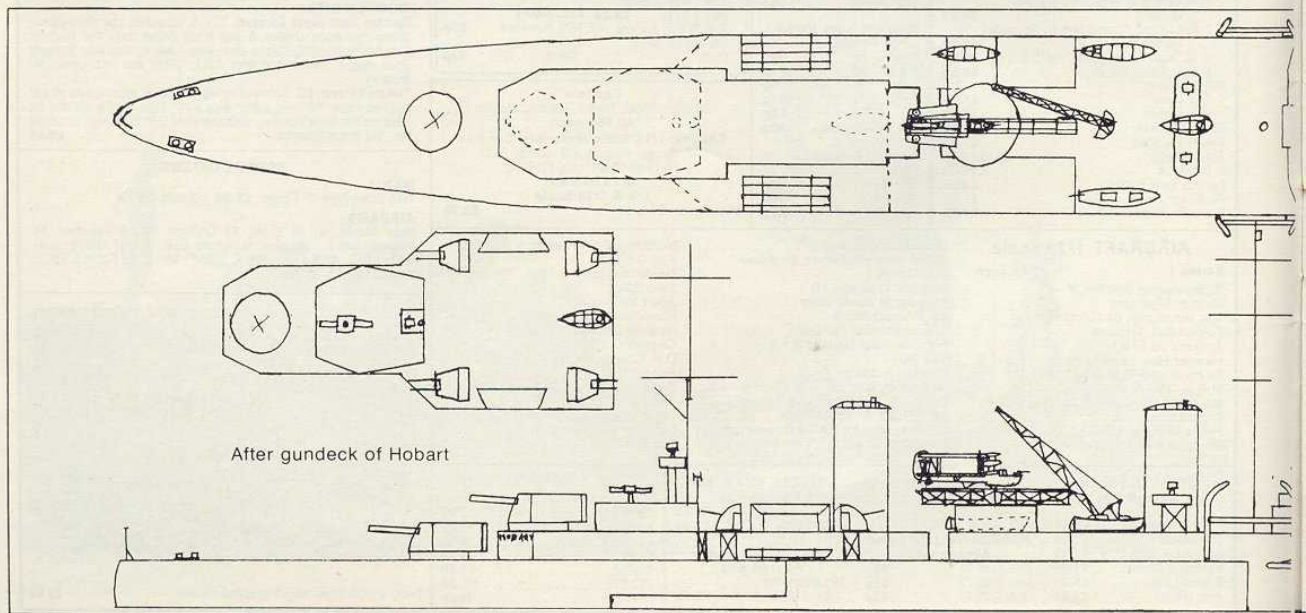
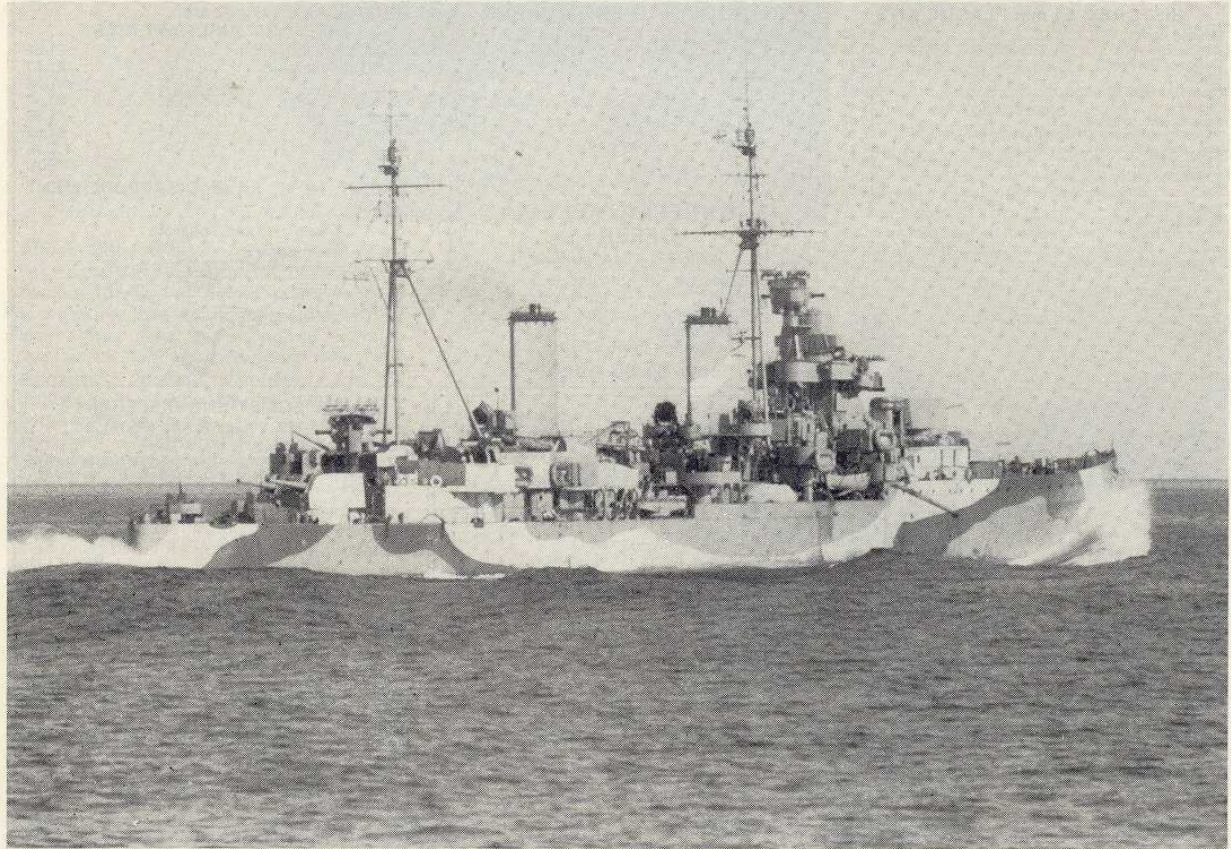


