

The 'L' and 'M' classes have their place among the powerful destroyers with which the Royal Navy was equipping itself immediately before the Second World War. The first and largest of these were the famous 'Tribal' class of 1935 and 1936, armed with eight 4.7 inch guns compared with four in their predecessors of the 'A' to 'I' classes. These were followed in 1937 by a reduced type, the 'J' and 'K' classes with six 4.7 inch guns, which together with the identical 'N' class were considered in the February 1980 issue of this magazine for conversion from the Airfix *Cossack* kit.

The 'L' and 'M' classes, ordered in 1938 and mostly completed in 1942, were of a different type again. Compared with the 'J' design, length and beam were increased, so that a larger power plant could be installed, giving an extra knot in speed. The number of torpedo tubes was reduced from ten to eight in two sets of four, one of which gave way to a 4 inch AA gun in most ships. The quadruple mounts were not of the type earlier fitted in the 'A' to 'H' classes, but were simply quintuple sets without the centre tube. The main armament again comprised three twin 4.7 inch guns, but with a new type of mounting: this was totally enclosed against the weather, and had powered ammunition hoisting, through its central pivot. Gun elevation was increased from 40° to 50° maximum; together with an improved director, this gave better anti-aircraft capability.

Four of the 'L' class ships were not armed with the advanced 4.7 inch guns. Instead, in order to hasten their completion, they were given four twin 4 inch mountings, of the type commonly fitted as AA armament on larger ships and later in great numbers of escorts. Designated as 'Anti-aircraft Destroyers', they formed a Special Escort Group in the Western Approaches for a while after their completion in the summer of 1941, and later served where such were most needed - in the Mediterranean; all were sunk there.

Lightning and the *Leader Laforey* also went down in the Mediterranean, torpedoed respectively by an E-boat and a submarine. The two survivors of the 'L' class were scrapped soon after the war, despite being only about five years old. Of the 'M' class, *Myrmidon* was transferred to Poland as *Orkan*, but was lost to a U-boat in the North Atlantic in 1943. *Marksman* was bombed while building but, renamed *Mahratta*, was eventually completed; within a year she too was torpedoed and sunk while with a Russian convoy. The remaining five were retained after the war. In 1956 *Musketeer* was broken up, but the others were sold to Turkey in 1957; *Jane's Fighting Ships* provides some details of them from that year under their new owner.

As with the 'J' type, this conversion uses the Airfix *Cossack*, or any other 'Tribal' kit. In 1:700 scale the Matchbox *Kelly* may be used, with



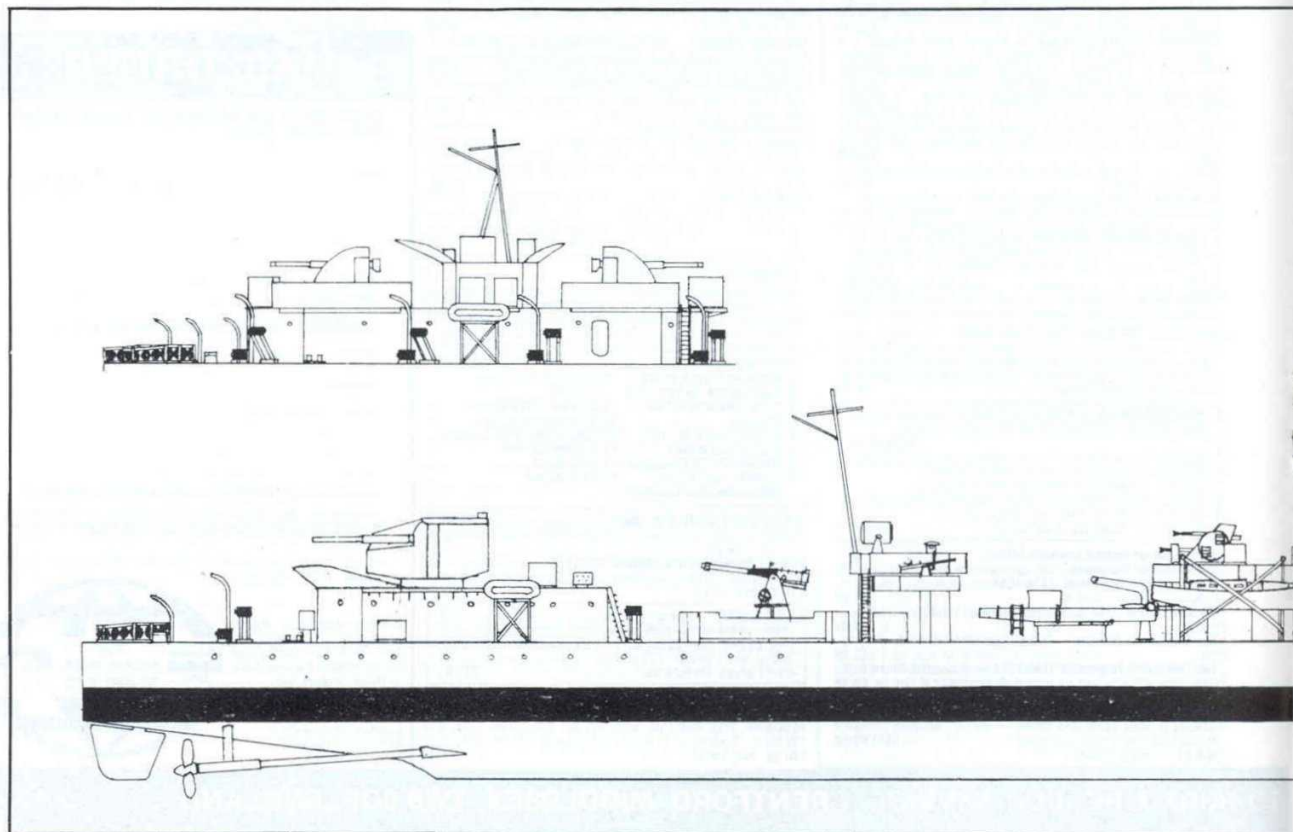
HMS Mahratta in a common camouflage scheme. Note the 4 inch gun camouflage pattern

