

Background – The 'L' class destroyers:

By 1937, the new Tribal and 'J' class destroyers then under construction were the Royal Navy's response to the new large destroyers being built in Germany, Japan, and the USA; two more destroyer flotillas were to be ordered for the 1937 program. The first was the 'K' class (a repeat of the 'J's). For the 'L' class, something different was required.

The appearance of the French *Mogador* class with four twin 5.5" guns, ten 21.7" torpedo tubes, and a speed of 39 knots appeared to hopelessly outclass the newest Royal Navy designs. Speeds of all capital ships were going up and destroyers needed a good margin for daylight torpedo attacks; upwards of 40 knots was proposed.

A new weatherproof twin 4.7" mount was also being developed in light of experience with the open 4.7" mount then being fitted to the Tribal and 'J' classes. Various design studies were pursued, but to carry the new gun mounts at the higher speed would require a much larger ship than the already large Tribal class. It was also felt that the new weatherproof mounting with its maximum elevation of 50[°] was not sufficient to deal with the increasing threat from the air.

A super destroyer was then proposed that could carry three twin 5.25" mounts with a speed of 40 knots. These ships would have been close to 3,000 tons and over 420 feet in length; more of a light cruiser than a destroyer. The commanders of the Home and Mediterranean fleets were in favour of a smaller destroyer as they quite rightly felt that Britain could not afford to engage in the arms race that would result if the super destroyers were to be built. CinC Home Fleet also noted that the new destroyers did not need ten torpedo tubes; eight would suffice and would also save weight. The smaller destroyer was

also handier and could turn quickly, a prime consideration for surviving air attack and for hunting submarines.

Private reports from the French Navy also indicated that the *Mogador* class were not a success and would not be repeated. These considerations led to the abandonment of the super destroyer concept in favour of the *Dido* class cruisers and a continuation of the basic 'J' and 'K' designs.

The resulting 'L' class would superficially resemble the 'J' and 'K' classes with their one funnel, three twin gun mounts, and two banks of torpedo tubes, but there were important differences. The 'L' class would carry the much larger and heavier weatherproof twin 4.7" gun mount which required that the front of the bridge be raised so that the helmsman could see over the mounting in 'B' position. They were 300 tons heavier, six feet longer, and generated 48,000 SHP in order to attain the design speed of 37 knots (the 'J' and 'K's had 40,000 SHP and a design speed of 36 knots). Only eight torpedo tubes were fitted compared to the ten in the 'J' and 'K's. They had powered ammunition hoists and a combined HA/LA director tower with integral rangefinder. The centre of gravity was also higher due to the heavier gun mounts and larger boilers.

Tenders went out in March 1938 and orders for eight ships were confirmed in August. Construction proceeded rapidly; the first six were laid down by the end of 1938 and the last two in March 1939.

Legion was the first launched in December 1939 by which time it was evident that not enough of the new 4.7" mounts would be available to arm the whole class. By March 1940, it had been decided to arm four of the ships with four twin 4" mounts and make them true AA destroyers. *Lance, Gurkha, Legion,* and *Lively* were fitted with the twin 4"; the other four would complete with the twin 4.7".

The 'L' class saw heavy action in the Second World War, seven of the eight ships being lost or becoming Constructive Total Losses; only *Lookout* survived. Matched by the mortality rate of the 'D' class which also lost seven out of eight ships, this was the highest loss rate of any of the Royal Navy destroyer classes.

HMS Legion was the first of the 'L' class to complete. Built by Hawthorn Leslie at Hebburn on the River Tyne just outside of Newcastle along with sister ship *HMS Lightning*, she entered service in December 1940. She was in high demand as an escort due to her High Angle armament and her long range AA Type 285 radar. She operated mainly in the Western Approaches as part of Escort Group 14 until October 1941, but was detached on several occasions for other operations.

In March 1941, she participated in Operation Claymore, the Lofoten Island raid. In company with *Lance*, she escorted the carrier *HMS Furious* to Gibraltar in June 1941, and was part of the reinforcements for convoy OG71 in August 1941. This convoy of 23 merchant ships bound for Gibraltar came under heavy U-Boat attack and lost 8 merchant ships and 2 escorts with 10 merchant ships diverting to neutral Portugal; it was one of the bigger convoy disasters of the entire war.

In September 1941, *Legion* participated in Malta convoy Operation Halberd, during which she sank the Italian submarine *Adua* in company with her sister *Gurkha* on September 30.

In October 1941, she was transferred to Force 'H' at Gibraltar as part of the 4th Destroyer Flotilla. At the end of October she was part of the escort for convoy HG75, during which the famous *HMS Cossack* was torpedoed and sunk. In November, she formed part of the escort for *Ark Royal* and *Argus* during a flying off operation for Malta. It was on this trip that the *Ark Royal* was torpedoed on November 13; *Legion* coming alongside the sinking carrier to embark survivors.

