

HMS Hood

M W Williams

May 1941



a 1:600 scale conversion by M W Williams

Introduction

By May 1941, the *Hood* had achieved her *raison d'être*, she was now a true ship of war.

In the preceding twenty months of war, she had evolved from the immaculate peacetime battlecruiser, as epitomised in my last article, on her 1931 appearance, into a veteran of many engagements, against German, Italian and even French forces. As can be appreciated, her equipment and therefore appearance, had undergone a distinct change during the years immediately before the war, and during the war itself, in order to make this twenty year old ship fit to fight in a modern conflict.

She never underwent the extensive modernisation carried out to other capital ships at this time, simply because she could never be spared. There was only the plan to take her in hand, if the international situation permitted the removal of the fleet's greatest capital ship to be out of service for a couple of years so that the necessary work could be done.

But by the late thirties time was running out, and the country faced increasing and stronger displays of aggression by the dictators of Europe. The *Hood* could not afford to be away from the front line strength of the fleet at such an unsettled time.

Some improvements however, could not be delayed, and these changes mainly affected the secondary and light armament of the *Hood*, so as to greatly increase her ability to defend herself against the new and growing threat to the world's capital ships, from enemy aircraft and their bombs and torpedos. The main work involved the removal of all the old single 5.5 inch low angle guns, to be replaced by a new complement of seven twin 4 inch AA mountings, placed higher up on the shelter deck. It could not be overlooked however, that the *Hood* was now an old ship, designed and built during the First World War, with a protection and armour system suitable for that period. Now she was to encounter newer and far stronger enemy ships.

Her final engagement, when in company with the brand new *Prince of Wales*, was to intercept the *Bismark* and *Prinz Eugen* in the Denmark Strait. This is perhaps one of the Royal Navy's most famous and well documented actions, and in keeping with my intention not to merely repeat already well known events in my coverage of the *Hood*, all I will describe in relation to this action, which resulted in her sinking, will be a brief summary of the known damage and hits she received and their possible effect, causing the *Hood's* tragic end.

At 05.52 on 24 May, at a range of 25,000 yards, HMS *Hood* opened fire on the German squadron, whereupon both enemy ships, replied soon after, by concentrating their fire on *Hood*. At 05.55 she received her first hit; an 8 inch shell from the *Prinz Eugen* which caught the port side of the shelter deck in the area of P2 twin 4 inch mount. This caused a very serious fire, which was fed and spread by the contents of the numerous ready use ammunition lockers in this area. By 06.00 this fire had spread forward and aft, enveloping a large area of the shelter deck, and setting off more lockers. The *Hood* however, was still steaming hard towards the enemy at 28 knots (the range had closed to 16,500 yards) and Vice-Admiral Holland had just ordered a course alteration to bring all his main guns

to bear, when the fifth, four 14 inch shell salvo, from the *Bismark* arrived. At least one shell hit aft, plunging through the outer plating, activating its delayed fuse, to explode milliseconds later, in or near the after 4 inch magazine, which in turn detonated X and then certainly Y main 15 inch magazines.

There is a possibility that the serious fire on the shelter deck, had been spread below through the series of locker explosions, to finally engulf and detonate some or all of the eight torpedo warheads located in the above water torpedo room, at the same time as the arrival of the *Bismark's* fifth salvo. But the majority of opinion seems to favour the possibility of a 15 inch shell hit, setting off the aft 4 inch magazine and causing a simultaneous detonation of the main magazines rather than a direct shell penetration of the magazine armour itself, or the detonation of the torpedo warheads.

One inescapable fact though, is that there was a massive explosion aft, which virtually destroyed the rear section of the ship, and resulted in her sinking rapidly in only one and a half minutes, taking 1,418 men with her and leaving only three survivors.

While she cruised the oceans of the world in peace for twenty years, she gained a reputation of invincibility and strength, the epitome of the Royal Navy's might. With the passing of time, her material weakness became known, but the fact that so much has been written about her and her career, amply confirms the high regard in which she was, and still is held, not as a physical structure, but primarily as an example of the capital ship and her existence — a representative of a way of life and times, that have now passed away.

