

Notes for this review:

For the general background of the Arethusa class, please see the review of the Flyhawk Aurora and Chungking kits.

Background - HMS 'Pepperpot':

HMS Penelope was the third of the four ships in the Arethusa class. Ordered in 1933 and commissioned on November 13, 1936 she differed from the first two ships in that she was fitted with twin 4" guns while building.

At the beginning of World War II, Penelope was serving in the Home Fleet and operated with the 2nd Cruiser Squadron on convoy escort duties. She was sent to Norway in April 1940 as part of the Allied response to the invasion of that country.

On April 11, 1940 while searching for a German ship at the southern entrance to Vestfjord, she ran hard aground on an uncharted rock, severely damaging 300 feet along the bottom of the hull, tearing open the forward engine and boiler rooms, and damaging three of her four propellers. With the aid of *HMS Eskimo*, she was wrenched free of the rocks three hours later and made her way to Skjelfjord in the Lofoten Islands, located on the northern side of the entrance to Vestfjord. The 45 mile trip took 17 hours on her single remaining undamaged propeller shaft.

Penelope lay in Skjelfjord for a month while her crew laboured to patch the worst of the damage. To help her blend into the towering mountains surrounding her anchorage, she was painted up in an

unofficial brown and white scheme. On May 8, she was bombed by the Luftwaffe and 5 crewmembers were killed. On May 10, she limped out of Skjelfjord under tow. On May 16, after a very anxious trip across the North Sea and coming under air attack once more she reached the Clyde. She would be out of service for a year.

As part of the repair, her catapult was removed and replaced by 2 quad pom-poms; she was also fitted with radar Types 281, 284, and 285 and the masts converted to tripods to carry the extra weight of the radar equipment. She rejoined the fleet on August 17, 1941. Again assigned to the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, she resumed convoy escort duties and occasionally escorted major fleet units on operations. On October 12, 1941, she and her sister ship *Aurora* were assigned to Malta as part of a surface striking force of cruisers and destroyers, the legendary Force 'K'.

After arrival at Malta on October 21, Force 'K' began operations against Italian convoys bringing supplies to the Axis armies in North Africa. Successful interceptions on November 8, November 23, and December 1, resulted in two Italian destroyers and eleven merchant ships sunk.

The initial successes of Force 'K' came to an abrupt end on December 19 off Tripoli when the force ran into an unsuspected minefield. *Aurora* and *Penelope* were damaged; the cruiser *Neptune* and destroyer *Kandahar* were sunk. *Penelope* made it back to Malta where she was under repair until the beginning of January. *Aurora* had to return to the UK for more extensive repairs, leaving *Penelope* as the sole cruiser left in Force 'K'.

Due to fuel concerns, *Penelope* was now restricted to escorting friendly convoys to and from Malta. She made a round trip to Alexandria from January 5-27, escorting the supply ship *Breconshire* on one of her many trips to Malta. She was out again on February 13-15 bringing in destroyer reinforcements for Force 'K'. In March 1942, she was part of the British forces engaged in the 2nd Battle of Sirte when Italian surface forces intercepted a convoy bound for Malta.

On March 26, she was damaged in an air raid and had to be dry-docked in Malta for repairs. While in dock, she was repeatedly attacked from the air and took so much splinter damage to her hull that she became known as 'HMS Pepperpot'. Malta had become untenable as a base and Penelope sailed for Gibraltar on April 8, coming under heavy air attack once more, but suffering no damage.

She was repaired at the New York Navy Yard in the USA from May to September, returning to the UK on October 1, 1942. Adopted by the city of Blackpool, she was sent out to the Mediterranean once more in January 1943. She participated in the bombardment and subsequent surrender of the Italian island of Pantelleria in June 1943. In July she was present at the invasion of Sicily where she provided fire support and in September she did the same for the landings at Salerno.

A brief period in the Eastern Mediterranean followed where she was once again bombed by the Luftwaffe, suffering minor damage. Reassignment to Gibraltar to search for German blockade runners in the Atlantic came in December 1943.

On January 22, 1944, she took part in the Anzio invasion, once again providing fire support and returning to Naples for replenishment. On February 19 while en-route back to the Anzio beachhead, she was torpedoed by U-410. The torpedo hit on the starboard side aft, flooding the after engine room and damaging the steering gear. *Penelope* circled to starboard and gradually came to a stop. She was then struck by a second torpedo to starboard in the after boiler room. The after magazine blew up and the ship broke her back. With both the bow and stern pointing skyward, she sank in less than a minute. 417 of the crew were lost, only 205 survived.

Penelope won eight battle honours for her service in World War Two. Her named lived on in the *Leander* class frigate of 1962.

The Kit:

This kit features *Penelope* as she appeared in 1940 before the replacement of her catapult with 2 quadruple pom-poms. It is **not** a simple re-packaging of Aurora or Chungking, but is a new kit with many unique parts.

Packaging:

The kit comes in a well-constructed box featuring a painting of *HMS Penelope* in Skjelfjord wearing her unique brown and white camouflage. The box of my kit was squashed in the mail, but none of the contents were damaged and the box is still usable.

On the side of the box are pictures of the *HMS Hermes 1937* kit and the upcoming *HMS Prince of Wales* kit.

All of the sprues are individually sealed in plastic bags with the exception of the main superstructure pieces and gun turrets 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 375 parts on 27 sprues with all parts moulded in medium grey. The Deluxe Edition adds 14 metal parts, 128 parts on two photo-etch sheets, and a resin piece.