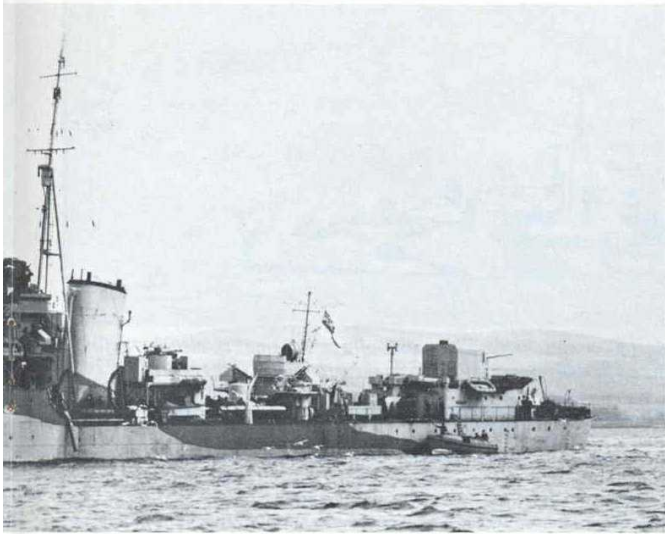
The L & M Class

Ian M. Fleming tells the story and discusses models

the equivalent of 6ft added to the length of the hull and forecastle. Apart from the greater length, there are numerous differences in the superstructure and fittings, and of course the guns: this type really was a complete redesign, not just a modified 'J'.

Nonetheless, the instructions given for modelling a 'J' broadly apply here also, if used in conjunction with the present drawings.





gun aft and how the 25ft motor boat is painted to match the midship form (IWM-A20329).

Class Destroyers

the story of these ships
modelling potential.

Basically, what is needed is a reduction in the depth of the hull, reshaping of the bow, and a largely new superstructure incorporating some kit parts.