The Conversion

This conversion entails considerably more work than my previous two, on the *Hood* of 1920 and 31. I have retained the same conversion format, relying on my artwork to convey the extent of the work, and supported by a descriptive text to clarify the alterations.

The one main difference in approach in this article, compared to my earlier ones, was my decision to use a considerable number of items from my extensive spares box, in preference to scratch-building throughout. I found the prospect of producing the numerous twin 4 inch, machine guns, extra pom pom and boats too daunting a task to consider, when I had ample supplies of these items available in my spares box. But all these items have been included in my artwork, for those willing or prepared to scratch-build.

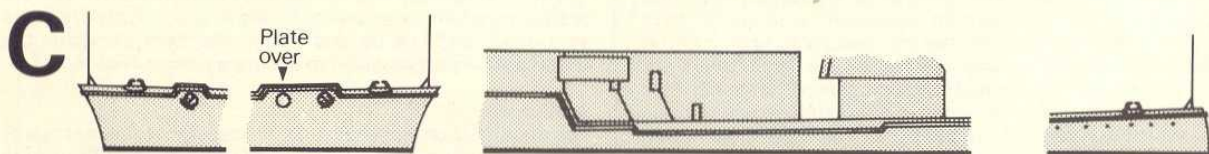
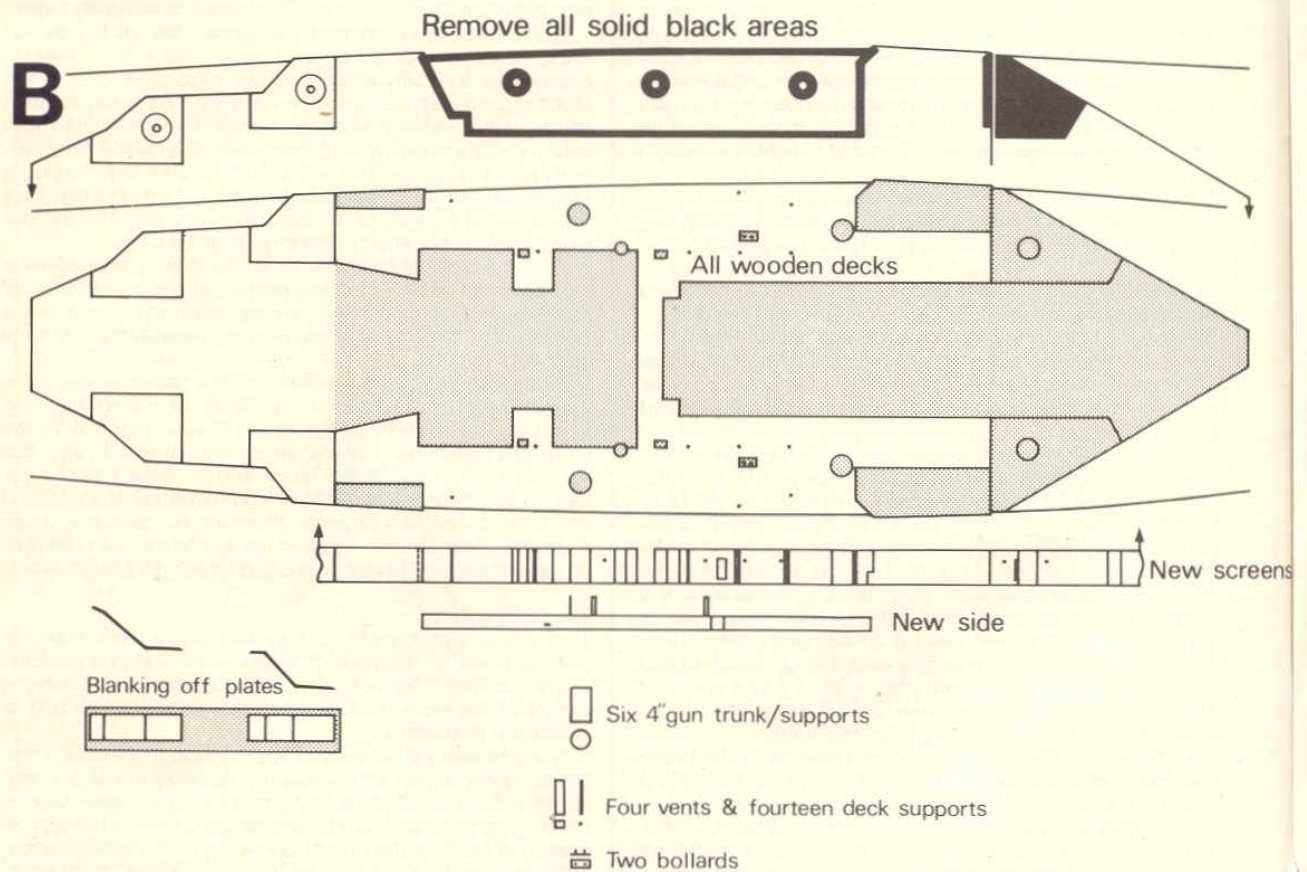
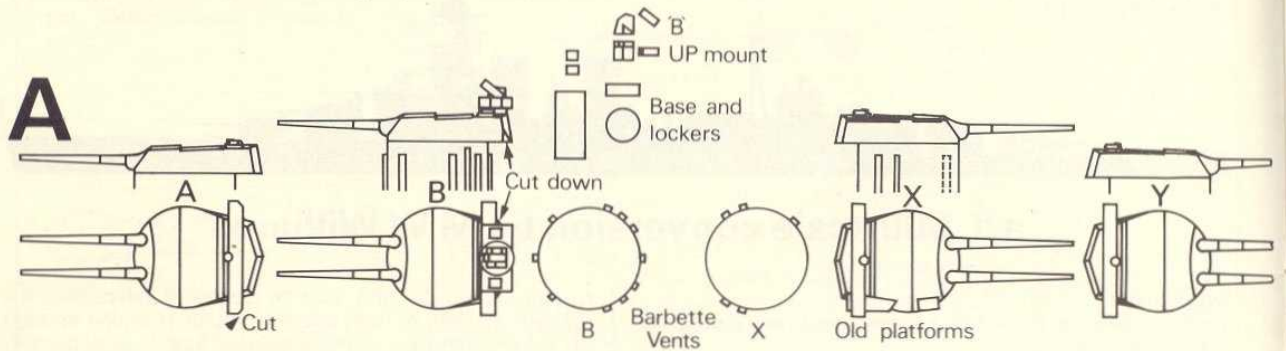
One final point to note in this introduction is when you are producing a new extension or enlargement, use my drawings as a guide and line up and fit the new item alongside the actual model part involved to ensure a perfect final fit.