Royal Australian Navy cruiser conversions

Modelling RAN 'Leander' and 'Arethusa' Class ships from the Airfix Ajax kit by Ian Fleming



THE MAJOR weakness in the otherwise excellent 'Leander' Class cruisers, represented in kit form by the Airfix *Ajax*, was the close arrangement of the two sets of machinery, which made it possible for one torpedo hit to damage both engine rooms. This was remedied in the second group of the 'Leander' Class and in all subsequent developments by separating the engine rooms, giving the characteristic two-funnel layout of those classes.

After the five ships of the initial group of the 'Leanders' came the second group which continued the tradition of mythical names: *Amphion*, *Phaeton* and *Apollo*, all built in 1934. Their armament was eight 6-inch guns and four single 4-inch, eight torpedo tubes and smaller anti-aircraft weapons; the 4-inch guns were replaced by twin mountings in *Amphion* and *Apollo* before the war, as had been done in the first 'Leanders'.

All three were transferred to the Royal Australian Navy, *Phaeton* in 1935 being renamed *Sydney*, *Amphion* and *Apollo* shortly before the war, becoming *Perth* and *Hobart* respectively. The RAN tends to be neglected by modellers, but these three cruisers all took active part in the war in the Mediterranean and in the east, and deserve a place in a World War 2 warships collection. Two of them were lost in action — *Sydney* when she engaged the German raider *Kormoran* in November 1941, and in the ensuing fight both ships were sunk and *Perth*, having returned to Australia late in 1941, was sunk at the Battle of the Java Sea in March 1942.

The 'Leander' classes were followed in 1934-36 by a reduced version with three instead of four twin 6-inch mountings, the 'Arethusa' Class of *Arethusa*, *Galatea*, *Penelope* and *Aurora*. These had a shorter hull (512 feet against 555 feet in the 'Leander'

ders'), which was retained in the wartime 'Dido' and improved 'Dido' Classes with 5.25-inch anti-aircraft guns, of which 16 were built. These latter ships will be covered in a future article.

The RAN cruisers *Perth*, *Sydney* and *Hobart* represent the simplest of the possible conversions from the *Ajax* kit, and the *Hobart* will be dealt with first.

Remove the lattices from the top edge of the hull sides in the kit, and keep them, as they can be used later. Cement hull and deck parts together. Remove the locating holes and lugs for the funnel, 4-inch guns, catapult — turntable and crane, and the screens on the midship gundeck. Now with reference to the drawings, the superstructure can be built-up using plastic card and kit parts where appropriate; kit gun-decks must be reshaped and in places extended. Slots should be cut in the bridge sides to represent the strip beside the wings which was left unplated in all these ships, this being visible in the photographs. The catapult in the kit is rather primitive; its girder structure can be seen in the photo of *Sydney*, where it is shown extended and turned to the beam. The normal stowed position, shown on the drawing, is with the arms unextended and the whole lying fore-and-aft, the aircraft having its wings folded. The kit part may therefore be replaced at the modeller's discretion by a lattice structure made with plastic rod and a lot of patience. *Hobart* carried a Walrus aircraft, L2321, not a Seafox like *Ajax* and the Walrus from the *Suffolk* kit will do very nicely.