---- Box Art ----

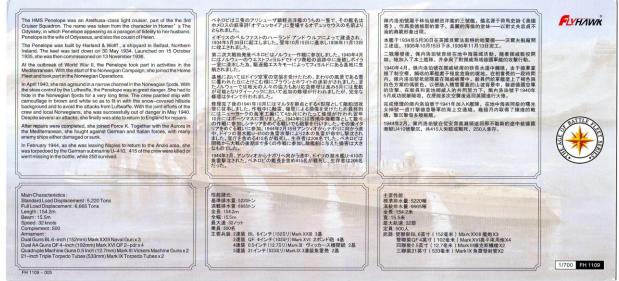


---- Box Contents ----



----- Internal box containing superstructure pieces and gun turrets-----





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

Hull:

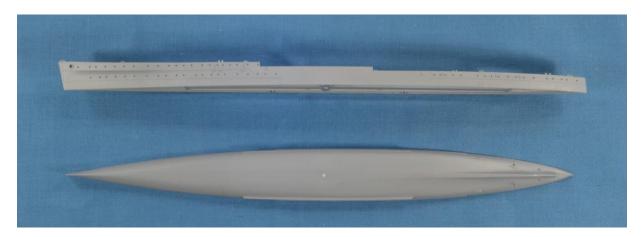
The one piece hull scales out perfectly to the actual length of 506 feet. A lower hull and a waterline base plate are supplied giving the modeller the option to build either a full hull or a waterline version. There are no stands included so those wishing to build the full hull version will need to plan ahead for an arrangement to display the completed model.

The lower hull itself has finely molded bilge keels and the lower half of the armour belt. Rudder, propellers, and shafts are included as separate pieces. It has raised locating points enabling an accurate fit to the upper hull. The instructions for fitting the lower hull do not appear on the main instruction sheet, they are on a smaller separate sheet.

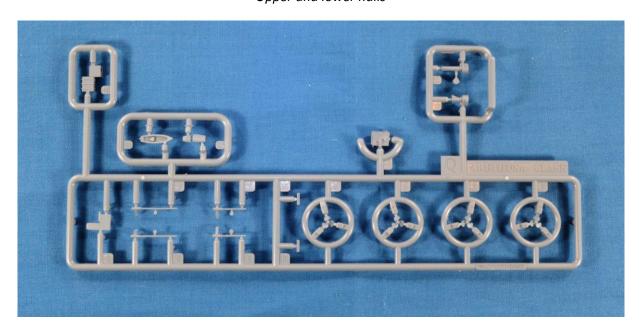
The pronounced bow knuckle is in the correct position, starting just under the anchor hawse pipe and terminating just aft of 'B' barbette. It is a perfect rendition of this distinctive feature, following the contour of the upper deck, curving slightly upwards under the anchor hawse.

There are also raised strakes capturing the line of hull plating from the bow back to the armour belt amidships and from the armour belt aft to the stern. It is slightly exaggerated in this scale and could be sanded down to be less conspicuous, but I find it so delicately executed that it would be a shame to remove it. The armour belt itself is exactly correct for dimensions and hull placement. The portholes all feature eyebrows and the anchor hawse pipe is very clearly defined. The hull also features bollards, fairleads, and ladder rungs.

A weight is included to give the completed hull some 'heft'.



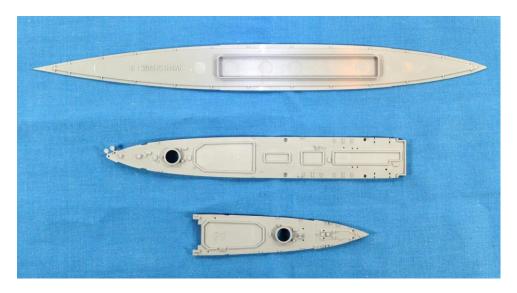
---- Upper and lower hulls ----



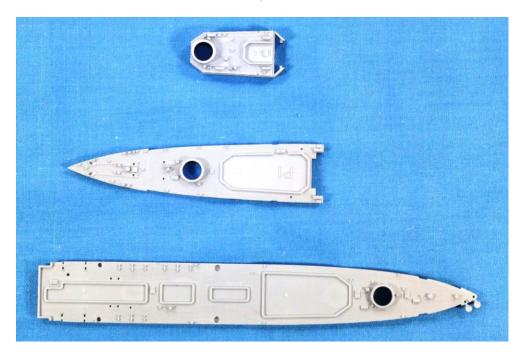
---- Propellers, rudder, and propeller shafts ----

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 individual deck planks, bollards, capstans, boat chocks, anchor chains, hatches and raised edges for fitting the superstructure parts. The main deck forward features a raised non-skid pattern. 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 ----



---- Forward superstructure and main decks showing the amount of detail ----

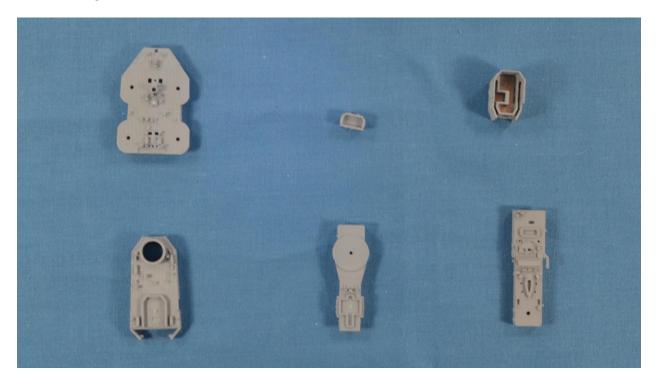
Superstructure:

The six main superstructure parts are in a separate box and are all individual pieces that do not require cutting from sprues, a great feature which will prevent any damage from sprue cutters and the like. They all feature immense detail on every face: hatches, handrails, deck fittings, slots for fitting other pieces. The bridge has a separate air deflector; 22 pieces go on the top deck which also features a raised wooden grating. This is quite amazing when it is considered that the piece is only 12mm x 19mm (3/8" x 1/2") in size!

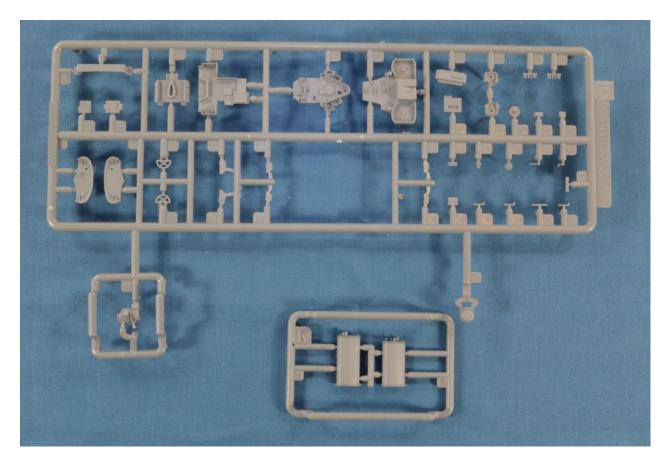
The amidships platform contains the turntable base for the catapult.