Section A

The main 15 inch armament. Gunhouse A, has the rear tips of its rangefinder cut away. B has a UP (Unrotated Projectile) installation mounted on top of the gunhouse along with its base and ready use lockers, the rear corners of the gunhouse itself are cut away. X has a couple of unused platforms on the port side crown, while Y is the only one with no additions. All that remains now is to add eight blast bags to the bases of the

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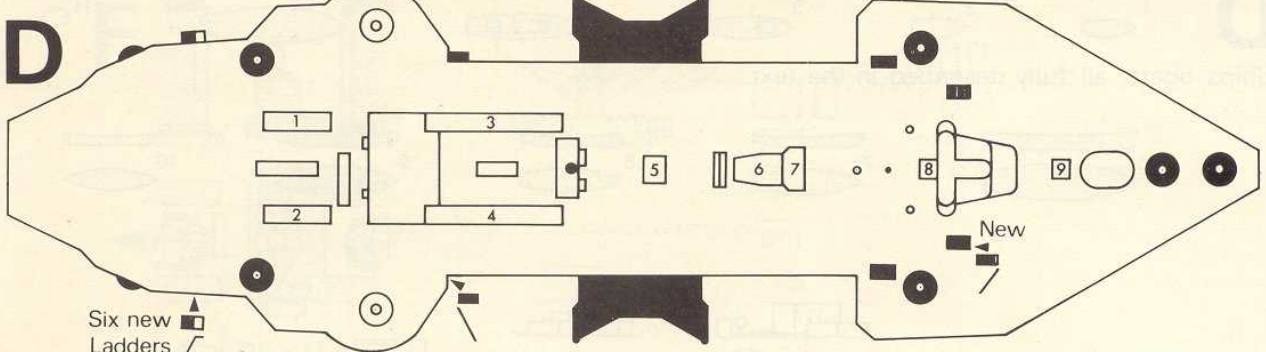
A 1-600 scale conversion, by M Williams.



The Degaussing Cable around the side.