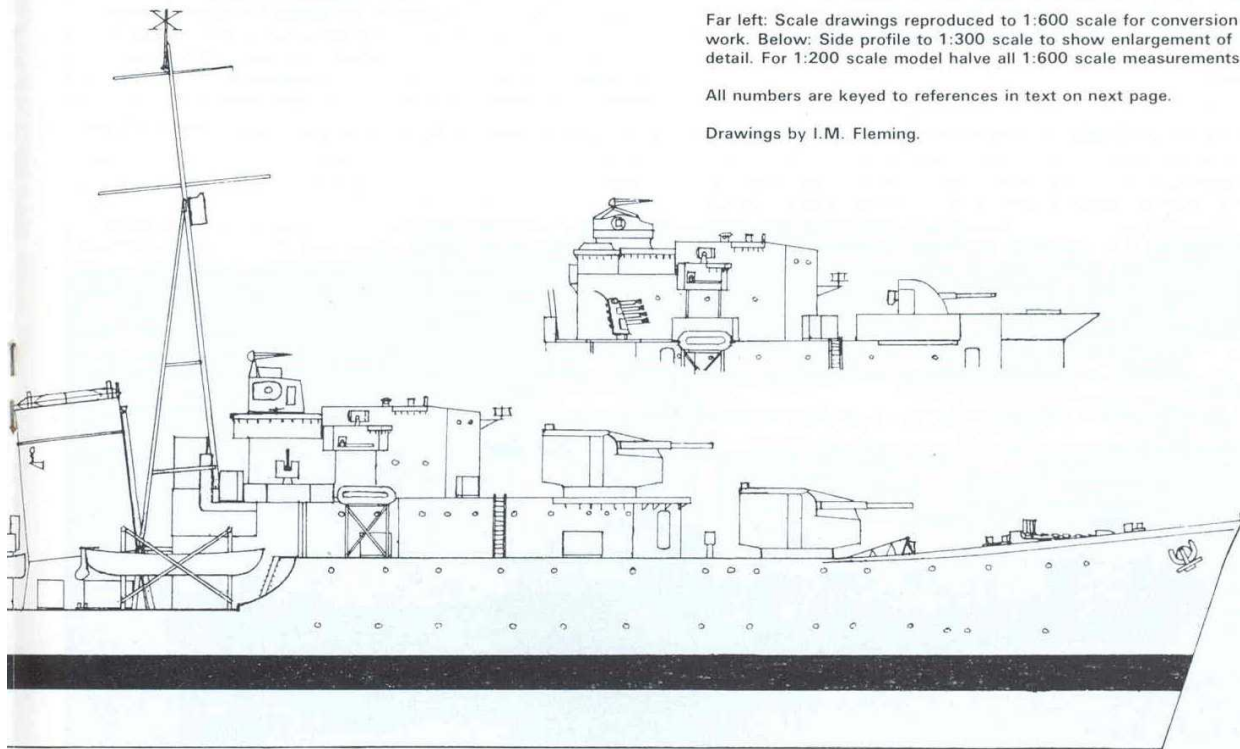
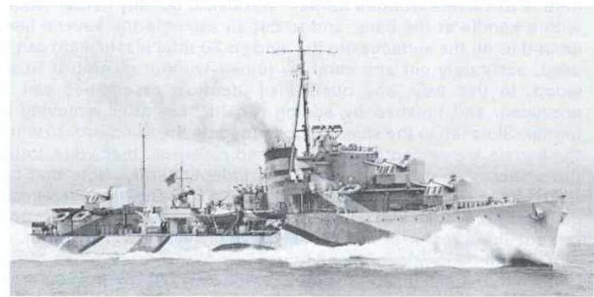
Starting with the *Cossack* hull, both the fo'csle and the main deck level are cut down, such that the depth amidships is 20½ft (0.41 in or 10½mm in 1:600 scale). The co'csle should follow the line drawn,

sweeping upwards near the bow. The stem of this type has much less rake and should be cut back. As this will shorten the hull, little or no further shortening need be done amidships, but check this from the drawing: the correct length is 362½ft, - 7¼in in 1:600, or 6.22in in 1:700 if the *Kelly* kit is used. Get the shape of each hull half right first, in accordance with the drawing; then join the halves, sharpen the stem, an drill new scuttles and anchor holes where drawn, filling in any remaining moulded ones.

The rather tricky operation of reducing the hull depth can, if desired, be avoided, by making a waterline model; it is then simply a matter of sinking the hull lower in its 'sea', which can be made from Polyfilla. However, the rake of the bow must still be reduced, and some way found of reproducing the curved line of the co'csle, without which the model will not look right. It is of some help here that for some distance behind the stem the flare does not continue to deck level, but is topped by a narrow strip of vertical plating, although this is not as pronounced as in the 'J' type. It is shown best in the photograph of *Mahratta*.

The kit fo'csle deck, severed from the rest of the deck part, can be used with appropriate trimming and alteration to match the drawings; use its width at the bow to push the hull halves apart a little, so as to produce the right flare. Cement the remaining deck in place upside down; the new superstructure can then be built up on a flat surface.

