

# TIGER KIT CONVERSIONS

Three conversions of the Airfix *Tiger* kit described and drawn by Ian Fleming

AFTER THE 'City' Class (*Airfix magazine* February 1977) British cruiser design continued in a linear development up to the 'Tiger' Class, which in 1960 were the last big-gun ships to enter service. All of these classes — 'Fiji', 'Swiftsure', 'Tiger', and converted 'Tiger' types — can be modelled using the Airfix *Tiger* kit, although for the first two, a number of parts must be taken from the *Belfast* kit. Indeed, it would be possible, if one wished to save the expense of buying a second kit, to use only *Belfast* for the 'Fiji' and 'Swiftsure' Classes; however, since that would involve altering the stern, shortening the hull amidships, cutting off the bulges and filing down the bow 'knuckle', and since the correct hull shape for all these types is exactly reproduced in the *Tiger* kit, the combination of two kits seems preferable.

Construction of the 11 ships of the 'Fiji' Class, all named after what were then British colonies, commenced as the war began. Their design was dictated by the need for adaptation of the existing 'City' design for simpler and quicker construction; hence the transom stern and much less pronounced 'knuckle' of their hulls. Armament was 12, later nine, 6-inch guns in triple turrets; eight or ten 4-inch; two or three quadruple 2 pdr pom-poms; smaller

AA guns added during the war; and six torpedo-tubes. *Fiji* herself was sunk by aircraft off Crete in May 1941, while *Trinidad* was scuttled after damage inflicted by aircraft in the Barents Sea a year later. The others continued in British service until 1957-62, except for *Uganda* which was transferred to Canada in 1944.

This class is represented on the drawing by *Jamaica* as in 1943, and the instructions which follow will be for that ship initially. Other members of the class are detailed below, together with their differences from *Jamaica*, so that the modeller has some variety of subject from which to choose.

Square off the fo'c's'le-break on the *Tiger* hull halves, and improve the fairleads and bollards with a knife; then cement the halves together, and add the armour belt from 10 thou plastic card. The after-deck comes from *Belfast*, with some trimming and filling. Now take the *Tiger* deck and modify it as follows: Build up the rounded front of the deck under 'B' turret; next, mark a point 26 mm forward of the rear of the forward superstructure and remove the portion forward of this mark above the level of 'B' gundeck; cut out the area beneath the fore-funnel, which on this type rises from fo'c's'le-deck level; and build up the after part of the deck that you have just short-

ened to a height of 10 mm above the fo'c's'le-deck, to form the tops of the hangars.

Cut across the deck at the catapult position and install the forward part. *Belfast's* catapult, its trolley and supports are added next; bridge parts, signal deck and main director also come from *Belfast*. The mid-ship gundeck is made from thick plastic card, including the triangular fillets merging it into 'X' gundeck, which is made from *Belfast* parts 65-67. The structure above that deck is also made from card. *Tiger's* funnels are used; the fore-funnel needs to be extended, and the cowed tops of both removed; the after funnel is mounted on *Belfast's* parts 150-2. Check their height carefully from the drawing.

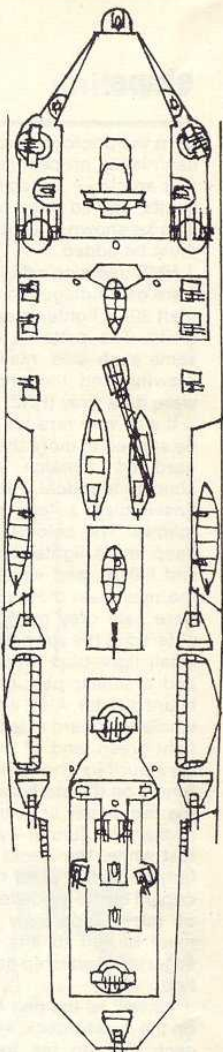
With the basic structure complete, the ship can now be fitted-out. Boats are mounted on and beside part 231, precisely as in *Belfast*; whalers and davits, from either kit, appear beside the catapult. Gun crew shelters, cranes, 4-inch guns, the two single 20 mm guns, torpedo-tubes, aircraft, rafts, ladders and masts all come from *Belfast*, as does the main armament. Pom-poms, which unlike *Belfast's* were four-barrelled mounts must be made up, and 'B' and 'Y' triple 6-inch turrets, are mounted on thick plastic card discs. Where fitted in this class, 'X' turret carried a director for both after turrets, an arrangement unique to the 'Fiji' Class; it can be made either from scrap or from *Belfast* part 195 with appropriate surgery.