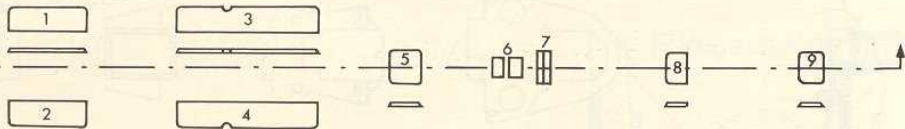
D

Remove all solid black areas



Six new Ladders

New ventilator tops



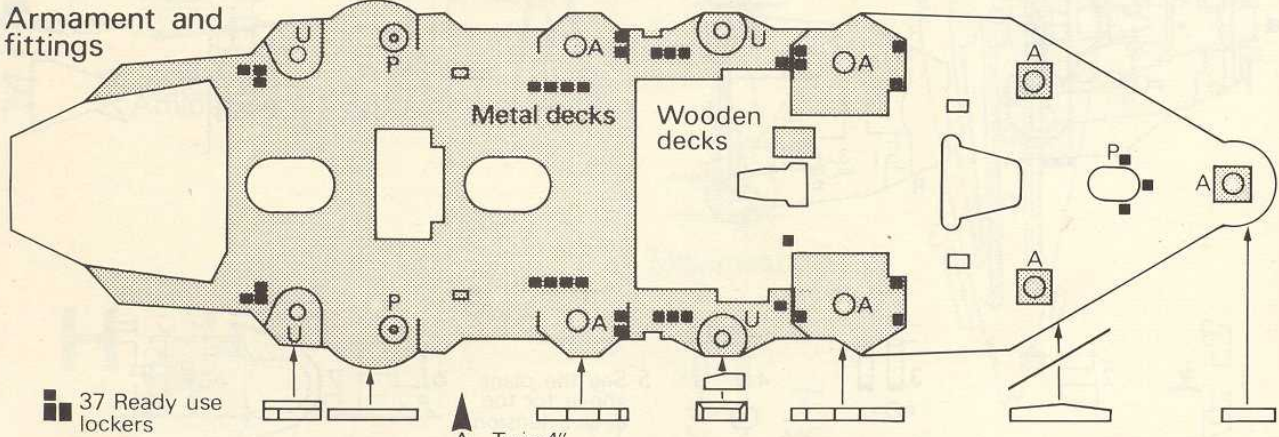
Deck extensions

Metal deck forward remove planking

10 thou, minor sections

30 thou, Main sections

Armament and fittings

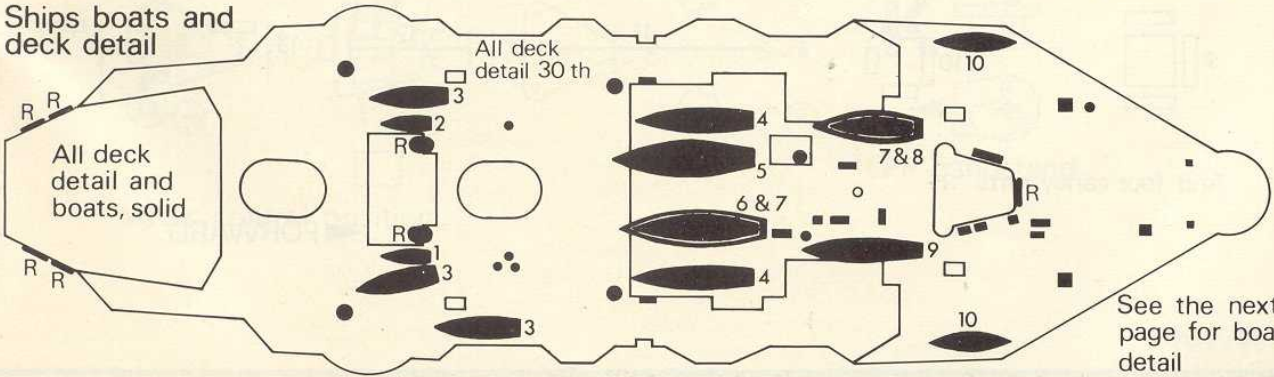


37 Ready use lockers

A Twin 4"
 U UP mount (see 'B' gunhouse)
 P Pom pom

Twin 4" AA gun

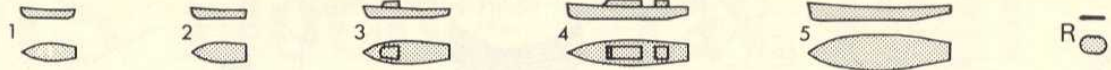