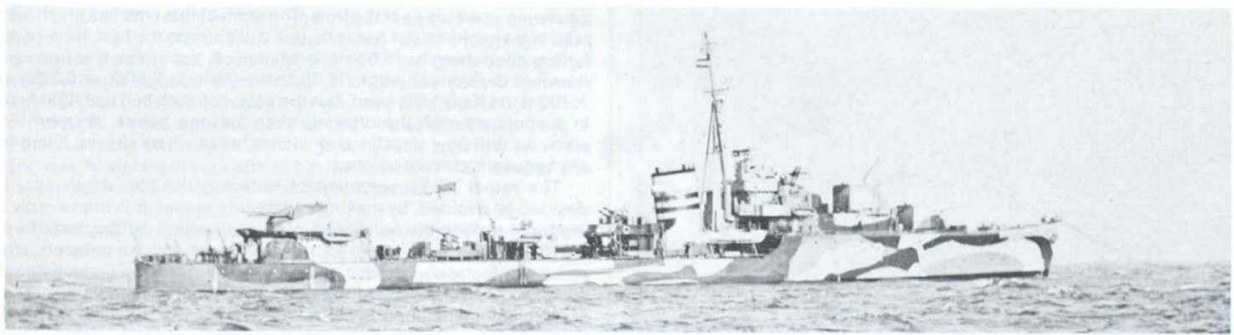
Using plastic card, make up the superstructure with reference to the relevant drawings and photographs, noting that both fore and after structures differed somewhat in the AA ships. Pom-pom and searchlight platforms were the same in all, the latter being flanked by single 20mm guns supported from below by tubular columns. In the Leaders *Laforey* and *Milne*, the after deckhouse was a little broader
HMS Laforey going into action. (IWM-A17367).



Far left: Scale drawings reproduced to 1:600 scale for conversion work. Below: Side profile to 1:300 scale to show enlargement of detail. For 1:200 scale model halve all 1:600 scale measurements.

All numbers are keyed to references in text on next page.

Drawings by I.M. Fleming.



A well-known view of *Lookout*, the subject of the drawing, in the Clyde on completion. The camouflage scheme is clearly defined. Unfortunately no port side view has been found, but camouflage patterns on destroyers were generally the same both sides (IWM-A7249).

and extended further forward, to give accommodation for Flotilla staff extra to the ship's own company.

The big weatherproof gunhouses for the main armament are a distinctive feature of this type. They do look rather ungainly, perhaps unsightly, on an otherwise sleek and handsome destroyer, but they also give an impression of power not seen again until the big *Darling* class of ten years later. Despite their size, however, it is not correct to refer to them as turrets, for they did not extend below deck.

For the gunshields of the 'Tribal' and 'J' types I recommended moulding, the kit parts being unsatisfactory and unsuitable for modification. Here, moulding is not the answer, for it cannot give the sharp edges which the photographs show. The method appropriate here is to carve a wooden former - not balsa, but any harder wood - with a handle at the base, and to cut an assemble the several faces around it. All the surfaces are flat, and so 20 thou plastic card can be used, accurately cut and carefully joined without glueing it to the wood. In this way, any number of identical assemblies can be produced, and finished by adding a card base after removing the former. Slots left in the shields accommodate the trunnions, to which the barrels are cemented at the desired elevation; they were, unlike the earlier type, capable of elevating independently. Note that two thicknesses of rod are required to make them. The same technique can be employed to make the big director, including its curved back - but not the director of the AA ships, which was quite different.

Other armament comprised two sets of four torpedo tubes, or one plus a 4in AA gun; quadruple 2pdr pom-pom; no fewer than 42 depth charges (mostly stowed below deck), with their throwers and rails; and small guns, Oerlikons or MGs, by the searchlight and on the signal deck. All must be made except the pom-pom, to which however screens need to be added. The outfit of small guns and of radar and other aerials varied, and will be described for each ship separately.

Finally, add details such as lockers, ladders, ventilators, capstans,

signal lamps, compass, searchlight, boats, torpedo and boat davits, Carley rafts, mast - and any other fittings suggested by the drawings and photographs. The warship modeller has to become fairly competent in using tweezers, a sharp knife, tiny pieces of plastic, ingenuity and patient concentration; this conversion gives plenty of practice, but a nice model should be worth the work. For those with less experience looking for something simpler, the 'A' to 'I' classes were described by the present writer in the December 1979 issue of this magazine for conversion from the much better *Hotspur* kit.