To make the funnels, carve a wooden former of the cross-section shown in the plan view but less than the full height of each funnel; now bend stiff paper around the former and glue it; this gives the correct cross-section all the way up the funnel but leaves the top part hollow for scale-effect, which is much better than carving the whole from the solid. Masts should be made up from plastic rod. One other refinement which can be made is to add the

armour belt of 10 thou plastic card to the hull sides, this being merely outlined in the kit and then not quite correctly. The drawing shows the correct outline.

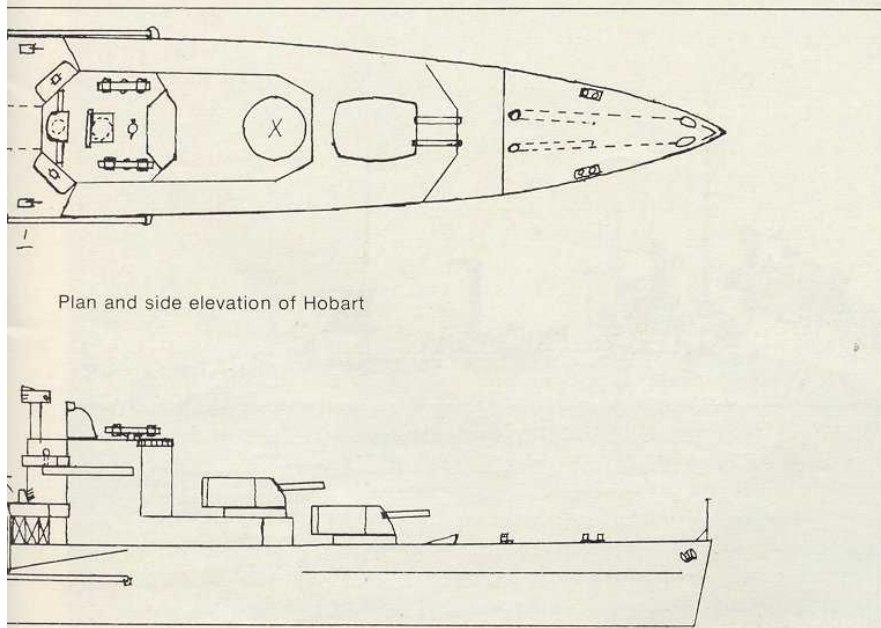
Hobart's colour scheme was as follows; hull below waterline, dull red, Humbrol HN5; waterline, black; decks, wood, HN4, except the foremost area and gundecks, dark grey, HN2; remainder light grey, HN1. The aircraft was pale blue underneath with Dark Slate Grey and Extra Dark Sea Grey camouflaged top and side surfaces, A1 type roundels on the hull and B type on the wing tops.

Perth was basically similar, but the photograph shows her suffering from temporary lack of a catapult, although the turntable remains. The catapult from *Ajax* was fitted in *Perth* at the end of 1941, and, therefore, can be included in the model or omitted as desired. The only other difference is that metal strakes have been fitted to the fore and aft edges of both funnels, their purpose being to alter the shape of the funnels in silhouette, thus making the ship harder to identify.

The colour scheme is blue and white, with the same pattern each side and plainly visible in the photograph. Some care and precision will be necessary in reproducing the pattern accurately. If the aircraft is installed it should again be a Walrus, L2319, painted as *Hobart's*; L2319 was shipped at the end of 1941 and went down with the ship in March 1942. Previously a Seagull V, A2-17, had been carried until shot down in April 1941. A2-17 was pale grey overall with A type roundels.

Sydney retained single 4-inch guns instead of twins, and these will need to be made up from rod and scrap. Rod will also have to be used to represent the frames of the last 20 mm guns of the fo'c'sle deck and sides, which were not plated in. These points may be seen in the photograph, which also shows well the structure of the catapult. *Sydney* carried a Seagull V, A2-2, pale grey with A type roundels and the number 076 painted large in black below the cockpit each side. At this scale the Seagull V may be considered identical to the Walrus. The ship was painted as *Hobart*, but all gun barrels except the 4-inch were dark grey, as were the range-finder arms on the directors.