The rest of the superstructure parts are attached to sprues.

The funnels are single pieces with engraved lines, open tops, and steam pipes. The fore funnel is taller than the after one, but the funnel casing under the after funnel is taller making the funnels appear to be the same height.



----- Superstructure pieces -----



----- Funnels and smaller fittings -----

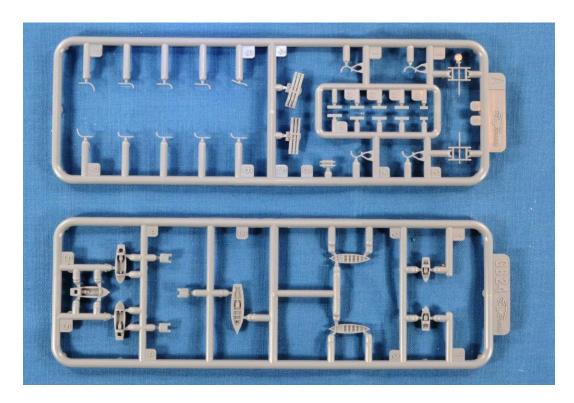
Weapons:

The 6" gun turrets feature plenty of detail on all four sides and the top including rivets and the doors between the gun barrels used when the turret was in local control. They are in two pieces with separate gun barrels. An extra turret base and 2 gun barrels are included.

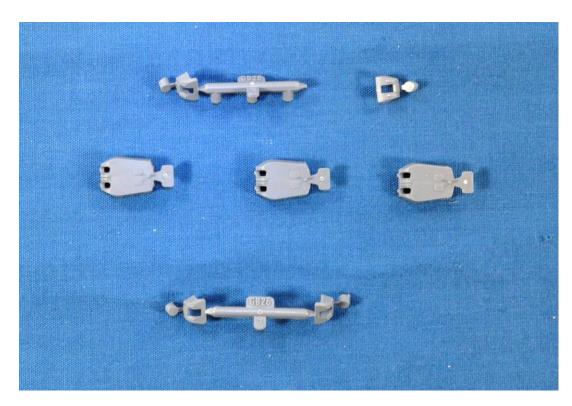
Each twin 4" gun is composed of three pieces, with plenty of detail on the sides and top of the shields as well.

The 0.5" quad guns are very detailed single pieces with separately defined gun barrels.

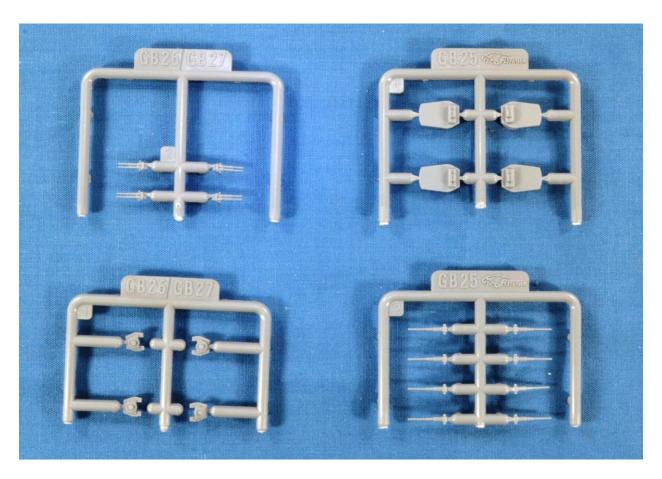
The torpedo tubes are exquisite with plenty of detail and hollowed out ends allowing torpedoes to be inserted if the modeller wishes. Torpedoes would have to be scratch built.



----- Torpedo tubes and boats -----



---- 6" turrets and 4" gun shields -----



---- 6" and 4" gun barrels with the bottoms of the mountings -----

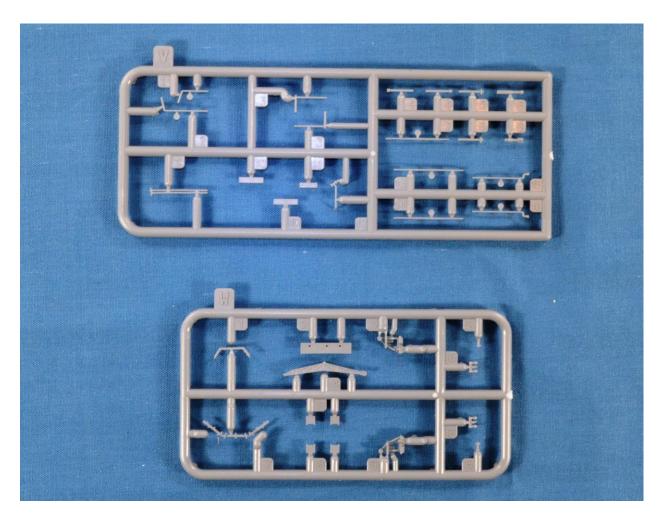
Boats and fittings:

There are 5 open boats and 1 motor launch, each one features deck planks. There are many smaller fittings, every piece of which is incredibly detailed. The ready use ammo lockers have lids and doors, fresh air intakes are hollowed out, the deck winches have detailed motors, the life rafts are detailed both top and bottom, the davits are extremely thin, the High Angle director is hollow at the top, and there are two depth charge racks for the quarterdeck. The paravanes are not solid at the tips; they feature very tiny molded lines instead.

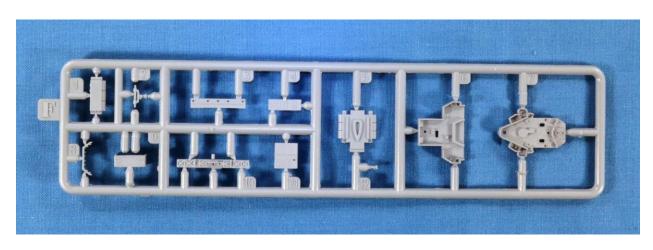
The large aircraft crane consists of 4 parts and the catapult is a single piece with well-defined lattice work – the lattice is not hollow however.

