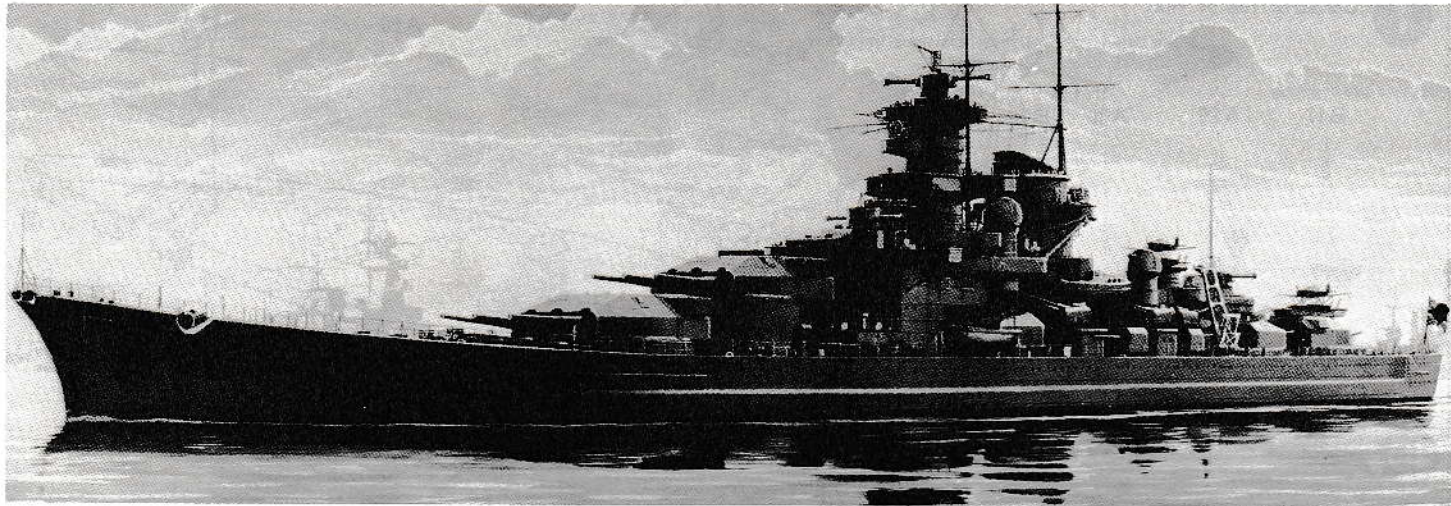




GNEISENAU

GERMAN BATTLE CRUISER



Illustrated by Kihachiro Ueda

WATER LINE SERIES

The Battlecruiser Gneisenau

As a result of the German defeat in World War I, the German Navy was subjected to the rigid limitations of the Treaty of Versailles. Main warships it was allowed to possess were only six outdated battleships, six light cruisers and twelve destroyers. As replacements of battleships and cruisers which had been in existence for more than 20 years, Germany was allowed to build new ships only under very rigid conditions as follows: New battleships should not exceed 10,000 tons in displacement or 28 cm in calibre of main armament; and new cruisers should not exceed 6,000 tons in displacement or 15 cm in calibre of main armament. In addition, German destroyers were limited in displacement to 800 tons and torpedo boats to 200 tons, and the Germans were prohibited from possessing aircraft carriers, submarines and military planes.

Under these circumstances, the Germans steadily set forward the reconstruction of their Navy. In 1925, the light cruiser Emden was launched. Soon after that, torpedo boats of the Möwe and Wolf types were completed. Then, the light cruisers Karlsruhe and Köln entered the service. In 1931, the Deutschland, pocket battleship really astonishing to the world, was launched. Also, two ships of the same type, Admiral Scheer and Admiral Graf Spee, came into existence. Thus, the German Ocean Fleet with proud tradition since World War I was being reorganized step by step.

Birth of the Gneisenau

In 1934, Adolf Hitler became the Fuehrer of Nazi Germany. Early in 1935, Germany denounced the Treaty of Versailles and declared rearmament. In June 1935, Germany concluded a naval agreement with Britain. Thus, the reconstruction of the German Navy began to be put forward openly. At the same time, Germany declared that the 4th and 5th ships of the Deutschland type would become battleships of 26,000 ton class. These were the Gneisenau and her sister ship Scharnhorst.