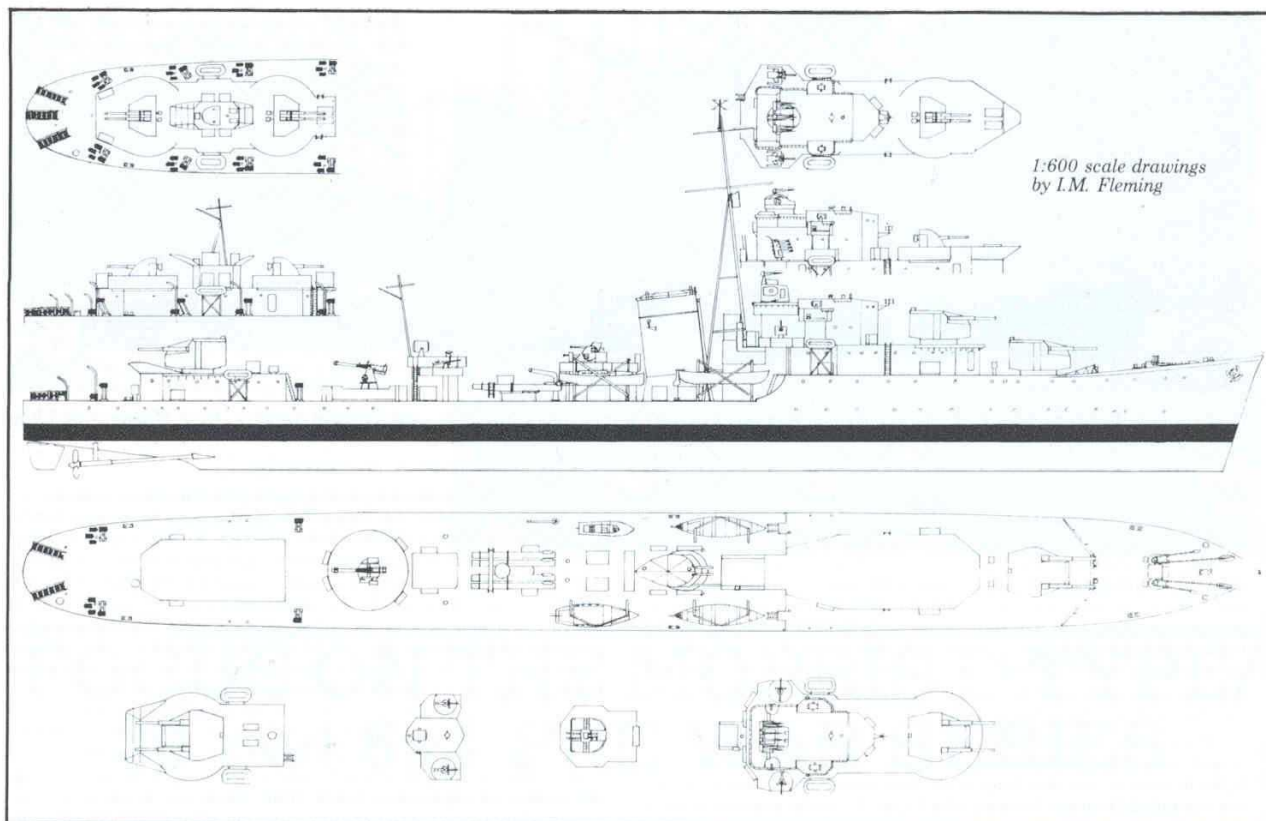
The main drawing shows the profile, deck plan and superstructure plans of HMS *Lookout* as she appeared on completion early in 1942. She exhibits what was then the latest electronic equipment as well as the advanced 4.7 inch Mark XX mounting and the new 20mm Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun. As the photograph shows, her colour scheme also reflects contemporary doctrine, for this was their heyday of the camouflage experts.

On a bracket projecting from the front of the wheelhouse appears MF/DF aerial, used for obtaining bearings on U-boats by their radio transmissions. The radar aerial on the top of the director is a Type 285 with, in this case, six 'prongs', its function being to track air or surface targets for the main armament. At the masthead is a short unbraked mast carrying the air warning radar Type 291, which actually comprises two frames of the shape drawn, mounted on the fore and aft sides of this mast and thus spaced by its thickness. Just aft of the base of the foremast, within its tripod, is the 'office' for this radar set. Further forward at about the same level, on the signal deck, a single 20mm Oerlikon AA gun appears each side, set in a circular recess in the deck. Another pair of these weapons may be seen on platforms abreast the searchlight platform but somewhat below its level.

Abaft the big funnel - larger than either funnel in the *Cossack* kit - is a platform for the four-barrelled pom-pom. This weapon is represented by part 31, which is not incapable of improvement, and requires the addition of a base and screens made from plastic card

The AA destroyer *Lance* showing the distinctive twin 4 inch mounts, quite different from the big 4.7 inch gun houses (IWM-A7266).





and some indication of the ammunition belt racks projecting from the trunnions of the guns; the latter can be made from lengths of 1 mm square plastic with notches filed in the upper and end faces. Note the form of the boiler room vents on which this platform rests: three rectangular structures and a pair of tubular supports.

