

An introduction to marine modelling by Allan Derham

After a working life in engineering, what better way to enjoy part of my retirement than in learning to build working model ships! In my own particular case, and period, the warships of WW11. These ships I remember well, for as a young sea cadet in the 1950's, I was fortunate in being able to visit and sail on board a variety of warships.

It was in the summer of 1956 that I, along with many other cadets from the Commonwealth countries, sailed out of Portsmouth harbour on a Royal Navy destroyer for a weapons firing exercise off the south coast of England. That ship was the "Battle class" destroyer, HMS Vigo. This class was built towards the end of WW11, and some shortly afterwards. Only HMS Barfeur saw active service with the British Pacific Fleet, in all 16 such ships were built.

HMS Vigo was the 4th to be built and was built by Messrs Fairfields Ltd at Govan, Glasgow, and joined the fleet on October 31st 1946. At 379ft long and 40ft beam, she had a displacement of 3,000 tons. Her main armament consisted of two 4.5inch gun turrets mounted forward, with close range anti-aircraft guns and eight 21inch torpedo tubes in two sets of 4 mounted amidships.

The name 'Vigo' is taken from the famous naval action, the battle of Vigo Bay, of 1703, when the English fleet annihilated a numerically superior fleet of French and Spanish ships, and captured £2,000,000 of treasure. So it came as no surprise to me that my first choice of model to build would indeed be the Vigo.

I bought the hull and drawings from Metcalf Mouldings at 1:96 scale, with the twin props from the Prop Shop. I spent a long time collecting photographs and many publications on the 'Battle class'.

I started from scratch, learning to work from a flat sheet of styrene. It took some time to build up the superstructure and detailed work using different materials, with many mistakes along the way. However, patience is rewarded when you finally complete your model. The purpose built workshop that I have is also a great asset to work in, enabling me to improve my technique and skills. Help and advice from club members has saved me much time and expense.

My second model is now well advanced, the WW11 cruiser HMS Liverpool at 1:24 scale.



HMS Vigo 1959



Finished model