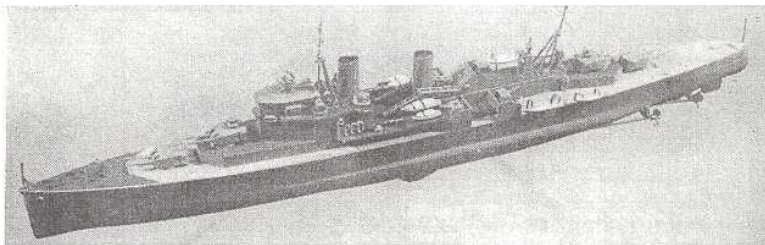


HMS London was the most drastic real-life conversion subject of all the 'County' class cruisers. With completely new superstructure and funnels she took on a modern look entirely different from her original appearance.



From 'Suffolk' to 'London'

ANOTHER CRUISER CONVERSION BY IAN WHITEHEAD

ONCE again, the versatile *Suffolk* kit has been used for the subject of this month's article. HMS *London* was the name ship of one of the sub classes of the 'County' class cruisers built in the late nineteen-twenties. She was laid down at Portsmouth Dockyard in February, 1926, launched in September, 1927, and commissioned in February, 1929, with machinery by Fairfields. Full details for modelling HMS *London* in this form were given in the *Devonshire* article (March, 1967). In 1939, HMS *London* was taken in hand for refitting, and did not leave the dockyard's hands until 1941. Her appearance was so changed that there was much speculation as to her identity for a time, and it is this conversion which has been chosen as this month's model. Her war service was with the Home Fleet from 1941 to 1944, earning the battle honours *Atlantic 1941*, *Arctic 1941 to 1943*, indicating plenty of action on the Murmansk run. In 1944 she joined the Eastern Fleet, and saw the end of the war on this station. In common with most of her sister ships she was marked down for an early doom, and was scrapped at Barrow in January 1950.

HMS *London* was the eleventh ship to bear the name, which today is perpetuated by a guided missile destroyer.

The name dates back to 1636, when it was borne by an East Indiaman which was purchased with ship money supplied to Charles I by the City of London.

After her refit, HMS *London* presented a similar outline to the 'Colony' class cruisers and carried three aircraft which were landed later in the war. Due to successive minor refits, the ship had detail differences at various periods. Thus in 1943 she had a small searchlight platform on the after funnel and AA guns on 'Y' turret. The distinctive searchlight tower just forward of the mainmast was altered between 1943 and 1945. By this time, the AA guns were on 'X' turret and the funnel searchlights removed. The scale layout drawing (Fig 1) shows the ship in 1945.

Conversion work

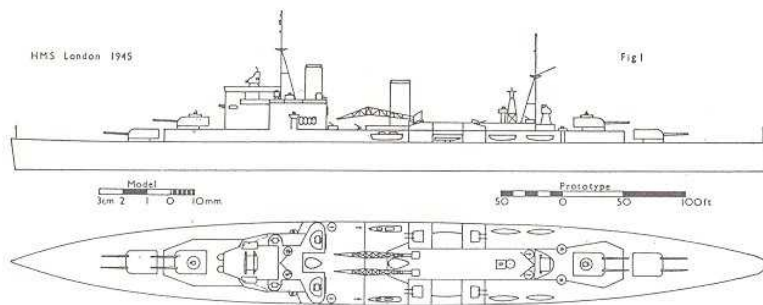
The conversion begins as for *Devonshire*, by plating in the cutaway at the stern of the hull mouldings, and completing with body putty or Bondapaste using Sellotape as formwork.

The main deck moulding is now taken in hand, and the quarterdeck raised to match the hull and make a flush deck. Parts to be removed are the raised square deckhouse on the outboard sides amidships, the raised location aft of 'B' barbette, and the

outboard ends of the aft hangar locating strip which is reduced to 11 mm wide. The steps by the hangar sides are removed and the decks to which they were attached are cut back by $\frac{1}{16}$ inch. The resulting holes are plugged with card, and fillets fitted round the edge of the quarterdeck to ensure a good fit in the hull. The catapult is fitted and openings 12 mm long x 2½ mm high are cut in the sides of this deckhouse to accommodate the torpedo tubes. The tubes are mounted on a deck fitted to the underside of the main deck, and should be quadruple mountings. I used spare 'triples' from a *Campbeltown* conversion as these were available and it is, in any case, impossible to see the number of tubes. Bulkheads should be added between 'B' gun deck and the catapult deck, after extending 'B' gun deck aft by ½ inch at its widest part. This moulding can now be painted to represent planking and, when dry, 'A', 'B' and 'Y' turrets are fitted prior to cementing into the hull.

Part 63 is dealt with next, all locations, screens, and gun mountings being filed away to leave a flat deck. The after end is sawn off to leave a centreline length of 58 mm. All the projections on the underside are removed, with the exception of the two locating pins on the centre line. It is now necessary to reduce 'X' gun deck to the shape shown in Fig 2 and to cut a ledge in the forward end by filing the steps away to a depth of 1 mm. 'X' turret can now be fitted and this deck added to the model. The deck carrying the aft superstructure and 4 inch guns is now made from 30 thou thick card to Fig 2 with screens from 10 thou card. This is made to fit between part 63 and part 20, with bulkheads matching those already in the model. The 4 inch guns are added as shown on the layout diagram.

