off the relevant deck area level, and if possible score a representation of the deck planking onto the forecastle deck. Finally remove the plated-over and open torpedo tubes from the hull and fill in the holes left.

Stage Two. The KGV's forward, amidships and aft superstructures are all now added to the locations indicated in my artwork, also construct a low scratch built structure to occupy the space between the bridge and the hangar which will now carry the forward funnel, ventilators and the tripod foremast. Place the eight new 5.25 inch barbettes as shown around the superstructure. To accommodate the aft, superimposed turrets part 118 has to be cut back as shown, and the loss of boat stowage that this involves can be rectified by replacing the relevant boats in the new positions indicated. A new scratch-built athwartships catapult and handling rails are constructed from strips of plastic card, use the KGV as an example.

Stage Three. To complete my conversion I carefully pared away some of the excellent deck detail from the unused KGV parts, and placed them around the rather bare deck to give her that businesslike quality present in the latest Airfix releases.

For those who wish to improve or detail this subject the field is wide open — maybe the raised 5.25 inch barbettes could be 'housed' in suitable structures similar to the KGV's or additional pom-poms could be added to B and X main turrets and some extra light AA guns might be added to the elongated superstructure. In a subject such as this it can be freely left to the individual modeller's expertise or interpretation of the information available.

The painting is the rather bland dark grey hull and superstructure, with a light tan wooden deck for contrast, brick red for the hull with black for the boot topping and funnel tops.

HMS Hood

The proposed 40's modernisation, by M.W. Williams.