There are 273, 281, 284, and 285 radars included in the kit but none are fitted as *Penelope* did not carry any of them in 1940. There is an HF aerial for the top of the foremast.

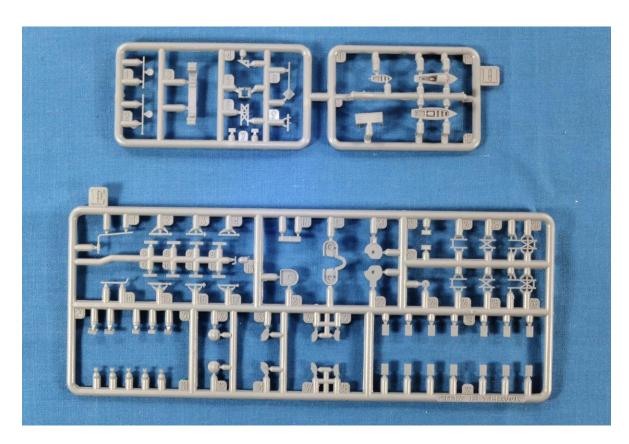
Most of the sprues carrying the smaller fittings are the same ones that are found in the Flyhawk *Naiad* kit. This is a welcome level of standardization that most likely makes kit production very cost effective for Flyhawk, and provides plenty of spares.



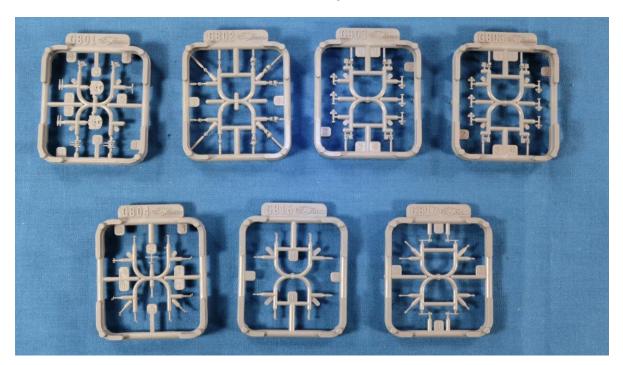
---- Crane and fittings -----



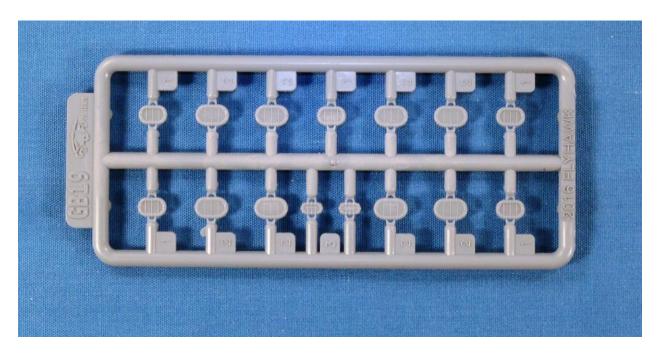
---- Catapult and Superstructure parts ----



---- Fittings ----



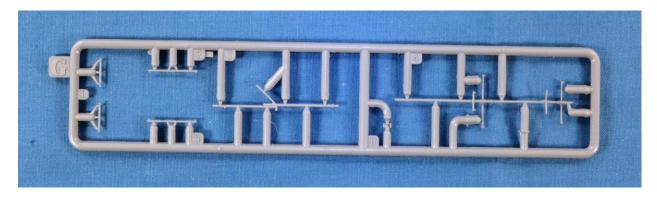
---- Fittings ----



---- Life Rafts ----

Masts:

The masts come on their own sprue. The yards are already attached to the foremast. They are extremely thin, very detailed with well-defined upper masts and brackets for the yardarms, and can be used as is without resorting to replacements made from wire.



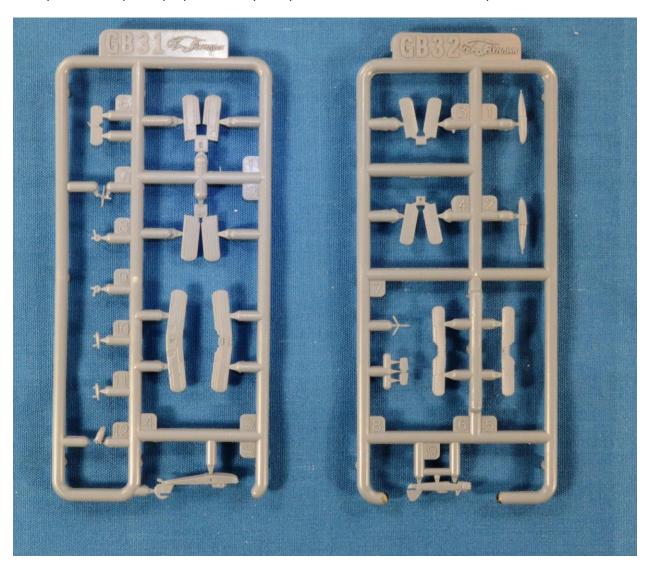
---- Masts ----

Aircraft:

A Seafox and a Walrus are included for fitting on the catapult, both aircraft can be assembled with wings folded or unfolded.

The Walrus consists of ten parts: fuselage, upper and lower wing, tailplane, engine, propeller, wing floats, and landing gear. There are raised ribs on the tops of the wings, and recessed panel lines on the top and bottom of the wing and on the fuselage. The fuselage features clearly defined windows for the cockpit, ribbing on the rudder, and a moulded-in tail wheel. The landing gear has detailed wheels and tires. The propeller is very finely moulded and includes the nose spinner. The underside of the lower wing has wheel wells in case the modeller prefers to show the aircraft with wheels retracted. The engine has raised detail and recessed attach points for each wing.