The space abaft the searchlight platform is occupied in *Lookout* by a 4 inch AA gun, mounted on a raised circular deck flanked by ammunition lockers. That this gun should be thought necessary, and worth the sacrifice of four torpedo tubes, might appear to indicate an inadequate AA capability in the main armament, notwithstanding its high elevation. Where, as on *Laforey*, the second set of tubes is fitted, it is identical to the first and has a similar davit level with its forward end but on the starboard side.

On each side before and abaft the after deckhouse is a depth-charge thrower, angled outboard, the after pair being provided with davits and spare charges. Rather smaller davits (nice and easy to make from wire) serve the depth-charge rails at the stern.

As far as the colour scheme is concerned, all of these ships may be assumed to have dark grey decks (apart, as always, from the unpainted wooden compass platform on the bridge); black band around the hull at the waterline, as drawn; and dull red below that line. On *Lookout* the hull and superstructure sides were camouflaged using light and dark grey and MS3, the intermediate tone on the photograph, which is a mid green-grey. The searchlight and its platform were white; pendant number G32 mid-grey, but white where

it falls on a dark ground; funnel bands, one white over two red. An intriguing scheme!

Another photograph shows *Laforey*, the Leader of the 'L' class, in 1943. She was completed with a 4 inch gun, quadruple 0.5 inch MGs, two yards and Type 286 warning radar; all of these can be seen to have changed, for the after tubes have been installed, and the MGs replaced by single 20mm; the rig has been reduced, and Type 291 radar fitted. A pole mast has been added aft, carrying an HF/DF aerial. As a Leader, *Laforey* has the longer deckhouse aft; the forward pair of depth-charge throwers is therefore absent. The funnel has a black top denoting her Leader's status, and a flotilla marking of two barrow red bands.

Lightning is similar to *Lookout*, but has her KF/DF mounted lower on the wheel-house; a wider and lower radar 'office'; eight torpedo tubes; and a slightly different disposition of lockers and vents, which do often vary from ship to ship. Both *Laforey* and *Lightning* wear a simple camouflage of mid-blue irregular strips, 'shaded' with dark blue, over a very pale blue ground.

The same colours appear on *Mahratta*, in a pattern found on destroyers of several classes in various forms. The ship is as drawn, except that the small AA weapons on the signal deck and abreast the searchlight are twin Oerlikons, without screens; and although this must date the picture to the 1943-44 period, no radar aerials are present. The radar 'office' appears as on *Lookout*, however, and their removal is therefore presumably temporary. Another view, IWM-

The 'M' class Leader *Milne*. Note long deckhouse, lattice mast, Carley rafts painted in red/yellow quarters (IWM-A19902).





The 'M' class were provided with steam heating and other internal refinements for service with Russian convoys. Here *Marne* is steaming out of Hvalfjord on patrol (IWM-A7511).

A17042, taken at the same time from further forward, confirms this arrangement. The forward pair of depth-charge throwers is also absent.

Marne is shown in the Hvalfjord, Iceland, anchorage, quite soon after her completion. A large Type 286 warning radar aerial is mounted at the masthead, with a smaller 'office' than that drawn; she is otherwise similar to *Lookout*. Note the shape of the flared funnel base, which is shown clearly in the view. The funnel has a black band over what appears to be two poorly painted-out white bands; the rest of the superstructure is light grey, the hull dark grey and the pendant number G35 on the sides and stern white.

Milne presents something of a challenge to the modeller, for her tripod mast has been replaced by an early form of the lattice mast fitted in many of the War Emergency destroyers; in her case it carries the octagonal 'lantern' housing of a Type 272 surface warning radar aerial. The Type 285 aerial, on the other hand, is absent from the director. As the Leader of the 'M' class *Milne* has the larger deckhouse aft. Her colour scheme is very similar to *Mahratta's*, with the addition of a dark blue area forward: this would serve to break up the outline in certain lighting conditions.