The High-Angle directors with type 285 Radar were mounted similarly to *Belfast* (parts 169-74, 192-4); a type 273 Surface Warning Radar 'lantern' appeared on a platform, elevated by girder supports, abaft the mainmast; type 281 Air Warning Radar aeriels were carried at the mastheads as in *Belfast* (parts 244, 248); the big aerial on the main director was also as *Belfast's* (part 181). *Jamaica* also had type 282 Radar (to direct close-range AA fire) on the hangar tops; this is easy enough to make from scrap rod. Finally, for the ultra-patient, any ideas for super-detailing may be gleaned

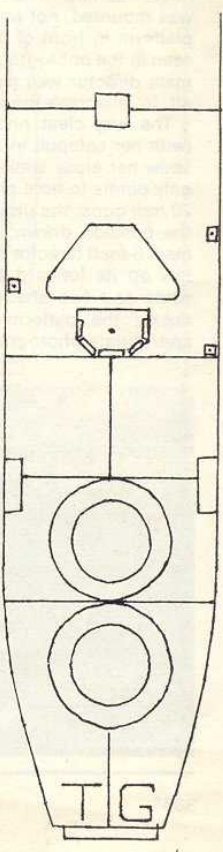


Top HMS Blake after conversion in 1969. Above HMS Gambia with her catapult in extended position (IWM).

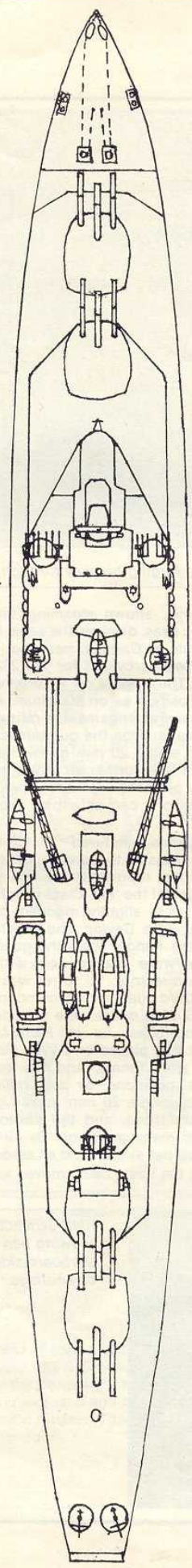
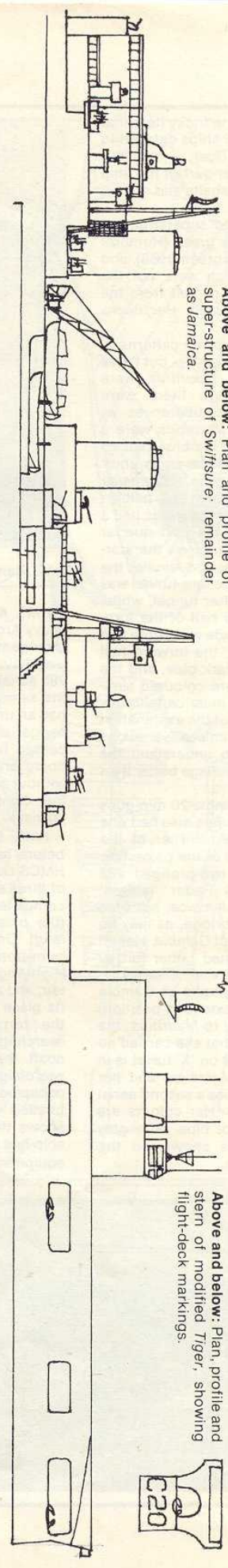
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Above and below: Plan and profile of super-structure of Swiftsure; remainder as Jamaica.