In December she was transferred to Alexandria to serve with the Mediterranean Fleet. While on passage in company with *HMS Sikh*, *HMS Maori*, and the Dutch *Isaac Sweers*, the four destroyers intercepted the Italian cruisers *Alberto Da Barbiano* and *Alberto Di Guissano* off Cape Bon on the night of December 13. Both Italian cruisers were transporting petrol to North Africa and both sank in flames after a short gun and torpedo action.

After stopping at Malta, *Legion* sailed in company with Force K on December 16 to participate in a resupply operation that culminated in the inconclusive First Battle of Sirte on December 17; she then carried on to Alexandria where she arrived on December 19. Three Italian human torpedoes followed her through the anti-submarine boom where they succeeded in laying explosive charges that damaged the battleships *Queen Elizabeth*, *Valiant*, and the tanker *Savona*.

In company with *HMS Kipling, Legion* sank U-75 off Mersa Mutrah on December 28 to round out a very eventful year.

She was transferred to Force K at Malta in January 1942. On March 20, *Penelope* and *Legion* sailed from Malta to rendezvous with supply convoy MW10 coming from Alexandria; the rendezvous was accomplished at 0800 on March 22 well to the east of Malta. Italian heavy surface forces were out looking for the British convoy and at 1410 they were sighted from *HMS Euryalus* and *HMS Legion*; the battleship *Littorio*, heavy cruisers *Trento* and *Gorizia*, light cruiser *Bande Nere*, and eight destroyers. Opposing them were British cruisers *Dido*, *Euryalus*, *Cleopatra*, *Penelope*, and *Carlisle* with 11 fleet destroyers and five Hunt class destroyers.

The resulting Second Battle of Sirte was a confusing action fought in high seas and heavy winds with the British forces interposing themselves between the Italian forces and the convoy. *Legion* tacked herself onto the 14th flotilla of *Jervis, Kipling, Kelvin,* and *Kingston* and in company with those ships carried out a torpedo attack on the *Littorio*; none of the torpedoes hit. The Italian forces were driven off without loss, but two of the four merchant ships were lost to air attack. *Legion* was near missed during one of the air attacks and limped into Marsa Xlokk on the south coast of Malta on March 23 where she was beached with one engine out of action and with flooding below decks.

Towed around to Grand Harbour on March 25, she was hit by two bombs the next day. The forward magazine exploded and she rolled over and came to rest with the upper works resting on the jetty – a constructive total loss. The wreck was scrapped in 1946.

Legion was in active service for a mere 15 months and won 7 battle honours.

The Kit:

This kit features *Legion* as she appeared in November 1941 with the dark hull and light upper works colour scheme and no funnel bands.

Packaging:

The kit comes in a well-constructed box featuring a painting of *HMS Legion* from an unusual angle off the starboard quarter approaching the sinking *Ark Royal*.

On the side of the box are pictures of the upcoming *Bismarck* kit and the just released *HMS Prince of Wales* kit.

All of the sprues are individually sealed in plastic bags with the exception of the forward and aft superstructure pieces and 4" gun shields which are in their own sealed box. There is also a large full colour glossy card featuring the box art on one side and a ship's history with general characteristics on the reverse.

The kit comprises 217 parts on 12 sprues with all parts moulded in medium grey; the forward superstructure, aft superstructure, upper hull, lower hull, waterline plate, and the main decks are separate pieces not attached to any sprue. There is also a photo-etch sheet. The Deluxe Edition adds 3 brass rods, 8 machined 4" gun barrels, and 96 parts on two photo-etch sheets.



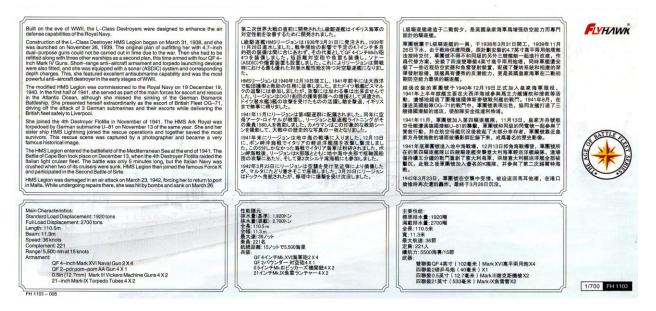


----- Box Art -----



----- Box Contents -----





----- Front and Rear of included card -----

Hull:

The one piece hull is 155mm long and scales out perfectly to the actual waterline length of 354 feet. A lower hull and a waterline base plate are supplied giving the modeller the option to build either a full hull or a waterline version. There are no stands included so those wishing to build the full hull version will need to plan ahead for an arrangement to display the completed model.

The lower hull itself has finely molded bilge keels, the forward section of the propeller shafts, and the skeg between the propeller shafts. Rudder, propellers, shafts, and the asdic dome are included as separate pieces. Raised locating points ensure an accurate fit to the upper hull.