Mahratta's camouflage scheme, without this modification, also appears on *Matchless*, of which a 1943 photograph is reproduced in W.D.G. Blundell, *Royal Navy warships 1939-1945* (Almark, 1971), page 72. As shown there, *Matchless* has a lattice nylon on the searchlight platform (displacing the searchlight itself) bearing the Type 272 radar such that the top of the 'lantern' is level with the bridge. This siting of the warning radar had the disadvantage of reducing its potential range and incurring a blind arc on the forward bearing, where it was screened by the bridge and funnel. An HF/DF aerial is carried on a pole main-mast as on *Laforey*; otherwise *Matchless* is as drawn. She wears the white pendant number G52, painted in rather square characters.

The four members of the 'L' class completed as AA destroyers were considerably different from their sisters in several respects apart from their guns. Separate drawings are therefore given, above the profile of *Lookout*, showing the forward and aft superstructures of this type: specifically of *Lance*.

In this type, the guns are twin 4 inch mountings of the kind found in a number of Airfix kits, and there may therefore be some in the spares box left over from a previous conversion. 'A' mounting is not

drawn, but occupies exactly the same position as in *Lookout*. Its smaller size enables the forward superstructure to extend further forward as on the two Leaders and further aft. 'X' and 'Y' guns are both sited on it, separated by a shelter with 'coal-shovel blast screens over the guns; on this in *Lance* and *Legion* appears the short mast that would normally be sited on the searchlight platform. *Lance's* rig, as shown by a photograph, is rather unusual: only the lower yard is carried on the foremast, and the DF 'office' is located within the tripod immediately below it. The diamond-shaped DF aerial appears near the masthead, painted white while the mast itself is black.

The 4 inch guns are almost surrounded by screens, that around 'B' gun reaching forward to overhang the gun below. In *Lance* there are no screens on the signal deck outboard of the 0.5 inch MGs at the time of the photograph; she did acquire them later, however, and they are present on *Legion* and *Lively*. Other weapons on *Lance* are two single 20mm by the searchlight, and the pom-pom, as drawn for *Lookout*; eight torpedo tubes; and a large number of depth-charges with eight throwers and three rails. The main armament is controlled by a type of director unique to these four destroyers, equipped with Type 285 radar.

Lance is shown with dark grey hull and light grey superstructure. The same colour scheme appears on *Legion*, as shown on the IWM photograph A4228, not reproduced here. *Legion* wears one white over two red bands on her funnel, and the white pendant number G74 in the usual three positions on the hull. She has no 20mm guns (nor their platforms) by the searchlight, and no aerials of any kind on the mast, which has two yards and is painted light grey. *Legion* is otherwise similar to *Lance*.

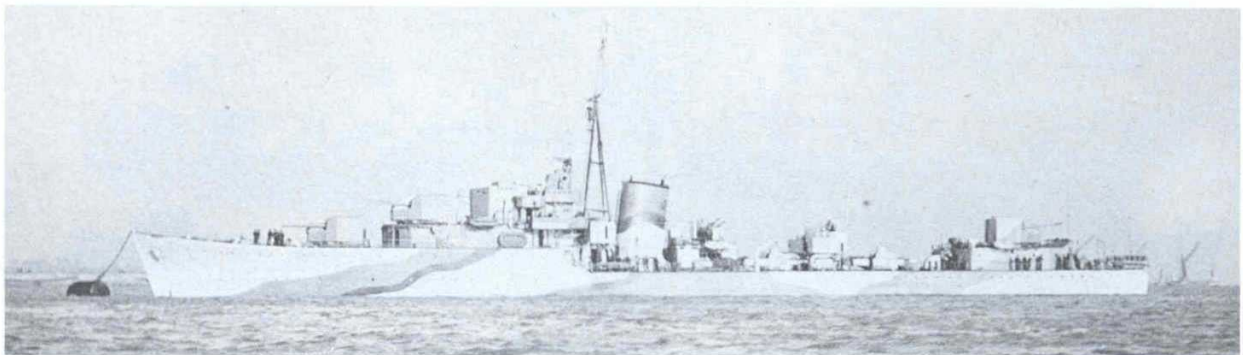
Lively also lacks the 20mm guns. Her WT mast is in the more usual position on the searchlight platform, for the position on the shelter aft is occupied by an HF/DF aerial. Type 291 radar is fitted on the aft side of the foremast head, and the pole aerial for fighter direction radar Type 86M on its fore side. *Lively* is mid-grey, with the white number G40.