Ships boats and deck detail



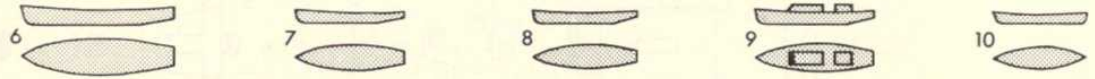
All deck detail and boats, solid

See the next page for boat detail

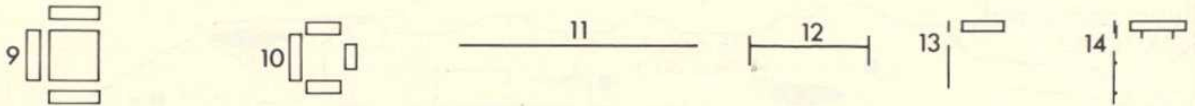
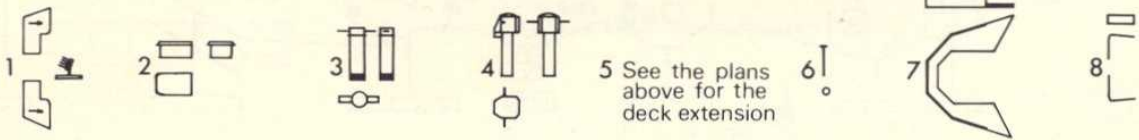
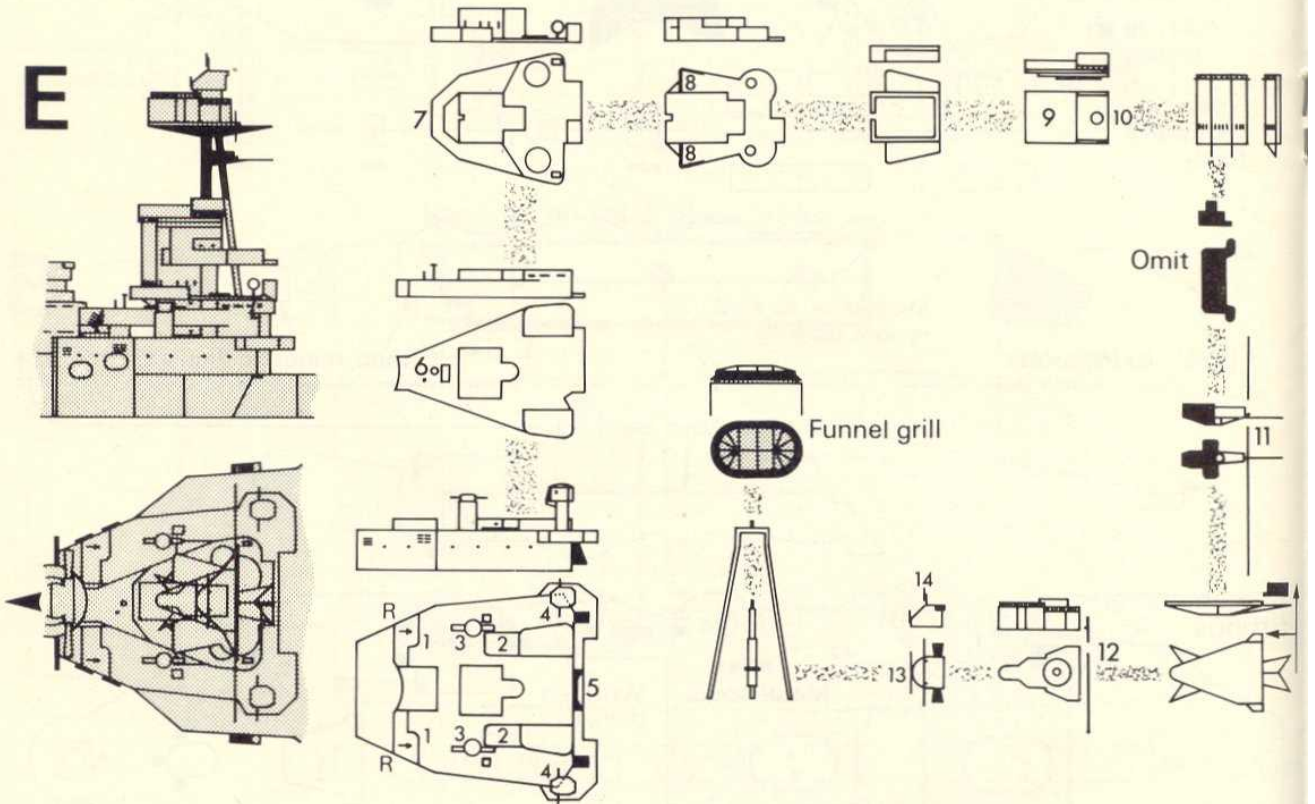
D



Ships boats, all fully described in the text.

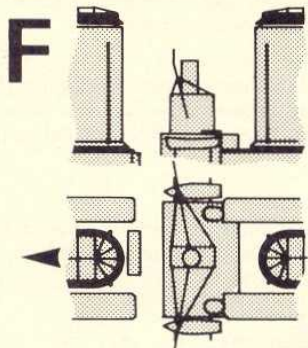


E

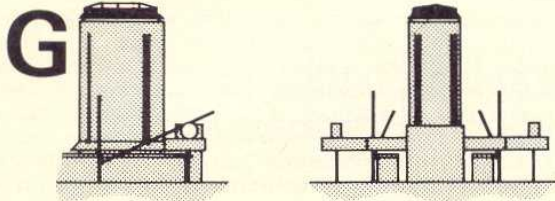
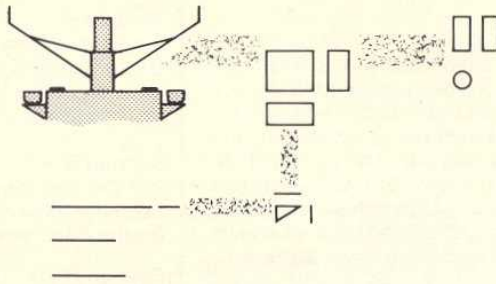