Left A business-like view of *Aurora* at the same period as the drawings. Note the camouflage pattern with green the darkest colour.



Plan and side elevation of *Hobart*

'Arethusa' Class

The first job in making an 'Arethusa' Class cruiser is to shorten the hull. Join the hull halves, and when dry cut squarely right through the hull at a point 13 cm from each end. Tidy up the cuts and cement together the bow and stern sections, fair over the joint with putty, and leave to dry completely. Then smooth down the putty. Cement a strip of 10 thou plastic card on to each hull side to represent the armour belts, referring to the drawing for the precise shape and position. This will very nicely cover the joint and render it undetectable.

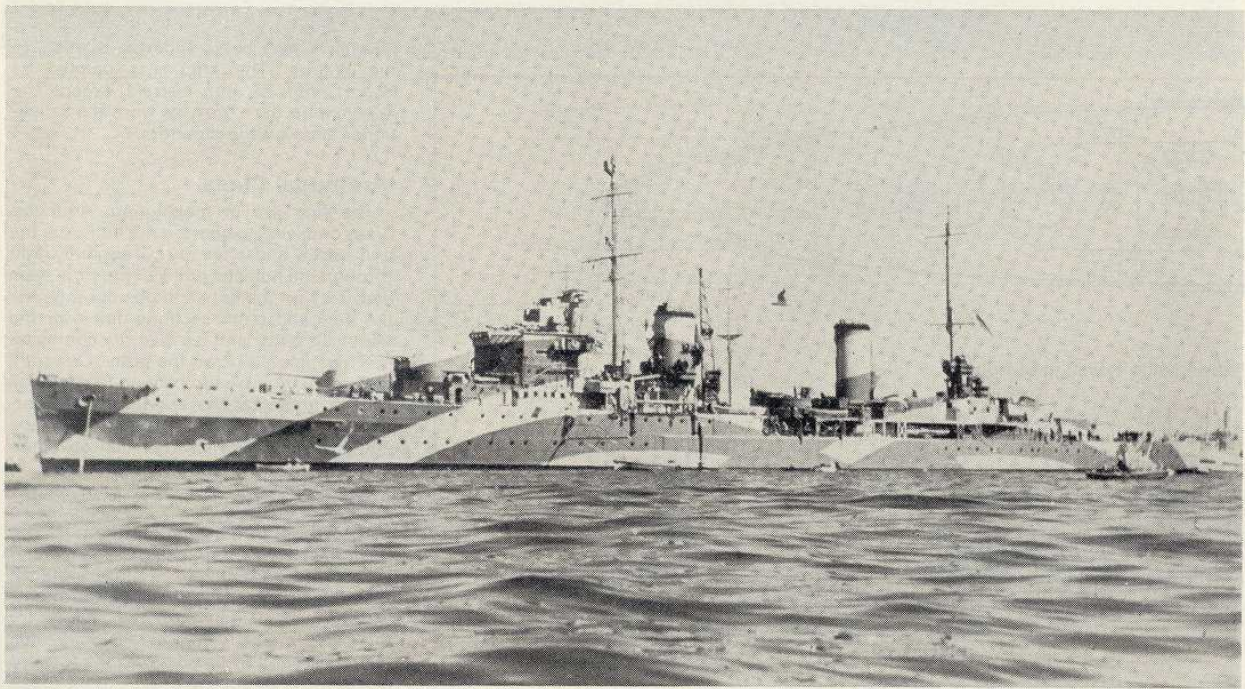
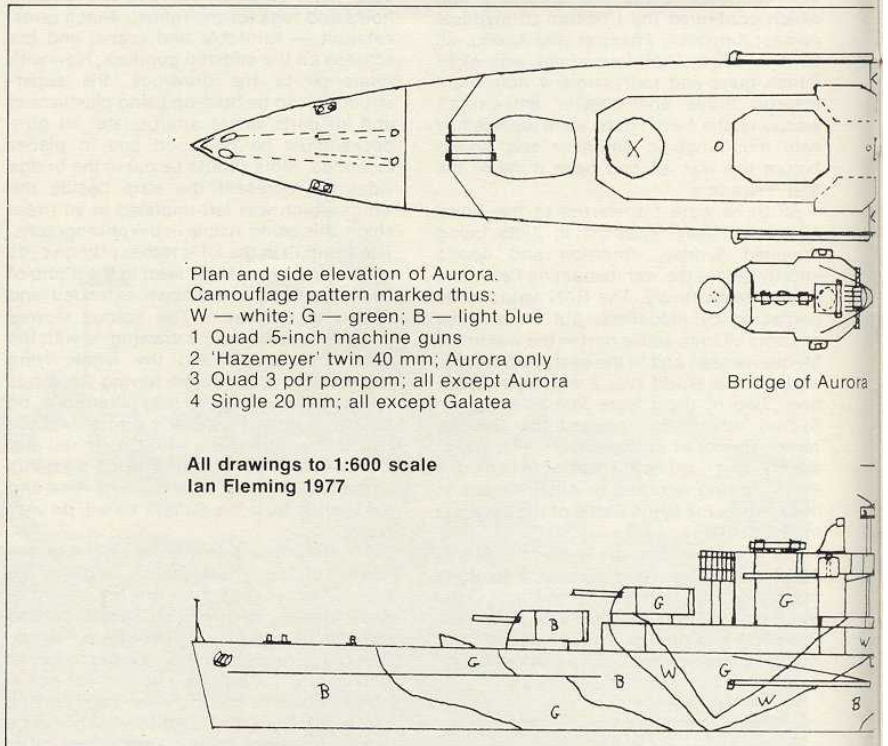
Cut off the aftermost 5 mm from the after deck; file the edges of the remainder so that it will fit in place within the hull. The point of shifting this deck aft in this manner is that the barrette for 'X' turret, the aft superstructure, and the catapult-turntable will now be in their correct positions for this class. A plastic card extension, 22 mm long, will need to be added to the forward end of the after deck to bring it to the break