The Seafox consists of seven parts: fuselage, upper and lower wings, tailplane, floats, and propeller. There is raised ribbing on the top of the wings and tailplane, and recessed panel lines on the wing bottoms and fuselage. The fuselage has a clearly defined cockpit and windowed after-compartment, a ribbed rudder, upper wing attach points, and engine and exhaust details. The floats feature a keel and clearly defined step. The propeller is very finely molded and includes the nose spinner.



---- Walrus and Seafox ----

Decals:

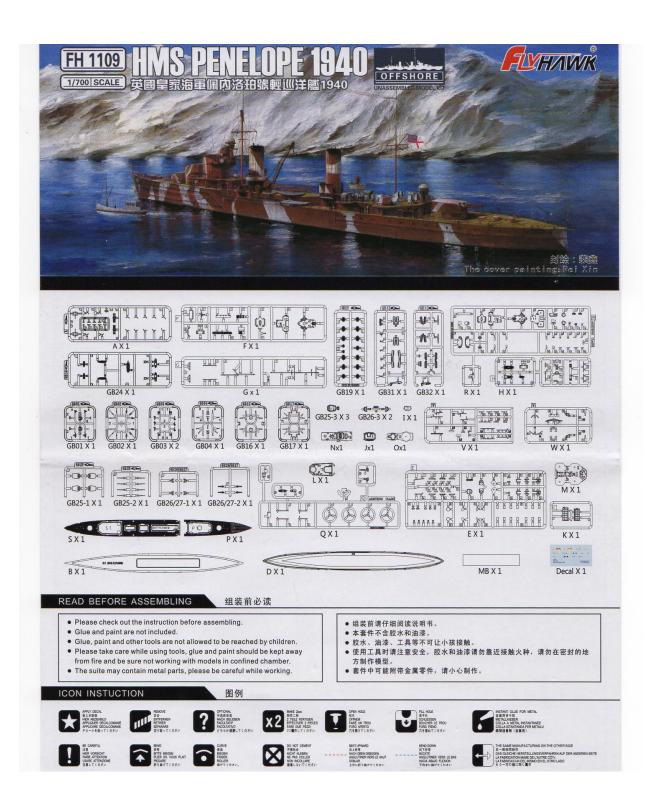
There are four White Ensigns for *Penelope* and markings for the aircraft.

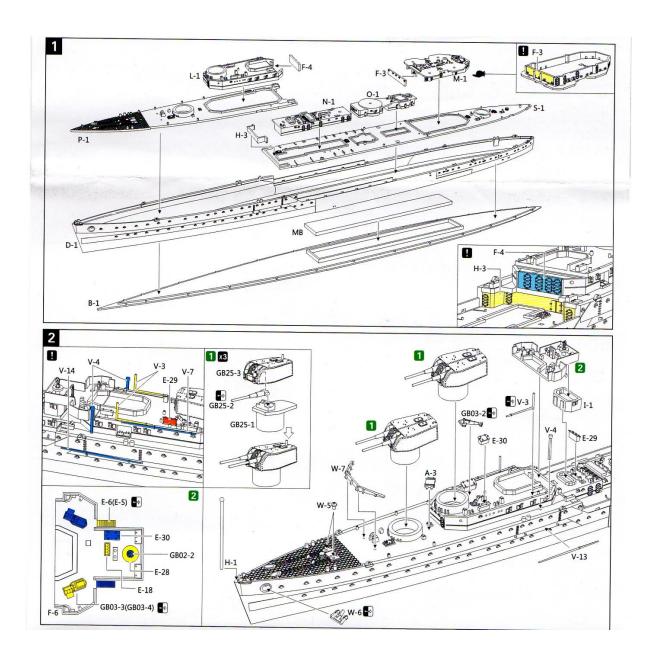


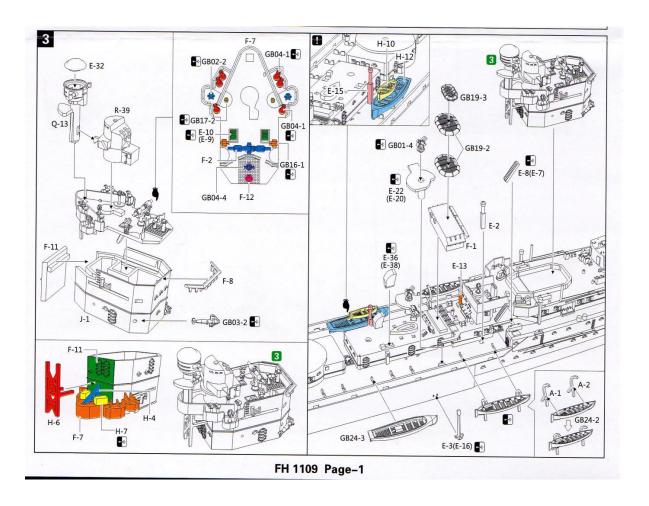
---- Weight and Decals ----

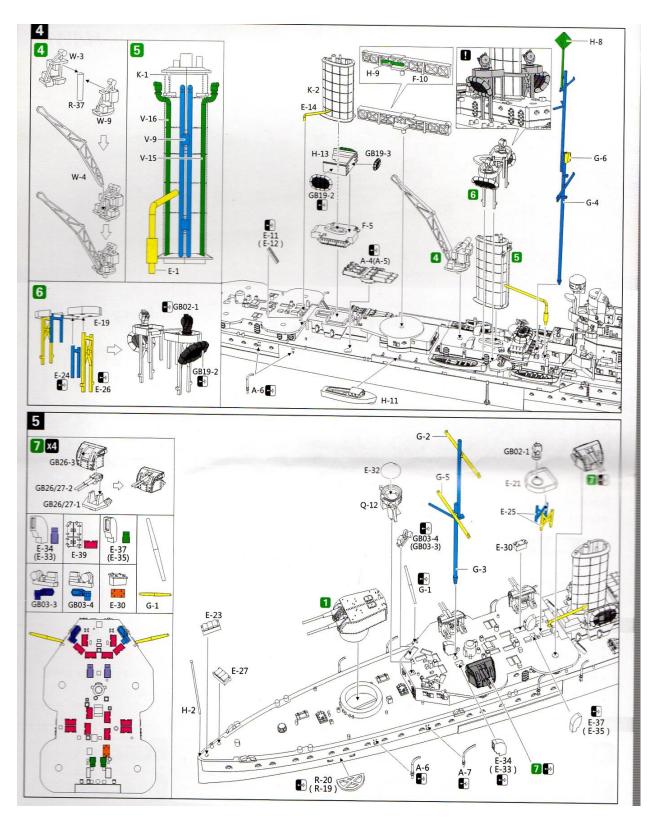
Instructions:

The instructions come on a large, double sided full colour page featuring five steps and seven sub-assemblies. 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; this is a very good feature which takes out a lot of guess work. There is also a smaller extra sheet with instructions for attaching the propeller shafts and rudder to the lower hull. The instructions for the aircraft are on a separate sheet as well.