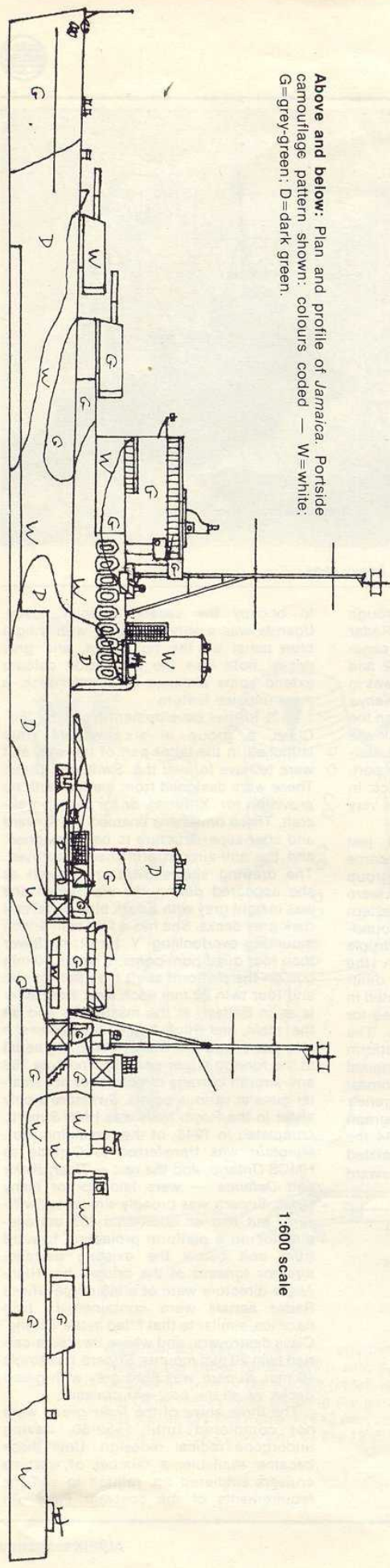


Above and below: Plan, profile and stern of modified Tiger, showing flight-deck markings.



Above and below: Plan and profile of Jamaica. Portside camouflage pattern shown: colours coded — W=white; G=grey-green; D=dark green.

1:600 scale



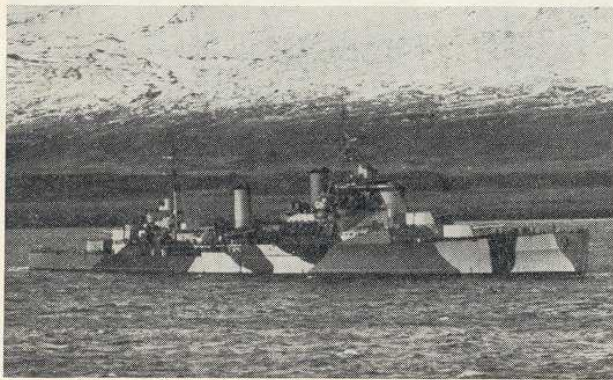
from the photographs. One tricky item that can't is the propellers: all ships detailed in this article — including *Tiger* — had four shafts, and so if the under-part of the ship is to be shown, the outer shafts and screws must be added.

HMS *Jamaica*'s hull and superstructure were camouflaged in dark green (Humbrol matt 30), a lighter greyish green (HB8), and white. The patterns, which were not the same each side, may be copied from the drawing and the photograph. Her decks were dark grey (HN2).