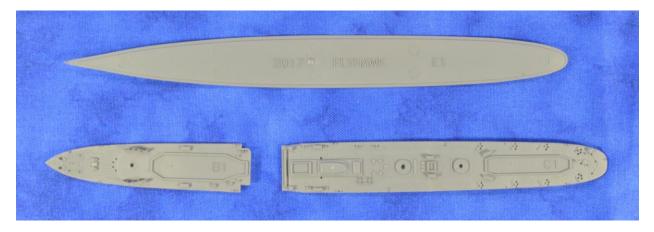
The upper hull accurately captures the features of the real ship, with flaring at the bow and stern and the gentle upward sweep which begins just forward of 'A' 4" mount. There are also raised strakes capturing the line of hull plating from the bow to the stern, escape scuttles, and fairleads. The portholes all feature rigols ('eyebrows') and the anchor hawse pipe is very clearly defined.



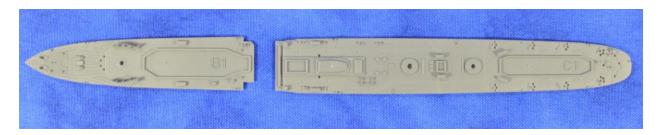
----- Upper and lower hulls -----

Decks:

The main decks are in two pieces: the foredeck back to the focsle break, and the much longer after deck. Both feature amazing levels of detail with bollards, capstans, cable reels, hatches, lockers, amidships walkways, raised edges for fitting the superstructure parts, and recesses for fitting deck detail such as the depth charge throwers and racks. The main deck forward curves gently upwards to match the hull sides and features a raised non-skid pattern at the bow. Outboard of 'A' mounting are raised bulwarks which are very thin and feature internal bracing. The breakwater itself is a separate piece. Both deck pieces drop right into place on the main hull in an impressive display of precision fit.



----- Waterline hull plate and main decks -----

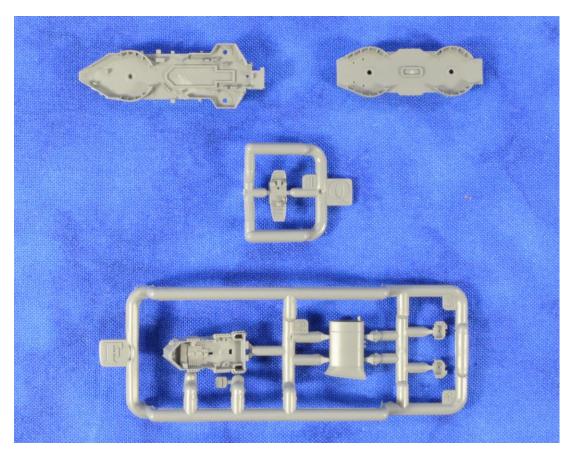


----- Main deck pieces showing the amount of detail -----

Superstructure:

The forward and after superstructure parts are in a separate box and are individual pieces that do not require cutting from sprues; a great feature which will prevent any damage from sprue cutters and the like. They both feature immense detail on every face: hatches, handrails, deck fittings, slots for fitting other pieces. The forward superstructure has the raised platforms for the 0.5" MGs in the signal bridge wings; both pieces have the raised bulwarks and internal bracing around each of the gun mount positions. The upper bridge has wind deflectors and the raised wooden grating that the binnacle and compass are fitted to; 14 pieces in all make up the components of the bridge.

The funnel is a single hollow piece with engraved lines and an internal steam pipe.

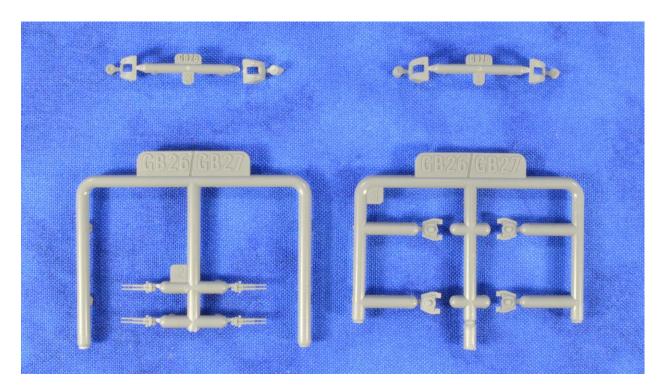


----- Superstructure and funnel pieces -----

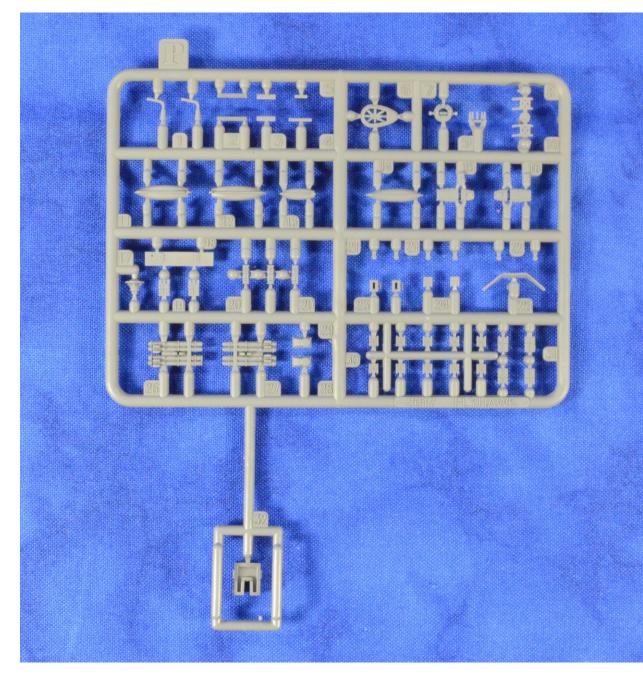
Weapons:

Each twin 4" gun is composed of three pieces, with raised rivets and sighting ports on the shields. The quad pom-pom is made up of 3 pieces, each of which features plenty of detail. The 0.5" quad guns are very detailed single pieces with clearly defined separate gun barrels.

The torpedo tubes are also well detailed with clearly defined air flasks and doors.



----- 4" gun mounts and shields -----



----- Torpedo tubes, boats, funnel cap, and other fittings -----

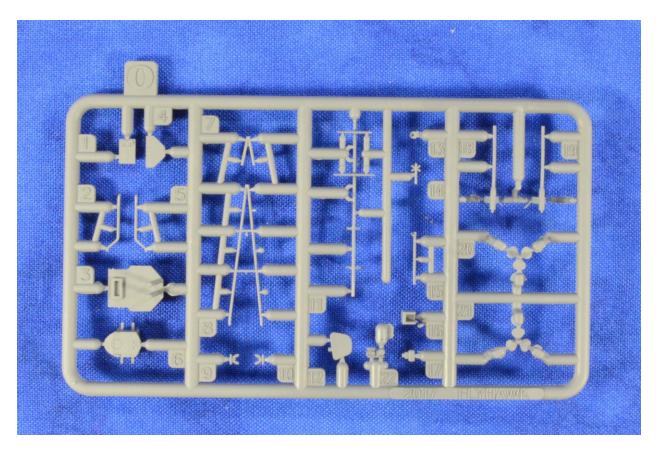
Boats and fittings:

There are 2 open boats and 2 motor launches, each one features deck planks and the launches have separate cabin pieces. There are many smaller fittings, every piece of which is incredibly detailed. The ready use ammo lockers have lids and doors, the deck winch has detailed motors, the life rafts are detailed both top and bottom, the boat and depth charge loading davits are extremely thin, the director is open at the top, there are 3 external pipes for the funnel, the depth charge throwers and ready use

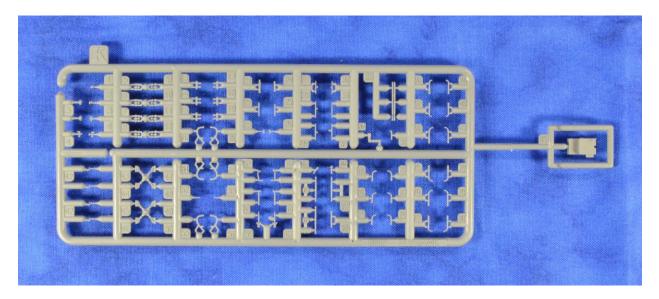
racks have clearly defined details and depth charges, there are 3 depth charge racks for the quarterdeck, and a Type 285 radar aerial.

The masts and support legs are extremely thin with the yardarms already attached. The cross piece bracing between the mast and the support legs are also already attached to the foremast; this will aid construction considerably. They can be used as is without resorting to replacements made from rod. There is an HF aerial for the top of the foremast.

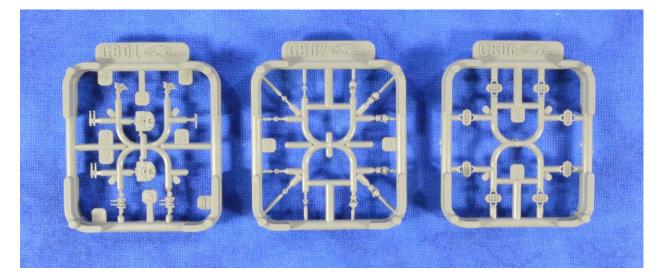
Three of the sprues carrying the smaller fittings are the same ones that are found in other Flyhawk Royal Navy kits. This is a welcome level of standardization that most likely makes kit production very cost effective for Flyhawk, and provides plenty of spares.



----- Masts, propellers, and other fittings -----



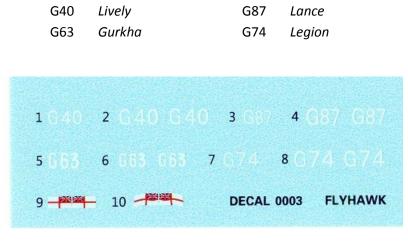
----- Depth charge throwers, storage racks, and other fittings -----



----- Fittings -----

Decals:

The decal sheet has 2 White Ensigns and pennant numbers for each of the 4" gun 'L' class destroyers:



----- Decals -----

Photo-etch:

The etch sheet contains anchor chain, a shelter for the rear superstructure, life raft supports, and the bridge windows.