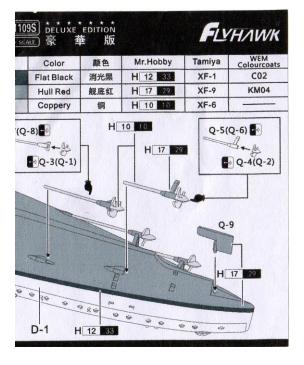




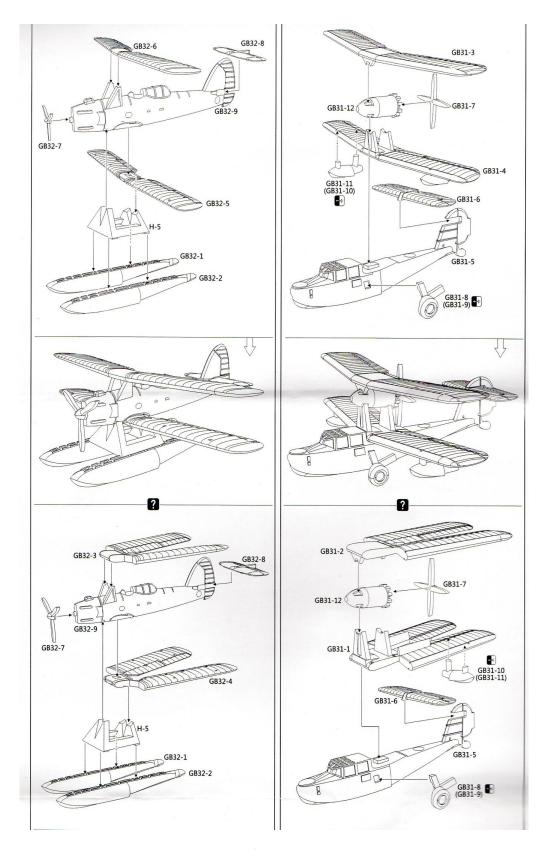




---- Instructions -----



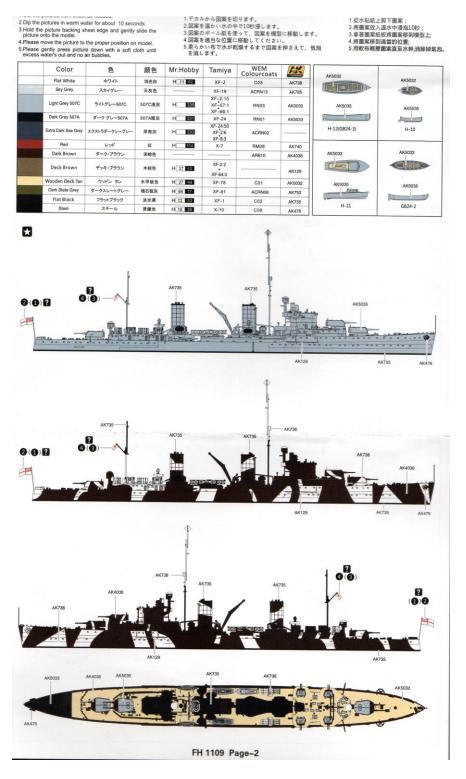
---- Installing Propellers and Rudder Instructions -----

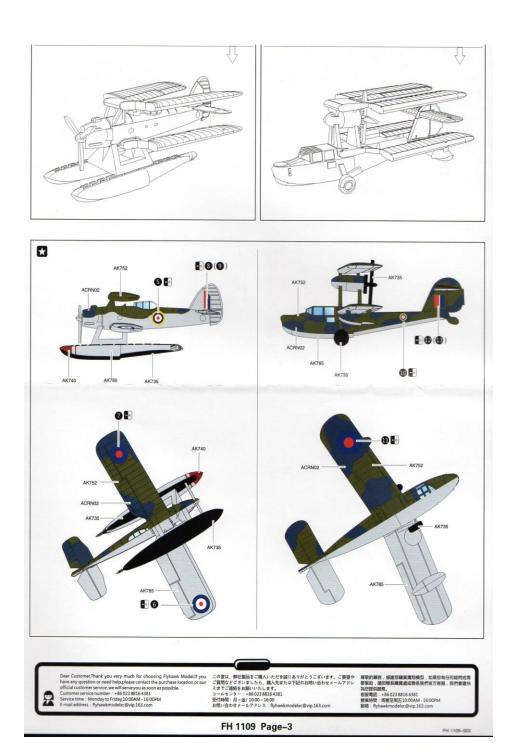


----- Aircraft Instructions -----

Colour scheme:

There is a full colour diagram giving two schemes for *Penelope*: pre-war and while lying damaged in Norway. There is also a full colour diagram for the aircraft. The colours reference the Mr. Hobby, Tamiya, White Ensign Colourcoats, and AK paint ranges.





---- Colour schemes ----

Deluxe Edition Parts:

The deluxe edition comes with 14 machined brass barrels, two photo-etch sheets of 128 parts, and a resin piece.

The machined gun barrels are for the 6" and 4" guns. Both sets of gun barrels are finely tapered with hollowed out muzzles and a lug at the breech end for fitting in the appropriate turret.