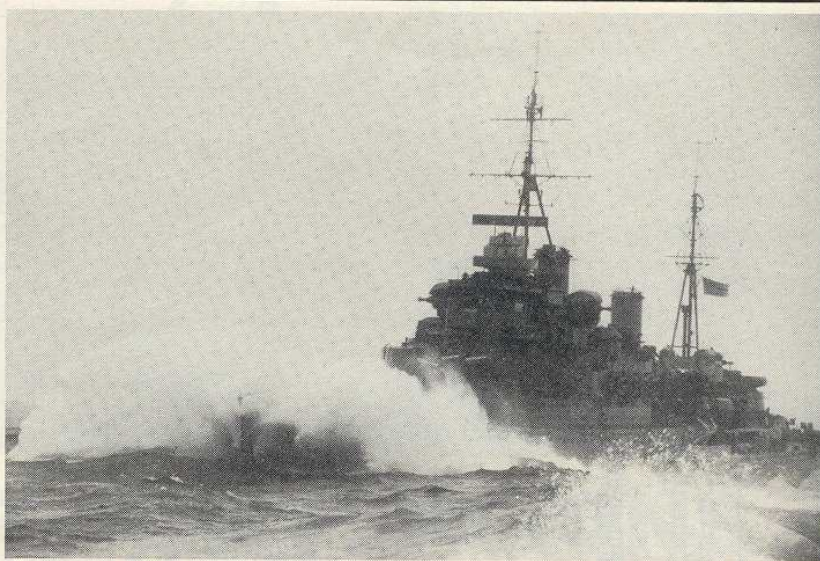
It was very rare for the same patterns to be applied to more than one ship, but those used on *Jamaica* and *Mauritius* were almost identical, although there were (inevitably!) a few minor differences as follows. The colours on *Mauritius* were a deep and a lighter blue (Humbrol matt 25 and HB13), and white; but all areas abaft the mainmast that were white on *Jamaica* were pale grey on *Mauritius*. The pattern differed at the stern, where *Mauritius* had a small light blue area on the port quarter and a similar pale grey area on the starboard quarter. Also, whereas on *Jamaica* the whole starboard side of the fore-funnel was light green, and of the after funnel, white, on *Mauritius* the forward half of the fore-funnel on the starboard side was white and the remainder light blue; the forward half of the after funnel was dark blue, and the rest white. Her decks were coloured similarly to *Belfast*'s. All this must be faithfully copied by the modeller, but the explanation of such apparently pointless variations must be left to any who understand the vagaries of warship camouflage better than I do!

As well as the pair of single 20 mm guns on the quarterdeck, *Mauritius* also had one each side on the forward corner of the hangar tops, just forward of the projecting platforms for the little two-pronged 282 Radar aeriels. The 273 Radar 'lantern' was mounted, not as in *Jamaica*, but on a platform in front of the bridge, as may be seen in the photographs of *Gambia*. Her aft main director was mounted rather further aft, to lie across the centre of 'X' turret.

The very clear photographs of *Gambia* (with her catapult in its extended position) show her close similarity to *Mauritius*: the only points to note are, that she carried no 20 mm guns; the director on 'X' turret is in the position drawn for *Jamaica*; and her main 6-inch director carries a second aerial low on its forward side. Her colours are white and two shades of blue, with grey decks; the patterns are shown on the appropriate photographs.



HMS *Jamaica* showing her starboard side camouflage.



HMS *Kenya* forging her way through heavy seas.

HMS *Kenya*, shown steaming through heavy Arctic seas, displays the same Radar arrangements as *Gambia*; note that canopies have been provided for the 282 and 285 aeriels. The director on 'X' turret was in the same position as on *Mauritius*. *Kenya* had an unusual arrangement of rafts on the hangar sides; and on the quarterdeck she carried two single 20 mm guns, the starboard one a little further aft than the port, without any protective screens — which, in that climate, one can only think was very unwise!