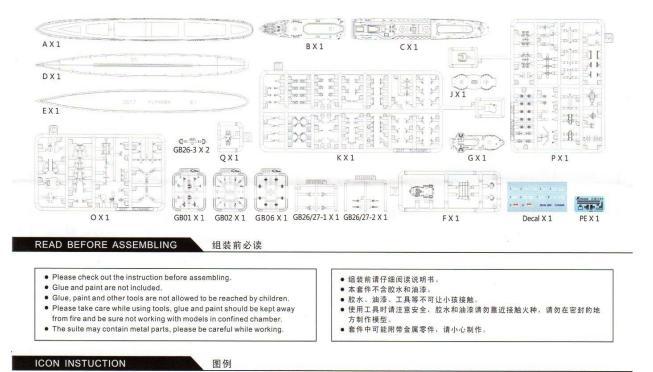


----- Photo-etch sheet -----

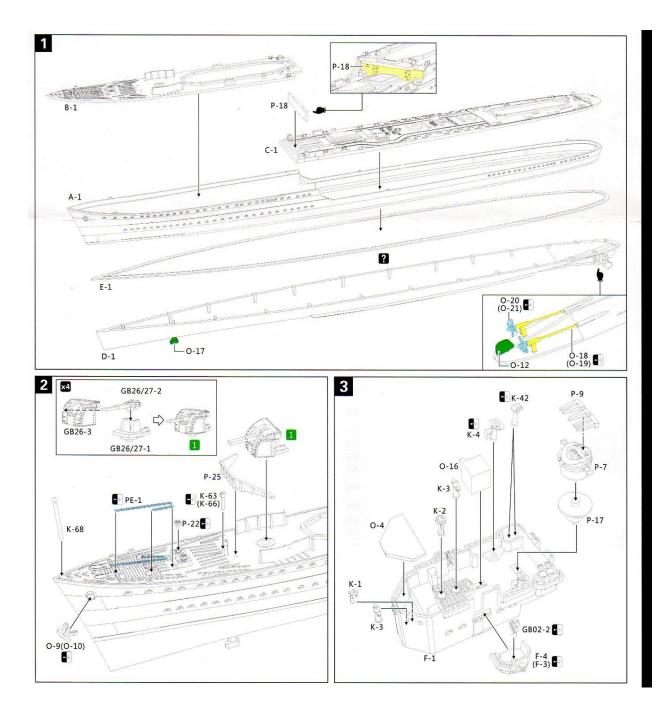
Instructions:

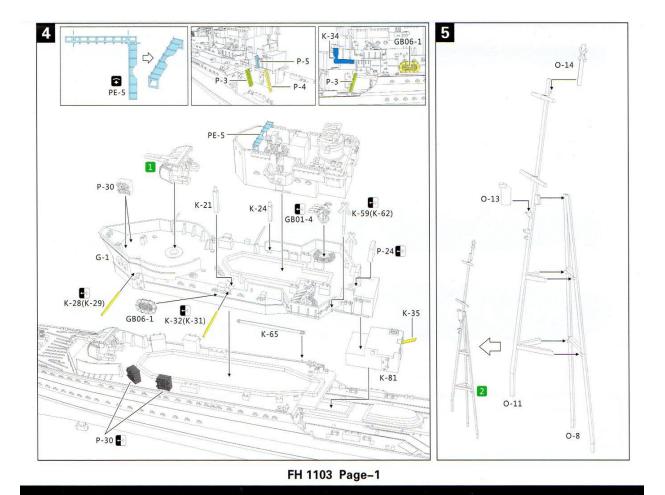
The instructions come on a large, double sided full colour page featuring ten steps and thirteen subassemblies. They are very clear and comprehensive and also feature a drawing showing all the sprues and parts included. Colour coding is used throughout to assist with placement of smaller parts, particularly the depth charge throwers, storage racks, and their attendant davits; this is a very good feature which takes out a lot of guess work.