The Gneisenau went into commission on 21st May, 1938. Ranking with the Scharnhorst, she was the biggest and most powerful battleship in the German Fleet of those days. Her displacement had been announced to be 26,000 tons, but in fact her standard displacement was 31,800 tons and loaded displacement reached 38,900 tons. The main armament consisted of nine 28 cm guns, which were smaller in calibre than those of the same class ships possessed by other countries. The other armament, however, was powerful enough and consisted of twelve 15 cm guns, fourteen 10 cm AA guns, sixteen 37 mm AA machine guns, ten 20 mm AA machine guns and six 53 cm torpedo tubes. She was protected with strong armour and, in spite of her large displacement exceeding 30,000 tons, had a speed of 32 knots. All these factors combined to make the Gneisenau one of the first-rank high-speed battlecruisers in the world.

War Service

As German troops invaded Poland in September 1939, Britain and France opened war against Germany. The Gneisenau and Scharnhorst became a grave menace to British ships because the two German battlecruisers were considered to exercise terrible power if used in commerce destruction warfare.

After repeating such sorties, the Gneisenau first saw full-scale action in April 1940 when she was returning from a mission of supporting Norway landing troops. Before dawn on 9th April, the Gneisenau encountered the British battleship Renown whose duty was to check the Norway landing of the German troops. They exchanged fire at a long distance for half an hour. Although the Gneisenau sustained damage to her fore turret and fire control equipment, she succeeded in driving the Renown away from Norway and fulfilled her purpose of supporting the landing troops.

Sinking of the Glorious and Activity in Commerce Destruction Warfare

On 4th June 1940, the Gneisenau left Germany again with the Scharnhorst, Admiral Hipper, etc. to destroy British convoys off Narvik, Norway. After making a good start by sinking two British transports, they found the British aircraft carrier Glorious under the escort of two destroyers at about 5 p.m. of 8th June. At 5:21 p.m., the Scharnhorst opened fire against the Glorious and then the Gneisenau launched an attack on the Ardent, one of the enemy destroyers. Immediately after the Scharnhorst gave her first direct hit to the Glorious at 5:28 p.m., the Gneisenau turned her attack against the British carrier. At 7 p.m., they sank the Glorious without giving her a chance to



British aircraft carrier Glorious

launch her planes. Soon they also sank the two British destroyers. Thus, they achieved brilliant results.

While the Scharnhorst returned home because she suffered damage in this action, the Gneisenau remained in the North Atlantic. On 20th June, the Gneisenau sustained damage to her bow in an encounter with the British submarine Christ and was forced to return homeward. She underwent repairs in Germany and on 27th December made a sortie again with the Scharnhorst for commerce destruction warfare. Because of bad weather, however, the Gneisenau received damage off Norway. The Gneisenau and Scharnhorst set sail together again on 22nd January 1941. They distinguished themselves by sinking 22 transports (115,622 tons in total) in two months and struck British convoys with terror. After fulfilling the mission, the Gneisenau and Scharnhorst entered the naval port of Brest in France to prepare for the next campaign. Because these ships sustained damage there again and again in air raids repeated by the Royal Air Force, the German Navy Headquarters decided to call home the main fleet in Brest including the Gneisenau.

Breaking Through the Strait of Dover

After studying different courses to take, the German Navy Headquarters decided that the fleet in Brest should return home by breaking through the Strait of Dover in the daytime. This was a bold attempt. The Strait between England and France, which had been the stage of various historical events such as the defeat of the Spanish Invincible Armada and the Allied evacuation of Dunkerque, is only about 32 km wide at the narrowest point. Naturally there were a large number of British bases along the coast and

ships sailing through the narrow strait could be easily found out by the enemy. In confident expectation of the German attempt, the British military authorities had ordered each base along the coast to keep watch for the enemy fleet. The reasons why the Germans still dared to adopt this course were that this was the shortest route to Germany and particularly that they needed air cover by friendly aircraft. At 11 p.m. on 11th February 1942, two hours behind time, the Gneisenau left Brest together with the Scharnhorst, Prinz Eugen, six destroyers and three torpedo boats. It was lucky for the fleet that a British plane then in charge of patrol over the harbour entrance was back in the base because its radar was out of order. The British did not notice the fleet at all until it approached the entrance of the Strait of Dover at 10:42 a.m. of the next day. A Spitfire plane spotted the fleet at this time but it was after noon that the report from the plane reached the British Headquarters. Therefore, no warning was issued even when the fleet was entering the narrowest part of the Strait. At the sight of the German fleet passing, British coastal batteries opened fire in a hurry but could not do damage to it. Six British Swordfish planes took off in hot haste and launched an attack against the fleet at 0:45 p.m. The fleet brought down all these planes and passed through the Strait of Dover without damage.

