



AIRFIX AFLOAT

How to convert 1:600th scale kits into waterline models

FOR centuries, model shipwrights around the world have traditionally expressed their love for things nautical by creating replicas of complete ships, from the base of the keel to the top of the mizzen-mast. These miniature works of art can be seen in museums in any civilised country and are almost always displayed safely ensconced in oversized glass cases that keep them secure from the inevitable probing of curious spectators.

In more recent times, the advent of the plastic kit phenomenon continued this tradition by designing models for public consumption with essentially the same concept in mind. Almost all plastic ship models have been issued with the complete hull included integral with the superstructure and containing some variety of suitable support structure to ensure that the finished model could be appropriately displayed. One cannot avoid the image of the meticulously detailed and rigged sailing vessel as an almost essential element to the decor of a properly appointed lounge in a private home. It surely must be the single most valid rationale for modern plastic kit manufacturers for perpetuating this tried and true technique.

HMS Hood completed as a waterline model.

The German battle cruiser Scharnhorst with the bottom of the hull removed.

of banding together four separate firms to undertake the monumental task of marketing a complete collection of all the ships in the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) of World War 2 were eventually agreed to. Perhaps even more impressive, they actually succeeded in achieving that goal.

WATERLINE SHIPS

They eventually settled on a constant scale of 1:700th. This probably had something to do with the fact that in the USA during World War 2, the US Navy used a scale of 1:720

for ship identification models. Revell and Italeri have also continued this tradition with the inclusion of ship kits to this scale in their ranges of models. My guess is that the Japanese used this fact in their overall marketing strategy but 'metricised' it to 1:700th. The other significant feature of this project was that they were to produce this range of kits as 'waterline' models. Most of us landlubber modellers will never have an opportunity to see a full-sized warship under construction or in a drydock. Therefore, the image, of any given ship, contem-