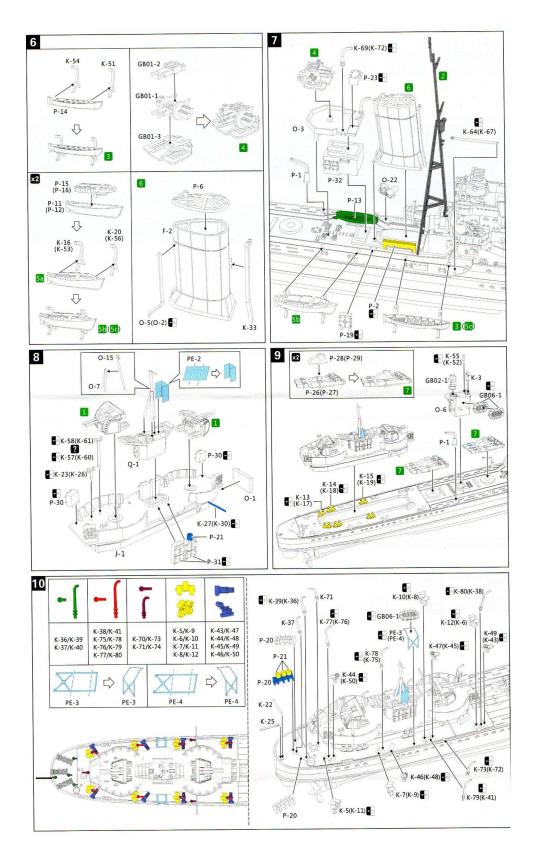












----- Instructions -----

Colour scheme:

There is a full colour diagram for Legion in her two tone grey scheme as she appeared in November 1941. The colours reference the Mr. Hobby, Tamiya, and White Ensign Colourcoats ranges.

Legion wore at least 4 different colour schemes during her career so the modeller has considerable scope for variation.

- o Dark grey overall
- Light grey with dark grey camouflage patches
- o Dark grey hull with light grey upper works, no funnel bands (alongside Ark Royal)
- Dark grey hull with light grey upper works and 3 funnel bands

PAINTING & MARKING GUIDE Decal Application:

1.Cut the pictures from sheet as needed.

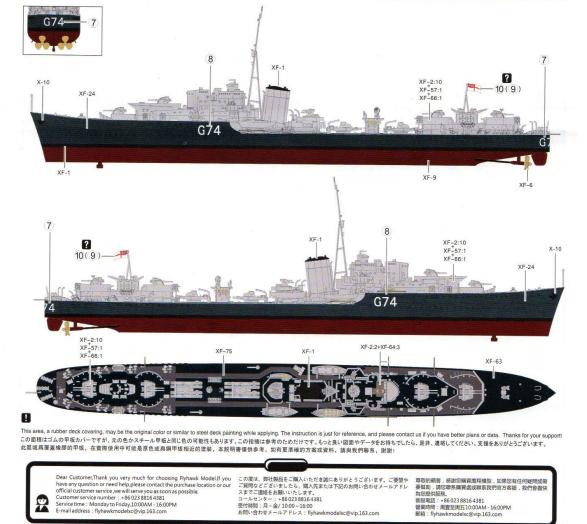
2.Dip the pictures in warm water for about 10 seconds.

2.Dip the pictures in warm water for about 10 seconds.
3.Hold the picture backing sheet adge and gently slide the picture onto the model.
4.Please move the picture to the proper position on model.
5.Please gently press picture down with a soft cloth until excess water's out and no air bubbles.

塗装とラベリングの指示 デカルの使用方法: 1.デカルから図案を切ります。 17 J JAP 504 そのります。 2 図案を温かい水の中で10秒浸します。 3 図案のボール紙を使って、図案を模型に移動します。 4 図案を適当な位置に移動してください。 5 柔らかい布で水が乾燥するまで図案を押さえて、気泡 5 楽しかい布で水が乾燥するまで図案を押さえて、気泡 を消します。

塗裝與標貼指示 水貼紙的使用: 1.從水貼紙上剪下圖案; 2.將圖案放入溫水中浸泡10秒; 3.拿著圖案紙板將圖案移到模型上; 4.將圖案移到適當的位置; 5.用軟布輕壓圖案直至水幹,消除掉氣泡。

	Color	色	颜色	Mr.Hobby	Tamiya	WEM Colourcoats	5a XF-2:10
	Light Grey 507C	ライトグレー507C	507C淺灰	H 338	XF-2:10 XF-57:1 XF-66:1	RN03	- XF_57:1 XF-66:1
	Medium Dark Grey	メイディウムダークグレー	中暗灰		XF-75		P-14 XF-78 XF-22 XF-57 XF-60
	Dark Grey 507A	ダーク グレー507A	507A暗灰	H 331	XF-24	RN01	
	Deck Gray	甲板グレー	甲板灰	H 32 40	XF-63		
	Hull Red	ハルレッド	艦底紅	H 17 29	XF-9	RN19	
	Deck Brown	デッキ・ブラウン	木棕色	H 37 43	XF-2:2 + XF-64:3		P-13 XF-78 XF-2:1
	Wooden Deck Tan	ウッドン タン	木甲板色	H 27 44	XF-78	C01	GB06-1
	Copper	カッパー	銅	H 10 10	XF-6		
	Flat Black	フラットブラック	清光黑	H 12 33	XF-1	C02	XF-78 XF-2:1
	Steel	スチール	黑鐵色	H 18 28	X-10	C08	XF-78 XF-6



----- Colour guide -----

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Deluxe Edition Parts:

The deluxe edition comes with eight machined brass 4" gun barrels, three pieces of brass rod, and two photo-etch sheets with 96 parts.