Fig 3 details the bridge, which was made from block balsa wood, 1 inch square x 1½ inch long, with additional



Above: General arrangement scale view of HMS *London* after reconstruction. Constructional drawings on opposite page are all full-size for the model. Shaded areas must be added from card, plastic card, or balsa wood.

decks (shaded in Fig 3) from $\frac{1}{16}$ inch balsa wood. The fittings all came from my 'odds and ends' box, being left-overs from other conversions. The small circular discs which are found attached to many pieces also find their way into this box, and these proved extremely valuable as mountings for searchlights and 40 mm AA guns for this model. The funnels are made from balsa wood, to the shape given in Fig 4, the forefunnel being 27 mm high and the after one 21 mm high. The cowls were formed by running round the upper ends of the funnels with the fine edge of a triangular file and 'doming' the tops. The after funnel is mounted on a $\frac{1}{16}$ inch balsa deck 34 mm wide x 18 mm long, with its after edge butted to the forward edge of the 4 inch gun screens. This is followed by a $\frac{1}{8}$ inch balsa deck, 13 mm wide x 53 mm long, butted to the funnel deck and running aft. This is terminated aft by a $\frac{3}{32}$ inch deck shaped to Fig 2. Both these parts are shaded in the diagram.

We are now ready to add the final details, again most of which came from my 'odds and ends' box. The cranes were used and fitted as shown in the layout drawing, but I removed $1\frac{1}{2}$ mm from the upper side only, forward of the bend, to obtain the shallower angle of the jibs in this

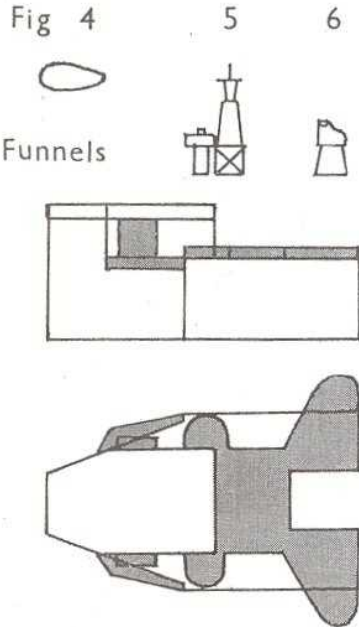


Fig 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Funnels Aft radar and searchlight towers, (6) aft director, (7) main director, (8) Bofors gun, (9) bridge and aft searchlight platforms.

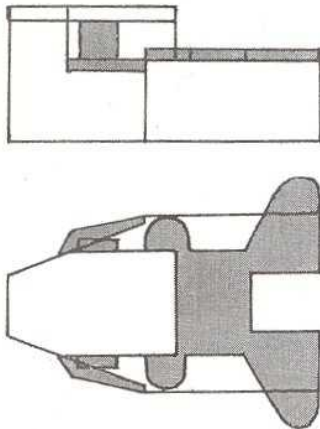
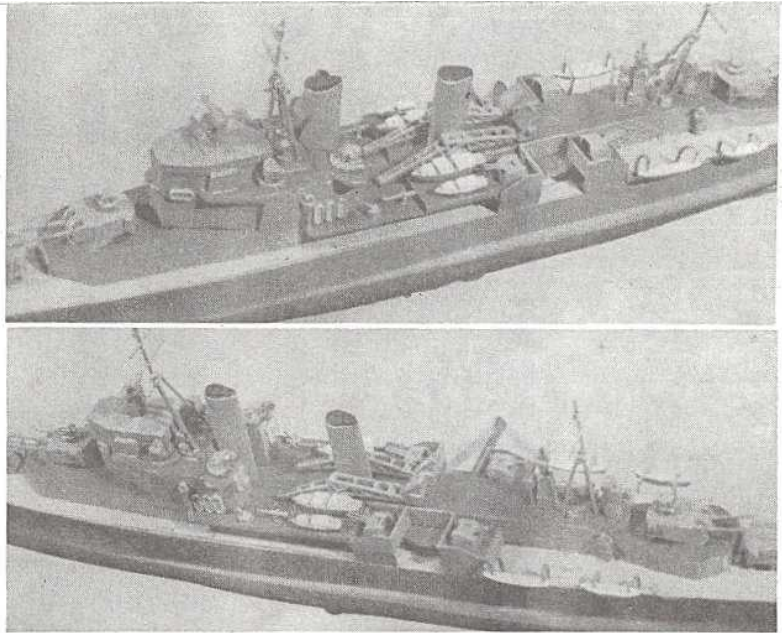


Fig 3 Bridge



Above: Two detail views of the completed model. Note in particular disposition of boats, AA armament, and bulwarks round 4 inch guns. Key to drawings below: (5) Aft radar and searchlight towers, (6) aft director, (7) main director, (8) Bofors gun, (9) bridge and aft searchlight platforms.

ship. The pom-poms on 'B' and 'X' turrets, were from *Cossack* conversions; the main director was part 94 with card radar aerials; the secondary directors were from *Tiger* conversions and the bridge pom-poms I took from a *Warspite*. The aft director is part 104, mounted on the lower half of a *Daring* aft funnel, and the searchlight

platform was a *Campbeltown* searchlight platform with scrap additions. Four 40 mm gun 'tubs' are made from scrap and fitted as shown on the layout, as are the searchlight mountings on the bridge top and sides. The columns supporting these latter are made from 'half round' spruce. The masts are those supplied in the kit cut down as follows: foremast to 38 mm, tripod legs to 23 mm; mainmast to 40 mm, tripod legs to 22 mm.

The boats and rafts are now added as shown in the illustrations and the model finished in medium grey with matt green composition decks, except for the planking which is painted grey-brown.

Fig 2 Aft Superstructure Deck & X Gun Deck