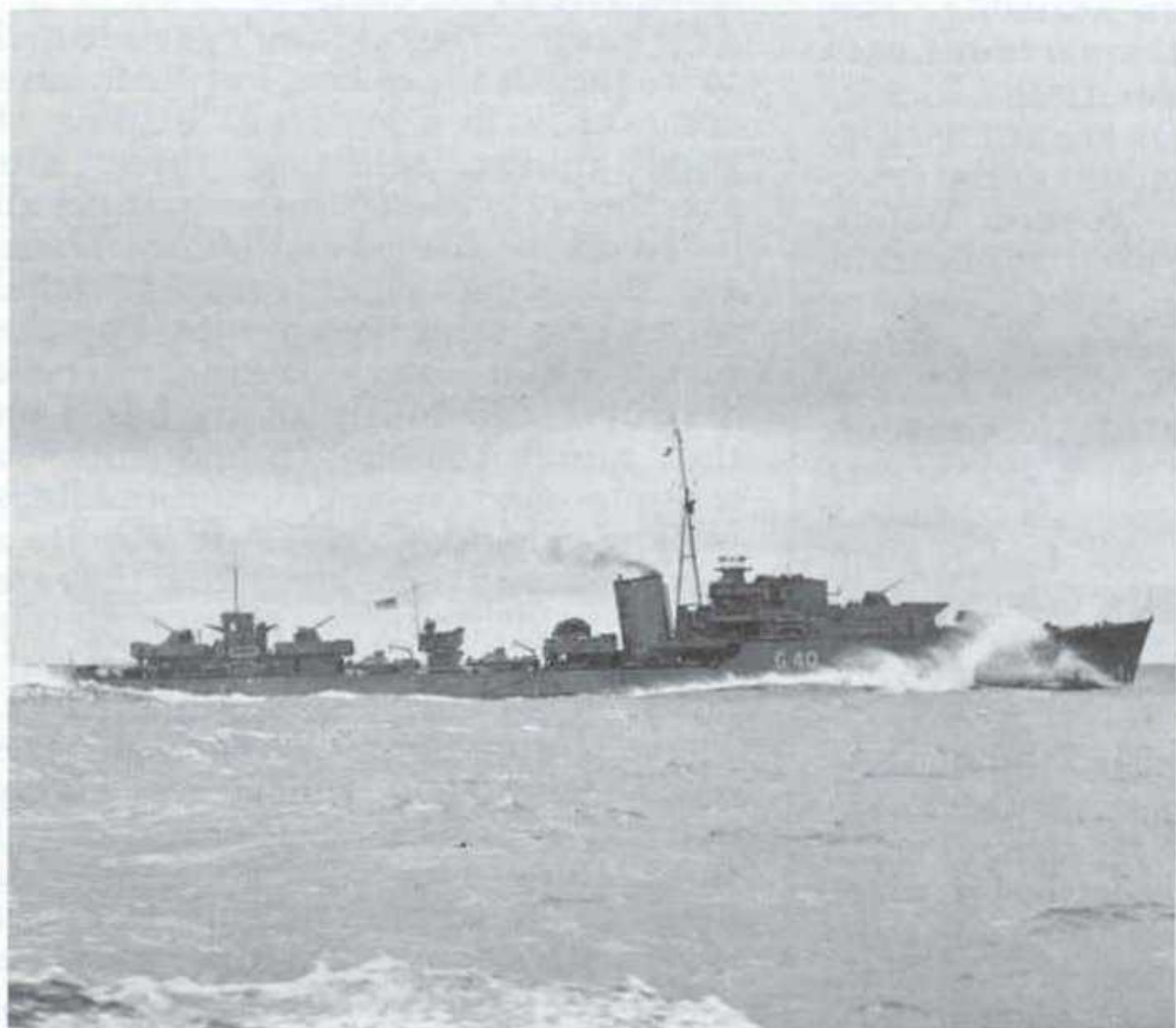
The quite exciting operational history of the other four 'L' class ships (those with 4.7 inch main armament) is described by Peter C. Smith in *Fighting flotilla: HMS Laforey and her sister ships* (Kimber, 1976); but otherwise there appears to be a complete lack of literature specifically on this type.

I am grateful to Peter Hodges for precise details of the *Lookout* camouflage scheme.

Lightning shows as built appearance (IWM-HV1491).

Continued on page 333





HMS Lively at full speed. The picture clearly shows the disposition of 4 inch guns. Note cover on pom-pom (IWM-A4653).

Shep Paine's book on diorama work, published in USA by Kalmbach and reviewed by us last issue is now available in the UK from Historex Agents, 3 Castle Street, Dover, Kent, price £4.95, postage extra. The Monogram Aviation Books, reviewed in December are available from Albion Scott Ltd, 51 York Road, Brentford, Middx. UK price £2.95 each plus £1 p & p.