The gun barrels are finely tapered with hollowed out muzzles and a lug at the breech end for fitting in the appropriate gun mount.

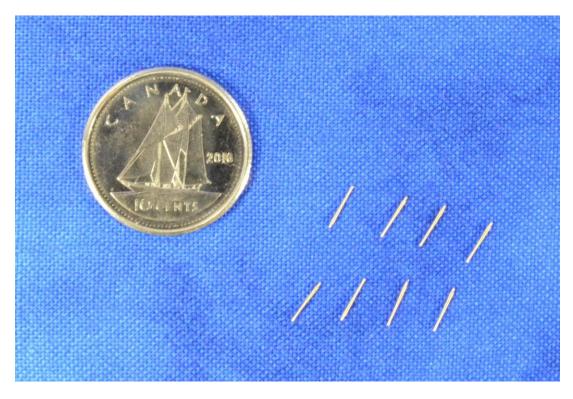
The brass rod comes in two thicknesses to be cut to length and used for the masts and support legs.

The photo-etch sheets contain (among other things), boat and depth charge loading davits, a Type 285 radar aerial, semaphore signalling arms, forward breakwater, depth charge racks, boat davit booms and ladders, cable reels, funnel grill, mainmast support bracing, ladders, and pre-cut railing lengths.

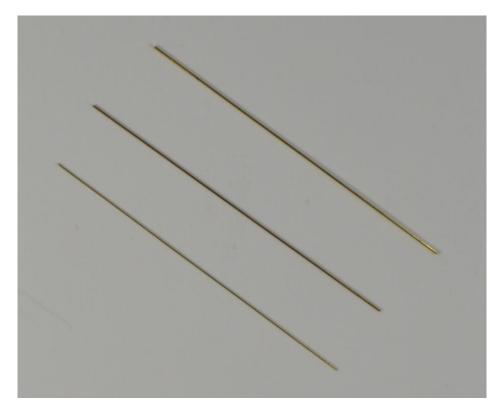
A single double sided instruction sheet in full colour indicates how the etch pieces are to be folded, assembled, and placed. A specific diagram is included to show where each length of railing is to be placed.