And four carley rafts R

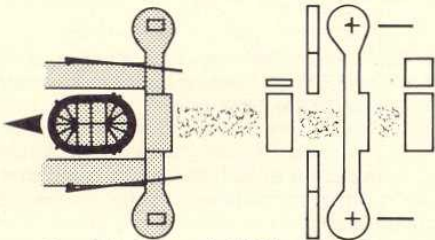
← FORWARD



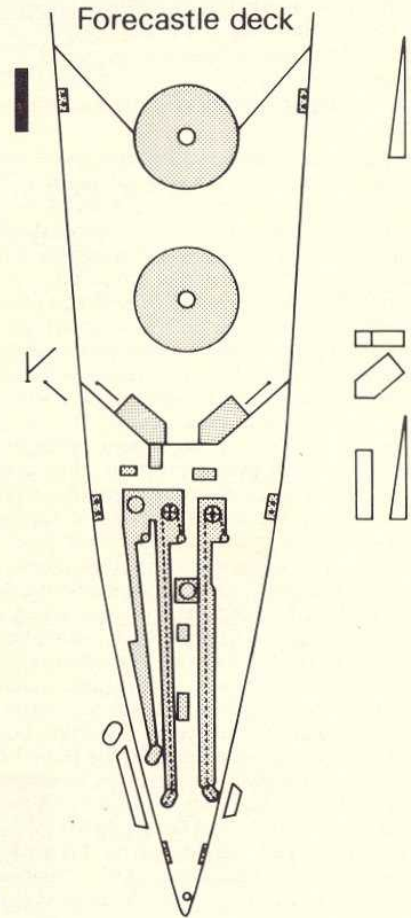
MF / DF office



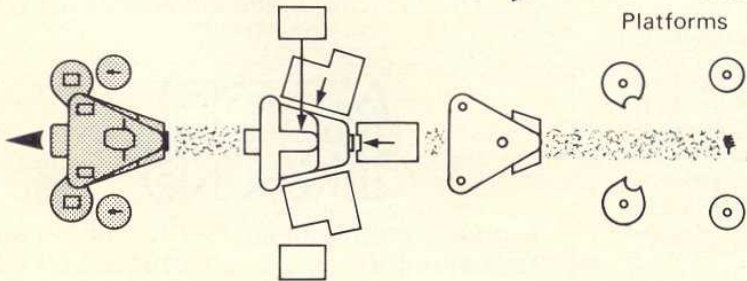
Amidships 44" SL platform



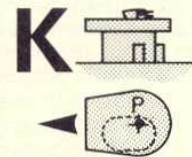
Mainmast



After control position



SL MG
Platforms



PP bandstand

guns, and represent the vents around the raised barbettes; those around the conning tower base can be copied from my earlier articles.

Section B

This deals with the extensive alterations to the forecastle deck area, and in particular the enclosed waist. After the hull parts 1 to 4 are assembled; the first step is to carefully remove all the existing screens and 5.5 inch bases, as shown, and replace them with a completely new set of 40 thou scratch-built structures, and 10 thou ship's side. With four vents and fourteen deck supports for detailing, I have also included six trunk/supports for the twin 4 inch mounts on the deck above. Finally blank off the four redundant 5.5 inch positions forward.

Section C

Before proceeding to the upper deck, the hull requires the representation of the prominent degaussing cable, worn around the side at this time as protection against magnetic mines. I found that 1:32 thickness Letraline (available from drawing office supply shops) is a very good scale cable, that is relatively easy to apply. The lengthening of the moulded gash shuts down to the upper waterline, completes the hull.

Section D

This section is by far the most intricate one in this conversion, but I hope my artwork will outline all the work necessary in an easy to follow layout. From top to bottom, the shelter deck, part 17, has various sections to be removed; after this add a completely new set of overhanging engine and boiler room ventilator tops to the positions indicated; also produce six new ladders at this stage which have to be added later. Note that the after pair require new openings in the deck.

The numerous deck extensions and coverings are dealt with next, with 30 and 10 thou thick sections for the relevant areas. At this stage the forward deck planking should be removed, as the original was metal.

The location of the new secondary and light armament is next, with the seven twin 4 inch four UP, and three multiple pom pom mountings, with all the numerous ready use lockers for them, clearly showing the mass of explosive material exposed in light structures on the shelter deck. The screened emplacements for the armament is illustrated in the artwork, but note that the 4 inch ones are open inboard. An example of a 4 inch mount is included, for scratch-building, I used spares from the *Warspite* and *Suffolk*. A UP installation is shown in section A on top of B gunhouse. A third pom pom for the aft bandstand could be copied from the ones supplied in the kit.