of the fo'c'sle. The fo'c'sle deck must be correspondingly shortened to 102 mm. Note that there are screens 2 mm high along the deck edges from the break of the fo'c'sle to the torpedo tubes; and that the latter are triple, not quadruple, mountings.

With all decks in place and painted, the next stage is to build up the superstructure, using large quantities of plastic card. The bridge sides (but not the bridge deck itself) are considerably shorter than in *Ajax*, leaving the directors overhanging aft and supported by a strut from the main deck below. It is therefore probably better to make this unit from plastic card than to modify the kit parts. Certain other parts, eg 20 mm AA guns, quadruple 3 pdr pompoms, and additional searchlights, are made up from rod and scrap plastic. Masts and funnels are constructed as above for *Hobart*.

If you study the drawings of HMS *Aurora* you will see that a number of anti-aircraft guns have been added; these were very necessary in the Mediterranean where these ships served. They are a single 20 mm, on the quarterdeck, beneath the barrels of 'X' turret, and each side of the after director and a Hazemeyer twin 40 mm on new platforms amidships. The quad 0.5 inch guns are retained on each side of the forward funnel deck. Various radar aerials have been added to the masts, and directors, as the photograph shows well. A radar 'lantern' appears on the bridge front supported by a strut; this is shown on the drawing. The aircraft and catapult have been removed. *Aurora* at this period (December 1942) was camouflaged in white, green and light blue. The port side pattern is marked on the drawing, while that for the starboard side can be seen in the photograph. Decks were dark grey.

Below The *Perth* is shown here with an unusual geometric blue and white camouflage. **Far right** A good detail shot of *Sydney* with quadruple .5-inch machine guns beside the bridge, and boat davits and catapult.



Penelope has been further modified by the addition of a metal shelter-deck. As the drawing shows, this deck is continuous with the 4-inch gundeck and leads forward to the midship gun position, occupied this time by a pair of quad pompoms. The boats are also carried at this higher level, sup-

Penelope in the Grand Harbour, Malta, clearly showing the modifications amidships.

ported on skids. Single 20 mm guns appear on the quarterdeck and on the roof of 'X' turret. The only other addition is a rectangular casing around the bottom of the after funnel. There is no aircraft, catapult, or radar 'lantern' and the bridge front is as for *Hobart*. The hull and all upper-facing surfaces on *Penelope* were dark grey, and all other surfaces light grey. Only the upper halves of the masts on *Penelope* were black.

Arethusa — as *Penelope*, but light grey

overall with the shelter deck and foremost area of the fo'c'sle deck dark grey and all other decks natural wood.

Galatea — as *Arethusa*, but no 20 mm guns at all.

Penelope was torpedoed and sunk by U-410 off Italy in 1944 and *Galatea* suffered the same fate at the hands of U-557 late in 1941. The other two ships were scrapped after the war but the names of all four are perpetuated in the present 'Leander' Class frigates. □