At about 2:30 p.m., the Scharnhorst struck a mine and caused a tremendous explosion. The damage, however, did not affect her cruising ability. After a time, Beaufort planes of the 217th Torpedo Bomber Squadron and a destroyer squadron from Harwich attacked the German fleet. They met with a repulse and did no damage to it. At 7:55 p.m., Gneisenau struck a mine this time but the damage was immaterial. At 7 a.m. of 13th, the Gneisenau arrived at Brunsbüttel with the Prinz Eugen. On the other hand, the Scharnhorst struck a mine again and, after temporary repairs, reached Wilhelmshaven early on the morning of 13th. Thus, the German fleet signally succeeded in breaking through the Strait of Dover.

End of the Gneisenau

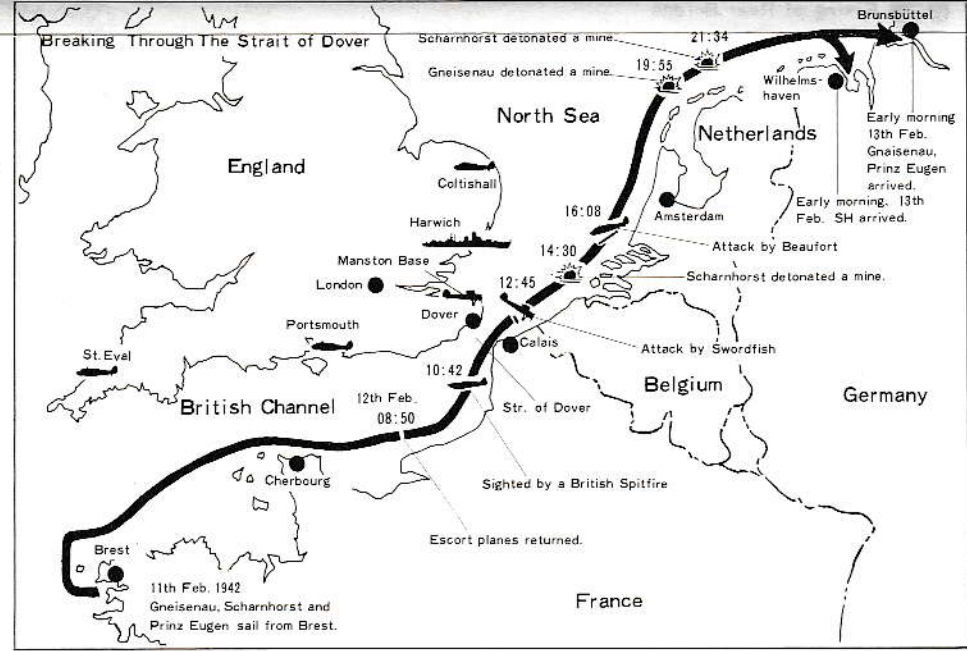
Although she returned home safe, the Gneisenau had not any opportunities of showing activity again. While staying in the naval port of Kiel, she was air-raided by RAF planes. In this air raid, a 500 kg bomb hit her near the 1st turret and caused ammunition in the turret to blow up. Therefore the damage was serious beyond expectation. The German Navy, which had planned to replace the main armament of ships of this class with 36 cm guns, sent the Gneisenau to Gdynia and started the replacement work. In July 1943, the work was stopped by Hitler's order and later her armament was removed. On 28th March 1945, she was sunk as a block ship against the Russian Navy and ended her life.

★ The Gneisenau was modified at about the end of 1938 to the beginning of 1939. This kit represents her just after the modification.

On 4th September 1939, only two days after the outbreak of the war, 14 British Wellington bombers carried out an air raid on the Gneisenau and Scharnhorst that were then anchored near Brunsbüttel at the mouth of the Elbe, in an attempt to check the activities of these ships at this initial stage of the war. This air raid, however, ended in failure.