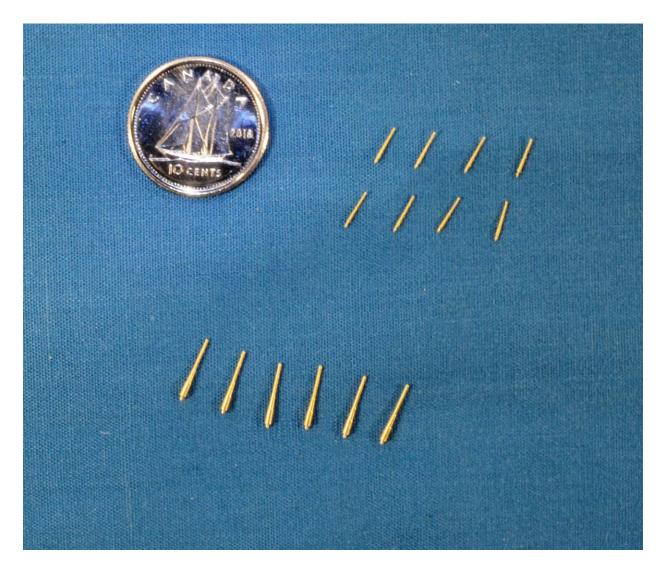
The additional photo-etch sheets contain (among other things), a forward breakwater, searchlight platforms, funnel platforms, a boom for the aircraft crane, a catapult with extensions used when launching an aircraft, davits, anchors, cable reels, funnel grilles, depth charge racks, and railings already cut to length. For the aircraft there are wing struts, float struts, propellers, and a machine gun for the Walrus.

The resin piece is a cylinder internal to the catapult.

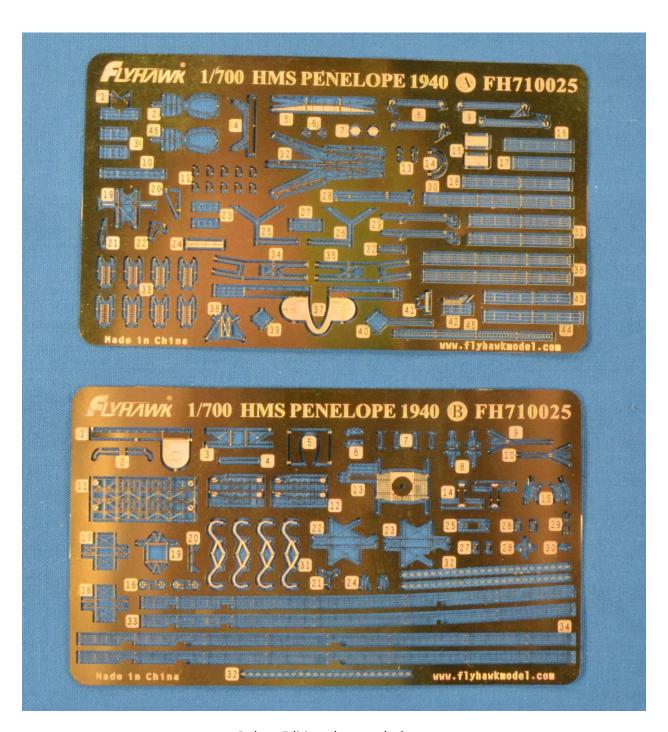
Two double sided instruction sheets in full colour indicate where the new pieces are to be placed. At the bottom of the instructions is a poster for the upcoming kit of *HMS Prince of Wales*.