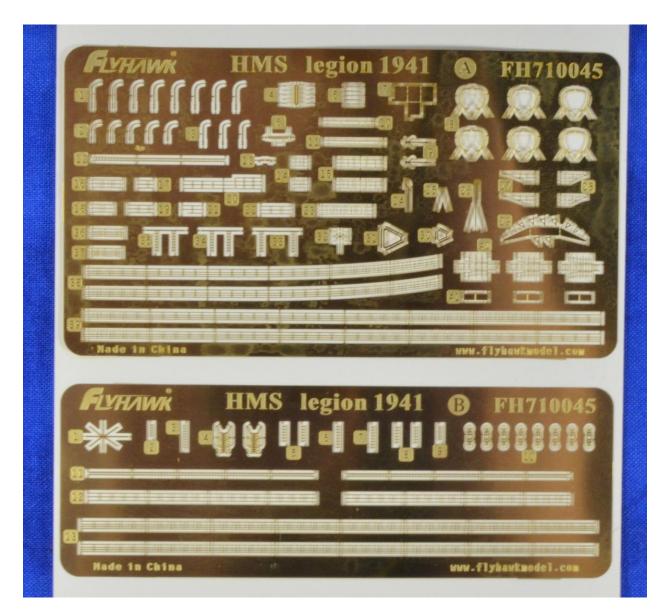
----- Deluxe Edition components -----



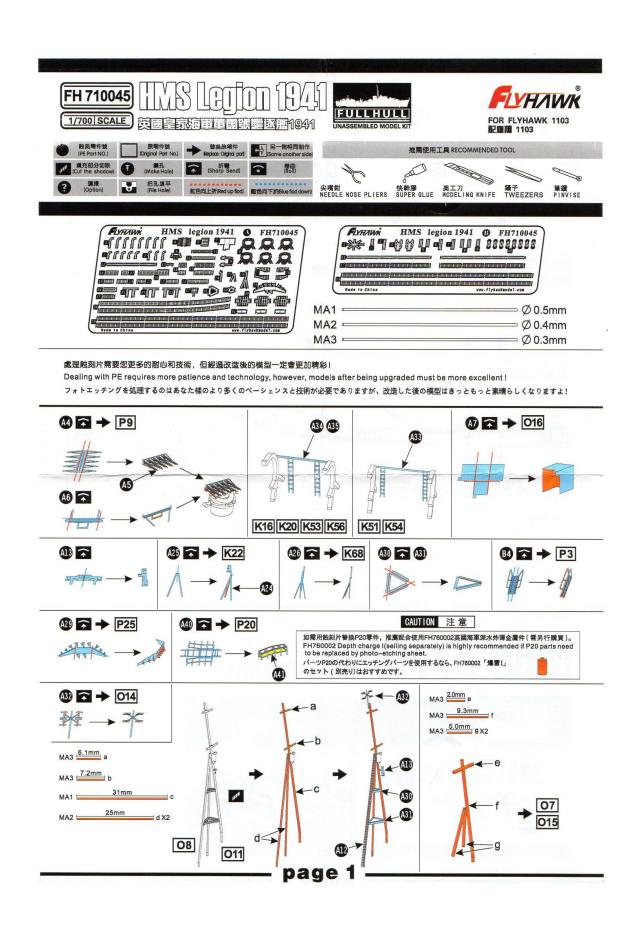
----- Deluxe Edition gun barrels -----

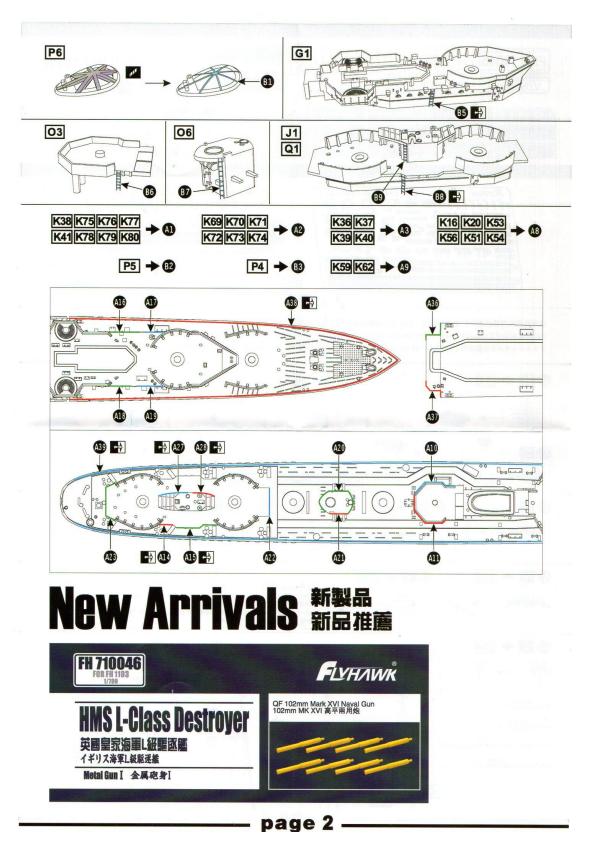


----- Deluxe Edition brass rods -----



----- Deluxe Edition photo-etch sheets -----





----- Deluxe Edition instructions -----

Overall Impression:

Flyhawk continues their remarkable series of releases with this superb kit of *HMS Legion*. All the parts are precision molded, with absolutely no flash or those lines that result when two mould halves are used to make a single component. The fineness of detail does not imply fragile pieces; the pieces stand up to rough handling. I like the idea of not attaching the main superstructure pieces to any sprues, none of the molded on detail will be damaged during assembly.

The model is just over 6" long; the amount of detail that Flyhawk has packed in is incredible. It is very well-engineered, the parts will fit together very easily and it is very accurate based on my available references.

While the sheer number of parts may appear to be intimidating upon first inspection, most modellers will have no problems assembling the kit. Those who don't wish to add the smaller pieces can simply leave them off - the level of detail present will still result in a spectacular model. Finely moulded items like the masts and Type 285 aerial can be used right out of the box without the need to resort to replacement parts. The instructions are very comprehensive and the use of colour coding will ease the assembly of the smaller parts.

More experienced modellers will enjoy the extra detail parts found in the Deluxe Edition. The 4" gun barrels are very tiny and will require steady hands and much patience to fit. As the kit funnel screen is molded directly onto the funnel cap, great care will have to be used when removing it in favour of the etch part. The only other item that modellers may consider would be anchor chain.

It is tempting to note that it could be relatively easy for Flyhawk to re-work this kit for the 'L' and 'M' class ships that were armed with the fully enclosed twin 4.7". All it would take are new forward and after superstructure pieces and the new gun mounts. Most of the rest of the kit would be the same. Will we see a Flyhawk kit of the 'L' and 'M' class destroyers that were fitted with the 4.7" guns? One can only hope so! In the meantime, those who like to scratch-build should find the conversion process fairly straight forward.

This is a highly recommended kit, well-researched, well-engineered, and well-packaged. In 1/700 scale we now have a Royal Navy aircraft carrier (*Hermes*), a battleship (*Prince of Wales*), cruisers (*Naiad, Aurora, Penelope*) and now their first RN destroyer; all impressive kits. Congratulations to Flyhawk once again, as well as a very sincere thank you for their choice of subjects. Their next releases are eagerly awaited.



----- Dry-fitting of decks and main superstructure pieces -----

References:

- Afridi to Nizam by John English. World Ship Society2001
- The Battle of Sirte by S.W.C. Pack. Ian Allan 1975
- British Destroyers by Edgar J. March. Seely Service & Co. Ltd 1966
- British Destroyers and Frigates the Second World War and After by Norman Friedman. Chatham Publishing 2006

Review kit courtesy of Flyhawk Models