For about a month after that, the Gneisenau kept inactive as if she had been trying to irritate the Royal Navy that was very nervous about the movements of the two German ships. On 8th October, the Gneisenau left Germany with the light cruiser Koln and advanced to the offing of Norway, where they were spotted by a Lockheed Hudson patrol plane of the Royal Air Force and returned homeward. Receiving a report from the patrol plane, the British Home Fleet immediately sent its main body to the offing of Norway but the Gneisenau was already back in her base in the Baltic Sea.

In November, the Scharnhorst, whose engine had been out of order since she was completed, joined the line again. Thus, the Navy Headquarters of Berlin decided to send both the Gneisenau and Scharnhorst to the Atlantic Ocean. On the afternoon of 21st November, the two battlecruisers set sail for the Atlantic. After 4 p.m. of 23rd, they encountered the British converted cruiser Rawalpindi. Immediately after sinking the enemy ship, they stopped their intended campaign and returned homeward because there was a very strong possibility of being attacked by a powerful British fleet which received a report from the Rawalpindi.



PAINTING

(Main Specification of the German Battle Cruiser Gneisenau)(1939)

Standard displacement: 34,841 ton Overall length: 234.9m

Waterline length: 206 m Beam: 30 m

Draught: 8.2 m (min.) 9.1 m (max.) Machinery: three-shaft geared turbine engine Shaft horse power: 165,000 shp

Speed: 32 knots Cruising range: 10,000 mile/17 knots

Fuel (max.): 6,200 tons

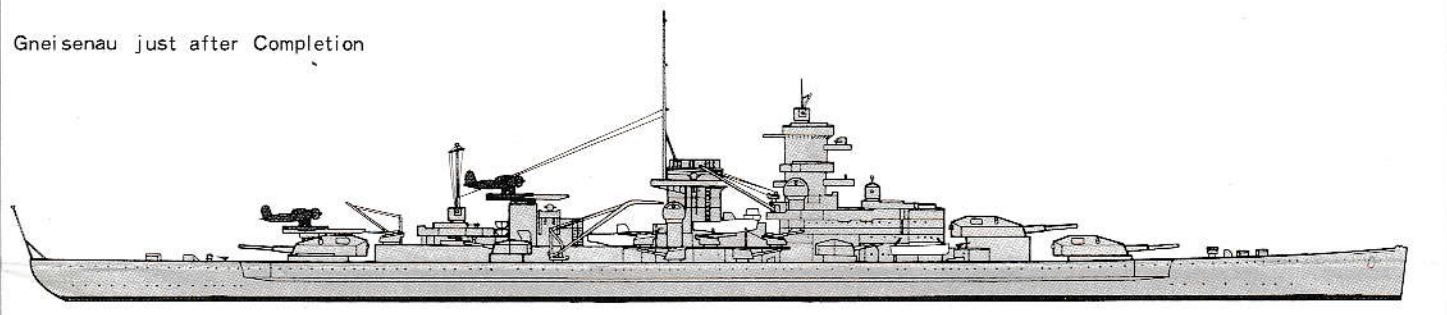
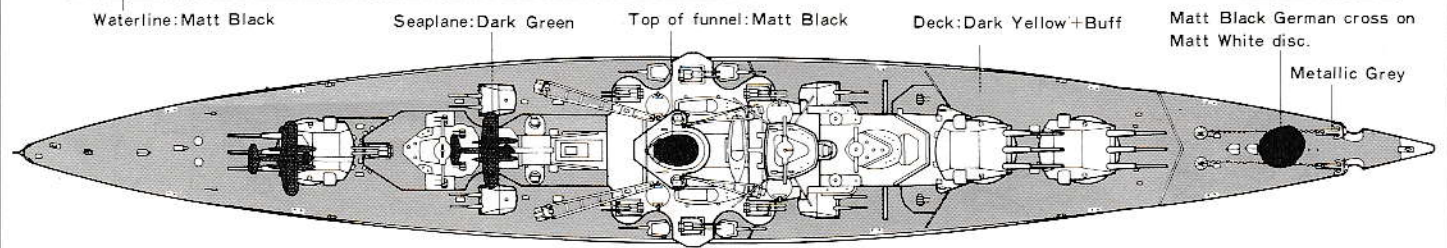
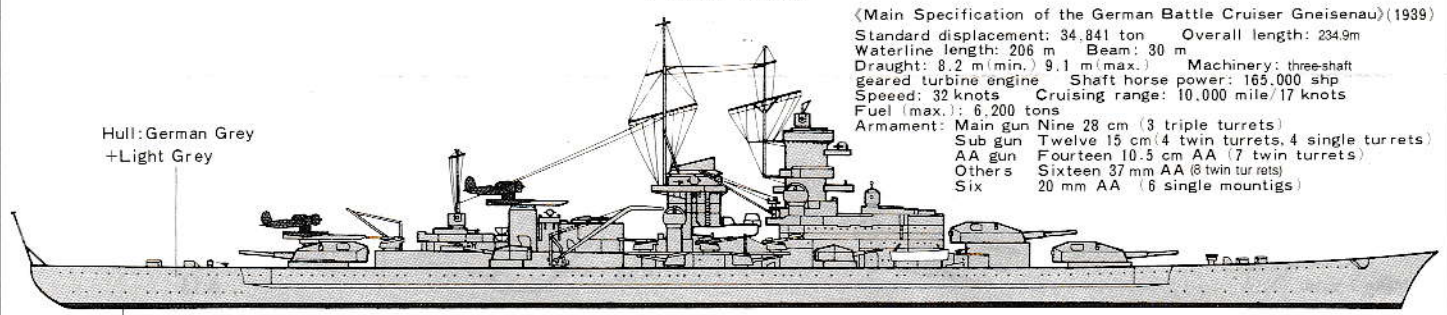
Armament: Main gun Nine 28 cm (3 triple turrets)