HMS *Uganda*, pictured in 1944 just before her transfer to Canada to become HMCS *Quebec*, represents the final group of three ships of the 'Fiji' Class which were completed to a slightly modified pattern (the others were *Ceylon* and *Newfoundland*). On the hangar tops, the quadruple pom-poms were transposed with the High-Angle directors; 'X' turret was omitted, and a third quad pom-pom mounted in its place. Sliding doors were provided for the torpedo-tubes, as in *Belfast*. The searchlight was placed on a new platform, abaft the after funnel, and the original searchlight positions by the mainmast occupied by single 20 mm guns. *Uganda* bristled with these, and the photograph shows their many positions. By 1944 the ship had lost her aircraft and all associated equipment, the boats being moved forward

to occupy the vacant catapult space. *Uganda* was a very pale grey with a light blue panel on the hull sides, and grey decks; note how the ship's-side colours extend some distance on to the deck, a most unusual feature.

As a further development from the 'Fiji' Class, a group of six cruisers were launched in the latter part of the war, and were to have formed the 'Swiftsure' Class. These were designed from the first with no provision for 'X' turret, or for carrying aircraft. These omissions enabled the forward and after superstructure to be redesigned, and the anti-aircraft armament improved. The drawing shows *Swiftsure* herself as she appeared during the war, when she was in light grey with a dark blue panel and dark grey decks. She has a fifth twin 4-inch mounting overlooking 'Y' turret; no fewer than four quad pom-poms; a single 40 mm gun on the platform abaft the after funnel; and four twin 20 mm each side. Her Radar is as in *Belfast*, at the mastheads and on the main and High-Angle directors; she also has a type 277 Surface Warning aerial at the foretop (*Tiger* part 45), and type 282 anti-aircraft barrage directors for her smaller guns at various points. *Swiftsure*'s only sister in the Royal Navy was HMS *Superb*, completed in 1946; of the remaining four, *Minotaur* was transferred to Canada as HMCS *Ontario*, and the rest — *Tiger*, *Blake* and *Defence* — were laid up for many years. *Superb* was broadly similar to *Swiftsure*, but had an additional 282 barrage-director on a platform projecting forward from and below the existing barrage-director forward of the bridge; her High-Angle directors were of a later type whose Radar aeriels were contained in twin nacelles, similar to that fitted in the 'Daring' Class destroyers; and where *Swiftsure* carried twin 20 mm mounts, *Superb* had single 40 mm. *Superb* was light grey with green decks, as all the post-war cruisers.

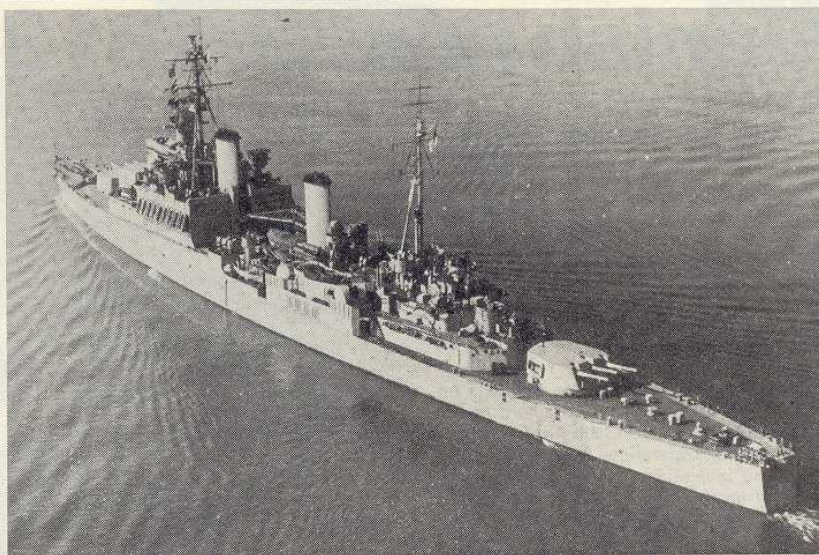
The three ships of the *Tiger* group were not completed until 1959-60, having undergone radical redesign. Until these became available, a number of wartime cruisers soldiered on, refitted to suit the requirements of the post-war Fleet. An