Some minor addition to the deck detail can be added at this stage by using 20 thou card items. The ship's boats, types 1 to 10, are mostly modified ones from the *Hood* herself, indicated as (M) in the following description. I used parts 41 and 61 from the *Manxman* for boats 1 and 2. For 3 three (M) 48, 49 type boats. 4 is parts 52 and 56. While 5 is a (M) 58. 6 is a cut down and (M) part 53. 7 is (M) part 50. 7 & 8 stacked ones are shown by part 51. 9 is a spare part 52. 10 is parts 80 and 83. Plus a total of seven carley rafts, complete this section.

Section E

This deals with the alterations to the bridge structure. The following are added to the admiral's signal deck: (1) two quad 0.5in Vickers machine guns (from the *Warspite*) and their bases. (2) two vents. (3) two rangefinders using modified *Hood* parts 46 and 47. (4) two scratch built HACS's on (5) the deck extension. The conning tower platform has only a vent (6) added. The admiral's bridge, part 98, has (7) added but only after the forebridge face, part 102 has been positioned. A pair of plates (8) fill the forward gap between the forebridge levels, parts 99 and 100. The forebridge top itself, part 101 has two new (9) and (10) positions added to its top. The old 36in searchlight platform is now omitted, and the torpedo lookout platform, part 107, is cut down forward, but has a new yard (11) added aft.

After the control top base has been altered, add the new array (12). Part 112 the 15 foot rangefinder is cut down as shown, while the director itself has a type 284 gunnery radar (13) and (14) fitted. Remove the prominent band around part

103, and finally in this section, add a representation of the funnel grill framework to detail both funnels.

Section F

Covers the New Medium Frequency/Direction Finding, (MF/DF) office and aerial array between the funnels. Note the location of the 16 foot motorboat (1), skiff (2) and carley rafts on the structure.

Section G

Has the amidships 44in searchlight platform illustrated. I just used the existing 36in units from the kit for this section, and for the other searchlights used later.

Section H

Outlines the extensive alterations to the after control position, the previously exposed appearance of this structure is now gone, the sides are now extended up to enclose the position. There are now two new searchlight and two machine gun platforms around the base, and a new scratch-built HACS on top of the structure.

Section I

This work could be carried out earlier, while working on Section B, as the two plates above the hawsepipe are certainly needed for Section C. Most of the work now is in the removal of the old breakwaters and paravane stores, for finer and higher ones. The removal of the outer starboard cable is next, plate over the unused hawsepipe, trim down the capstan to about 1/4 of its original size. Two paravane derricks are rigged beside the stowage aft of the forward breakwater. The only other work here is to paint on an impression of the metal decks forward in the area of the cables and capstans.

Section J

The main-mast has only a diesel exhaust running up the port side support leg, a gaff is fitted below the starfish and there is an extension to the top of the mast itself.

Section K

Covers the aft pom pom and its 'bandstand'. Note that the entire structure is offset to starboard, on top of the old aft torpedo control position.

This only leaves the final overall painting of the model and, as in my other conversions, I have used Humbrol authentic naval colours. Dark grey HN2 covers the above water structures, metal decks, boats, guns and fittings. Deck planking HN4 is for the areas of wood covered decking, but there is a strong possibility that the planked shelter deck areas may have been painted dark grey, with the forecastle and quarter decks treated this way as well. Black HN6 is for the funnel tops and grills, the top portion of both the bridge and mainmast supports, and the boot topping. With the submerged hull, use hull red HN5. All in all, a rather drab overall finish and appearance, but one that was expected of an active capital ship in war time.

The story of the *Hood* ended at this time, but my final article on the *Hood* will look into her lost future, and investigate her proposed reconstruction, and the extensive changes to her appearance this would have entailed.