Sub gun Twelve 15 cm (4 twin turrets, 4 single turrets)

AA gun Fourteen 10.5 cm AA (7 twin turrets)

Others Sixteen 37 mm AA (8 twin turrets)

Six 20 mm AA (6 single mounts)



PARTS

A

B

C

33

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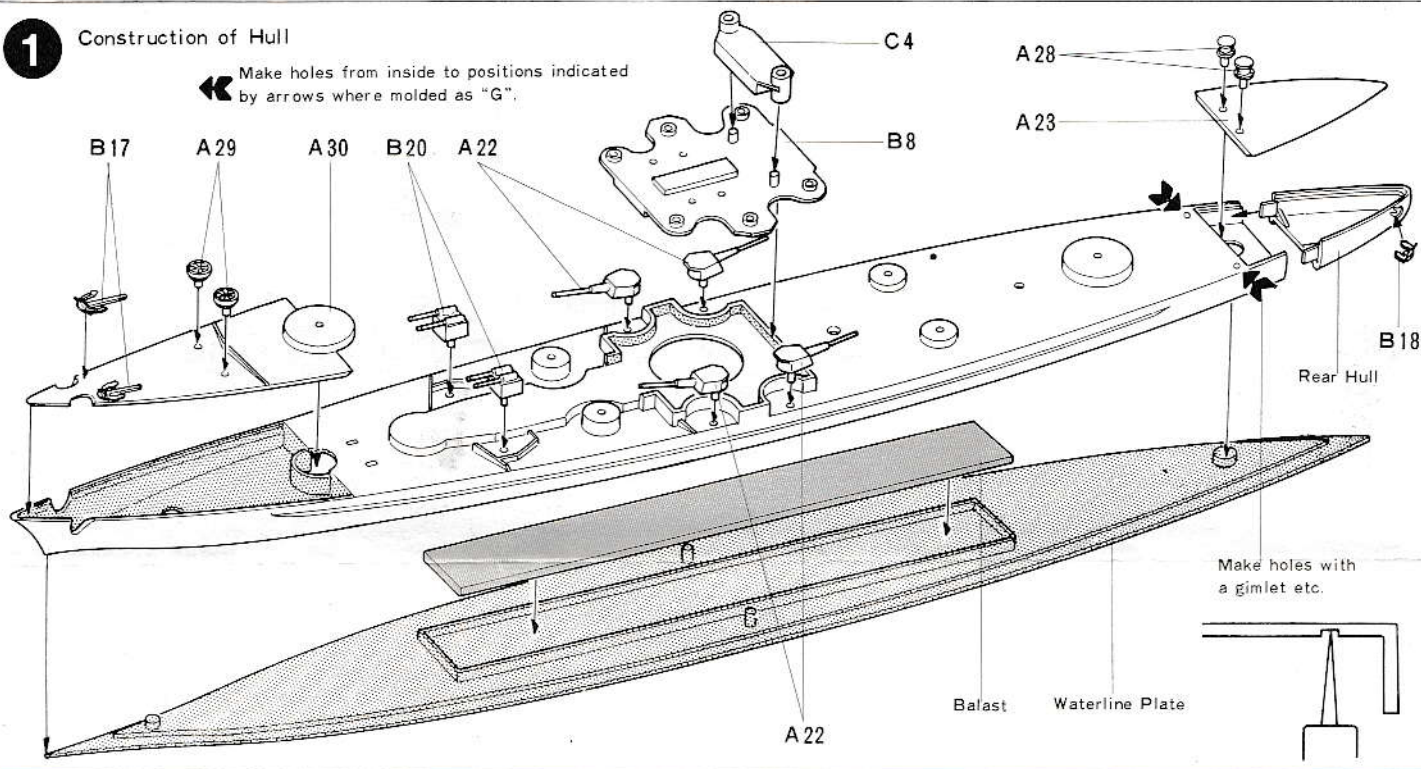
GNEISENAU