example is the old 'Fiji' Class cruiser *Bermuda*, which by 1960 had lost her 'X' turret and quad pom-poms, but had a new AA armament of 14 40 mm guns. These were carried in twin mountings, sited on each side in the positions vacated by 'X' turret and the forward and after High-Angle directors, with the seventh mounted centrally on the former boat-deck. Boats and crane were carried as in *Swiftsure*. New High-Angle directors — similar to *Belfast* parts 170, 173, 193, but mounted on shorter trunks — were provided on each side abreast the fore-funnel and the mainmast. The main 6-inch director (*Belfast* part 180) carried a Radar nacelle similar to *Tiger*'s; the bridge forward of the director was covered over. Again, *Bermuda* was then light grey with green decks; her masts between the level of the funnel tops and the tops of the tripods, and also the 40 mm gun barrels and the pennant number C52 on hull sides and transom, were black.

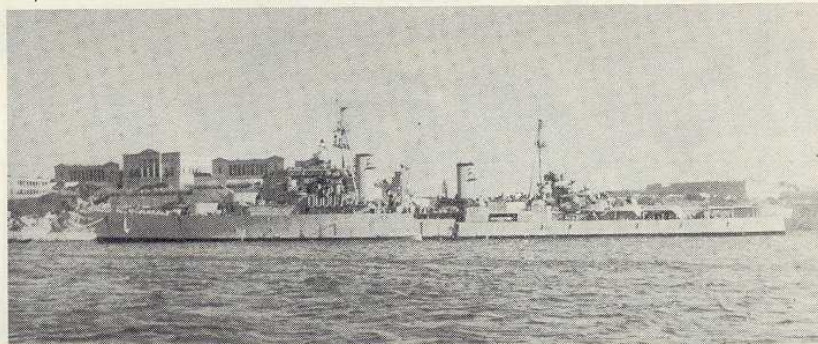
By 1960, the 'Tiger' Class ships were in service, with their modernised armament capable of firing 20 rounds per minute from each 6-inch gun and 120 from each 3-inch.

The *Tiger* kit is accurate as it is; the only real improvement that can be made, apart from two additional propellers mentioned earlier, is that the sides of the midship gundeck should be built up so as to lie almost flush with the hull sides. Apart from the light grey scheme with green decks, note that upper masts, all gun barrels, and of course the boot-topping, are black (although Airfix appear to have forgotten the last point!); rafts, Radar nacelles, fairleads and topmasts are white — not the boats! Pennant numbers are: *Lion* C34; *Tiger*, C20, *Blake*, C99.

However, even though they had already been massively reconstructed before their completion, the 'Tiger' Class had not yet reached their final form. During the 1960s the Royal Navy was appreciating the value of helicopters, especially in anti-submarine warfare, but lacked any number of ships able to carry helicopters larger than the *Wasp*. Thus, it was decided to reconstruct *HMS Blake* to enable her to operate four Wessex or Sea King helicopters. The resultant transformation, completed in 1969, may be clearly seen in the photograph and drawing. Note that, in addition to the new



**Above** HMS Uganda. Note barrage director overlooking after pom-pom. **Below** HMS Superb in Grand Harbour, Malta. **Bottom** Another view of HMS Gambia (IWM).



flight-deck and hangars replacing the after 6-inch mounting, the midship 3-inch twins have also disappeared; these have been replaced by a Seacat launcher each side, just abaft the sided directors.

With *Blake* thus rebuilt, *Tiger* was taken in hand for similar treatment and reappeared in 1972. She is substantially similar to *Blake*, but has different flight-deck markings, and no black area on the main-

mast. Colour-scheme for both ships is as previously; the flight-deck is dark grey with white markings, and the Seacat missiles are red.

The proposed reconstruction of *Lion* was never carried out, and she was scrapped in 1974; but *Tiger* and *Blake* remain in service in their new role, and one must wonder whether the development of the cruiser has yet reached the end of the line. □