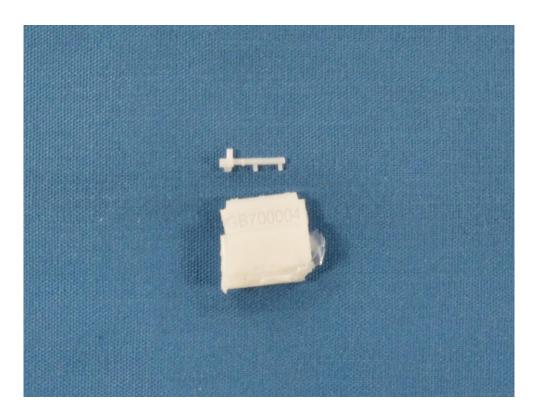
---- Deluxe Edition components -----



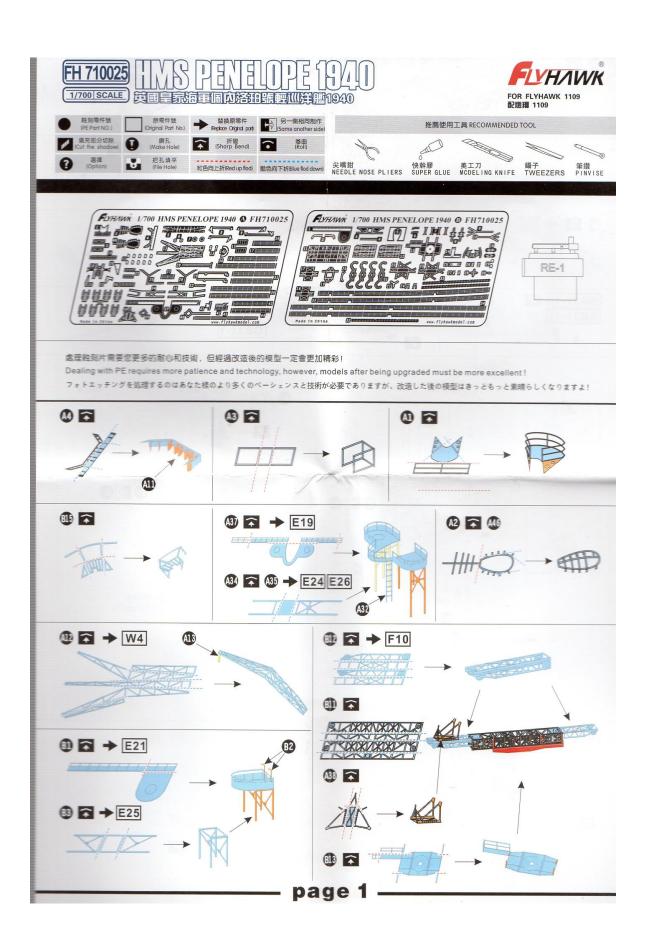
---- Deluxe Edition gun barrels -----

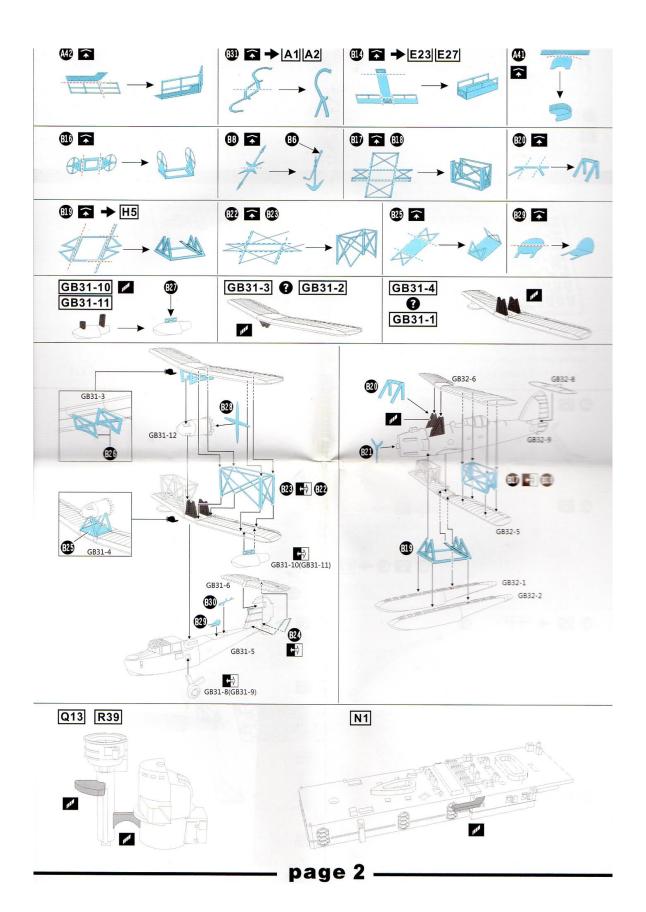


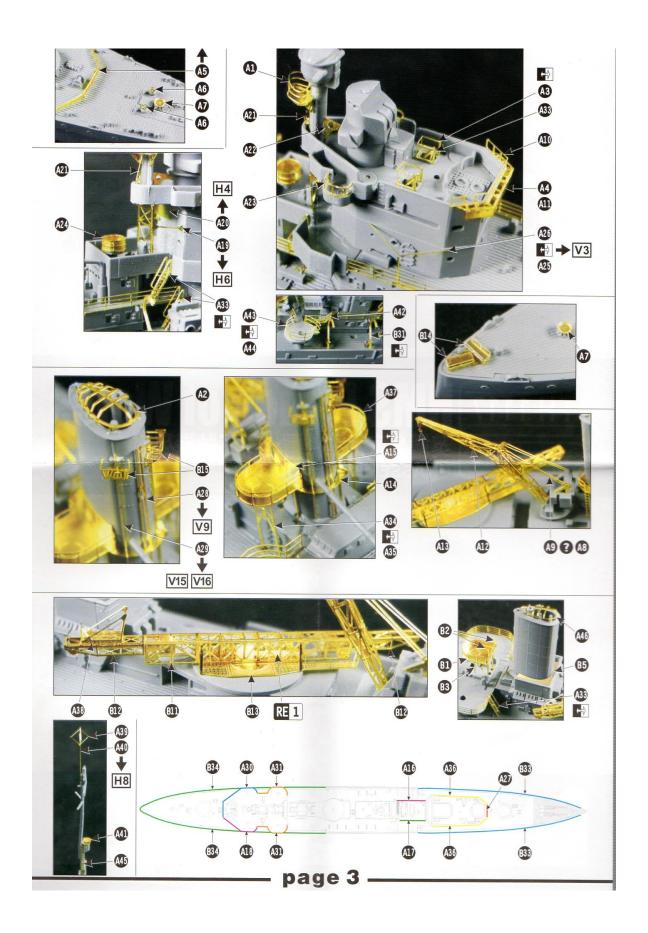
----- Deluxe Edition photo-etch sheets -----



----- Deluxe Edition resin piece -----









---- Deluxe Edition instructions ----

Overall Impression:

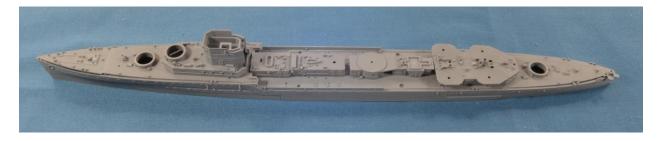
Building on their impressive kits of *HMS Aurora* and *Chungking*, Flyhawk has produced another superb model of another ship in the *Arethusa* class. All the parts are precision molded, with absolutely no flash or those lines that result when two mould halves are used to make a single component. The fineness of detail does not imply fragile pieces; the pieces stand up to rough handling; none of mine were damaged in spite of the box being squashed in transit. 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 8.5" long; the amount of detail that Flyhawk has packed in is incredible. Their product research is very comprehensive as shown by identifying the differences between *HMS Aurora* in 1945 and *HMS Penelope* in 1940, and even *Penelope's* appearance in 1941 after repair. The kit is very accurate based on my available references.

There are a lot of pieces but modellers will have no problems assembling this kit. It is very well-engineered and the parts will fit together very easily. 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. Even those not particularly fond of photo-etch will find the catapult and boom very easy to assemble and attach. The only other item that modellers may consider would be anchor chain.

This is a highly recommended kit, well-researched, well-engineered, and well-packaged. After many years with no commercial kits available of the *Arethusa* class in 1/700, modellers now have three equally impressive kits to choose from; Flyhawk is to be congratulated! Their next releases are eagerly awaited.



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

References:

- HMS Pepperpot! by Ed Gordon. Robert Hale 1985
- British Cruisers of World War Two by Alan Raven and John Roberts. Naval Institute Press 1980
- British Cruisers Two World Wars and After by Norman Friedman. Seaforth Publishing 2010
- Cruisers In Action 1939-1945 by Peter C. Smith and John R. Dominy. William Kimber 1981

Review kit courtesy of Flyhawk Models