⟨Please read this before commencing assembly⟩

★Do not break parts away from sprue but cut off carefully with a pair of pliers. ★Apply cement to both parts to be joined. ★To handle small parts, a pair of tweezers may be helpful.

1 Construction of Hull

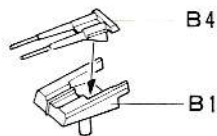
← Make holes from inside to positions indicated by arrows where molded as "G".



2 Construction of Guns

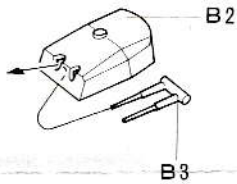
⟨105mm AA⟩

Make 7 sets.

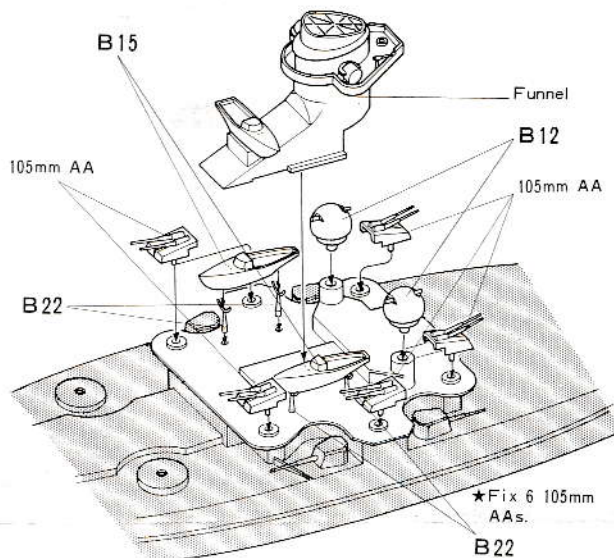
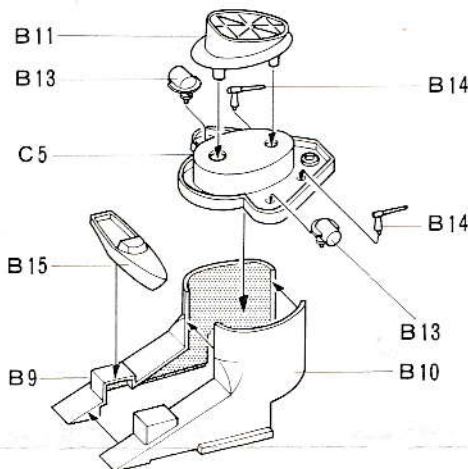


⟨150mm Sub⟩

Make 2 sets.



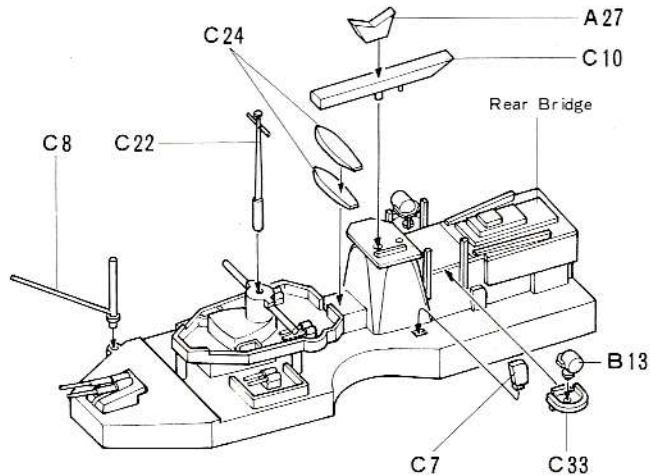
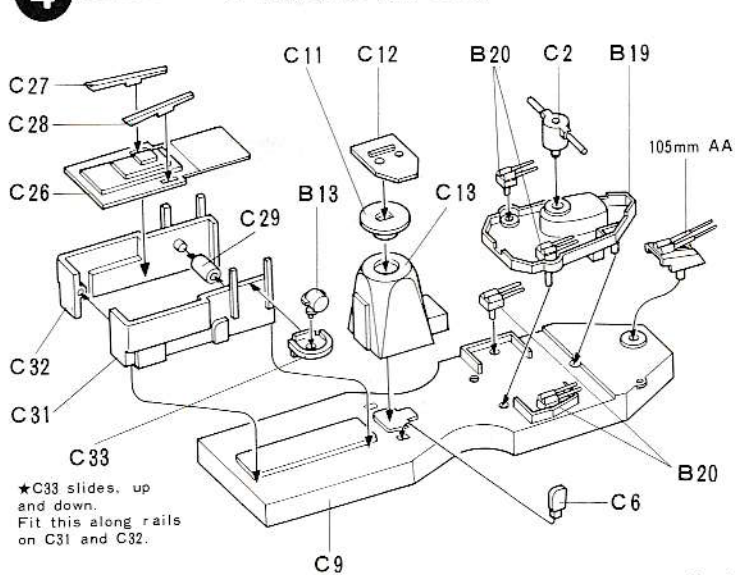
3 Construction and Fixing of Funnel



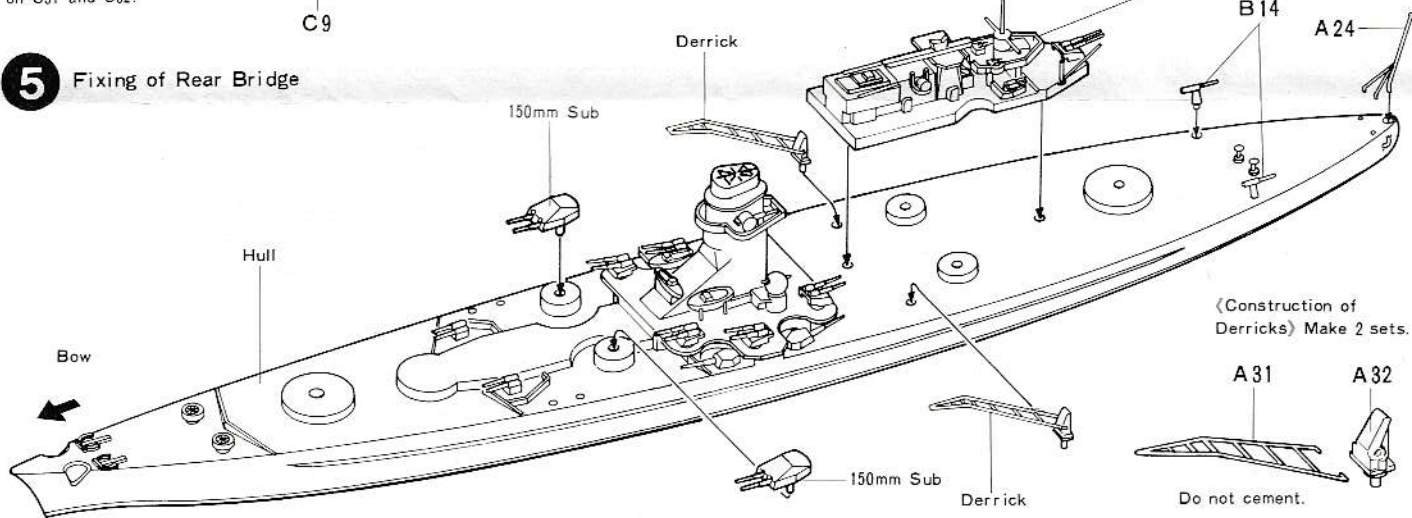
★Fix 6 105mm AAs.

B22

4 Construction of Hanger and Rear Bridge



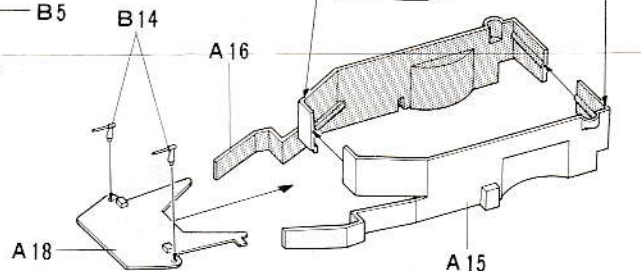
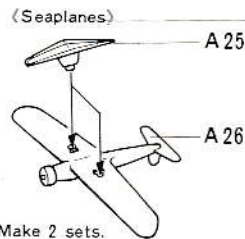
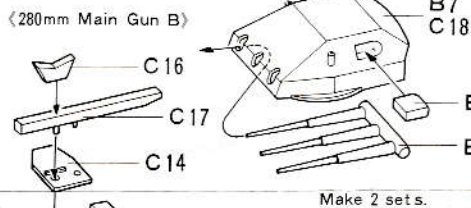
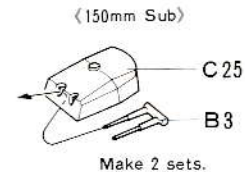
5 Fixing of Rear Bridge



6 Construction of Main Guns and Seaplane

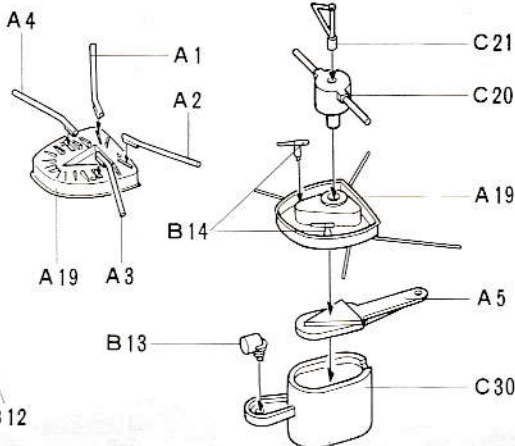
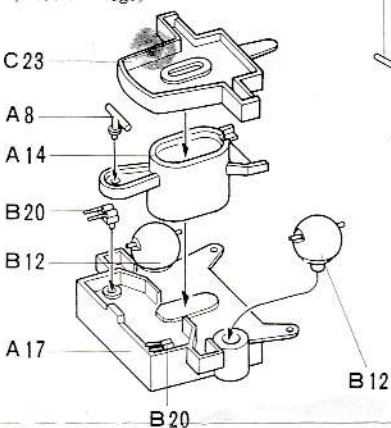
(280mm Main Gun A)

7 Construction of Lower Bridge

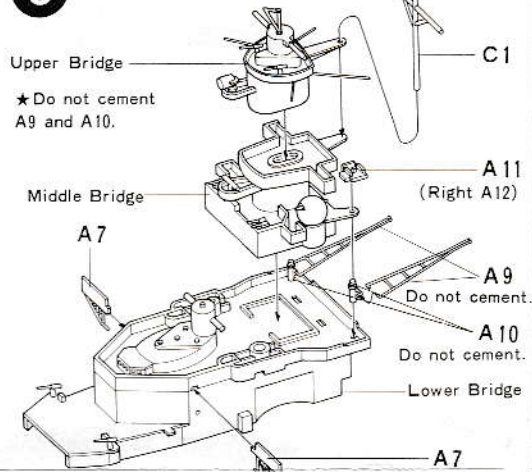


8 Construction of Upper Bridge (Bridge Top Deck)

(Middle Bridge)



9 Construction of Bridge



10 Fixing of Bridge and Main Guns

