

The 16in Mk 1 guns of HMS *Nelson*'s 'X' turret, 1934



THE KING GEORGE V CLASS PART I

BY ROBERT DUMAS

By 1930 the British battlefleet consisted mainly of old vessels constructed during or before the First World War, the only exceptions being the two battleships of the *Nelson* class. The Admiralty, therefore, began an extensive programme of reconstruction and started work on the design of the battleships that were to become the *King George V* class. It was intended that these ships should be the first vessels of a battleship replacement programme and that on their completion the five *Royal Sovereign* class ships, which were the least suitable of the older vessels

for reconstruction, would be sold for scrapping.

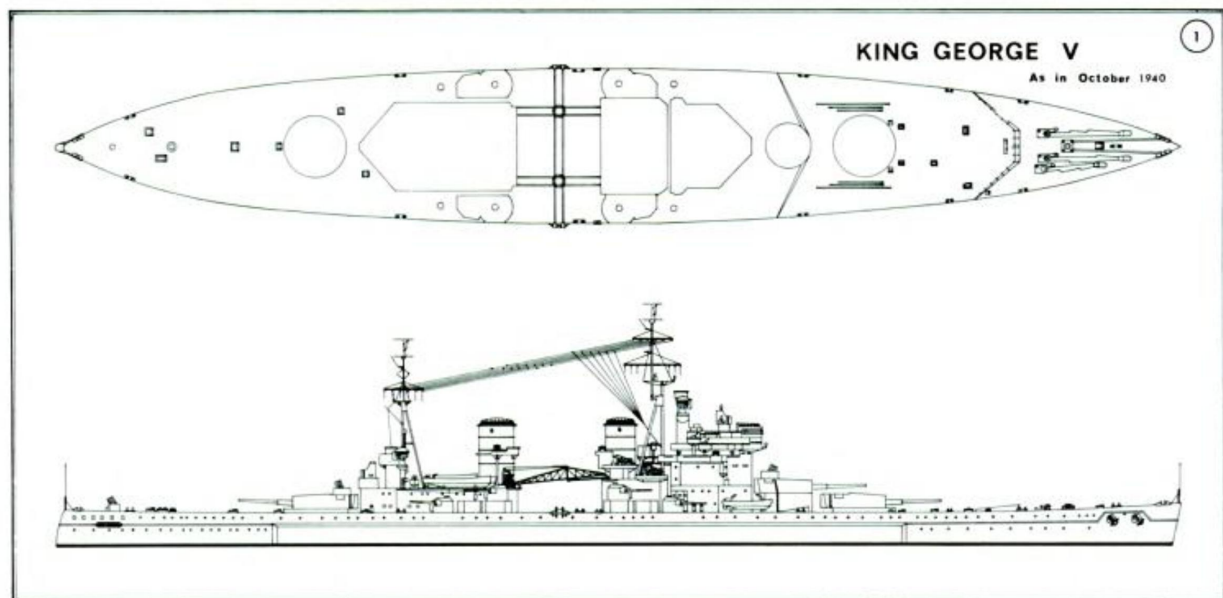
The new ships were required to be designed within the current international Treaty limitations of 35 000 tons standard displacement and 14in (506mm) maximum gun calibre. Originally the design was settled on a main armament of twelve guns in three quadruple turrets (two forward, one aft) but, in order to provide more weight for protection, the turret in B position was altered to a twin mounting. The designed speed was 27.5 knots at full load displacement.

Compared with foreign

contemporaries the *King George V* class had guns of smaller calibre and, in most cases, a lower speed but their well conceived protection helped to counterbalance any possible handicap. The Royal Navy had not conceived sophisticated vessels but well built ships with good staying power.

Anson runs trials in the Pentland Firth, 21 June 1942.
NMM





TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS WHEN COMPLETED

Dimensions: Length: 745ft (227.07m) overall, 700ft (213.36m) between perpendiculars; Beam: 103ft (31.39m) max; Draught: 29ft (8.84m) at standard displacement, 32ft 6in (9.9m) at full load.

Armament: Ten 14in (356mm) 2 x 4 plus 1 x 2; Sixteen 5.25in (132mm) 8 x 2; Four 8-barrelled 2pdr pom-pom AA mountings in *King George V* and *Prince of Wales*; Six 8-barrelled 2pdr pom-pom AA mountings in remainder, (the two additional 8-barrelled pom-poms were disposed on B and X turrets); Four UP (Unrotated Projectile rocket launchers) AA mountings in *King George V*, three UP mountings in *Prince of Wales*, (in *King George V* one UP was fitted on B turret, two on X and one on the quarterdeck, in *Prince of Wales* one UP was fitted on B and two on X); One Bofors AA on the quarterdeck on *Prince of Wales* only; six single 20mm Oerlikon in *Duke of York*; eighteen single 20mm Oerlikon in *Anson* and *Howe*.

Aircraft Equipment: One catapult amidship (Type DIIH); three Walrus amphibians

Machinery: 8 Admiralty 3 drum boilers (400lb/sq in working

pressure), 4 sets Parsons single reduction geared turbines, 110 000 SHP (normal), 125 000 SHP (maximum), 4 shafts and one rudder.

Note: *King George V* was engaged by Vickers Armstrong (Barrow-in-Furness) *Anson* by Wallsend Slipway and the other three by their builders.

Protection: Main belt: 15in (380mm) 5½in (140mm) lower edge-abreast magazines, 14in (356mm) 4½in (115mm) lower edge – abreast machinery; Internal bulge, with outer air space and inner oil/water tank, torpedo bulkhead 1¾in (45mm); Main deck: 5in (127mm) over machinery, 6in (152mm) over magazines; Upper deck: 1in (25mm); Main turrets: 13in (330mm) face, 9in (228mm) sides, 7in (177mm) rear, 6in (152mm) crowns; Conning tower: 4½-2in (114-50mm).

Radar: *King George V* and *Prince of Wales*: Type 279 air warning, with aerials on mastheads, and Type

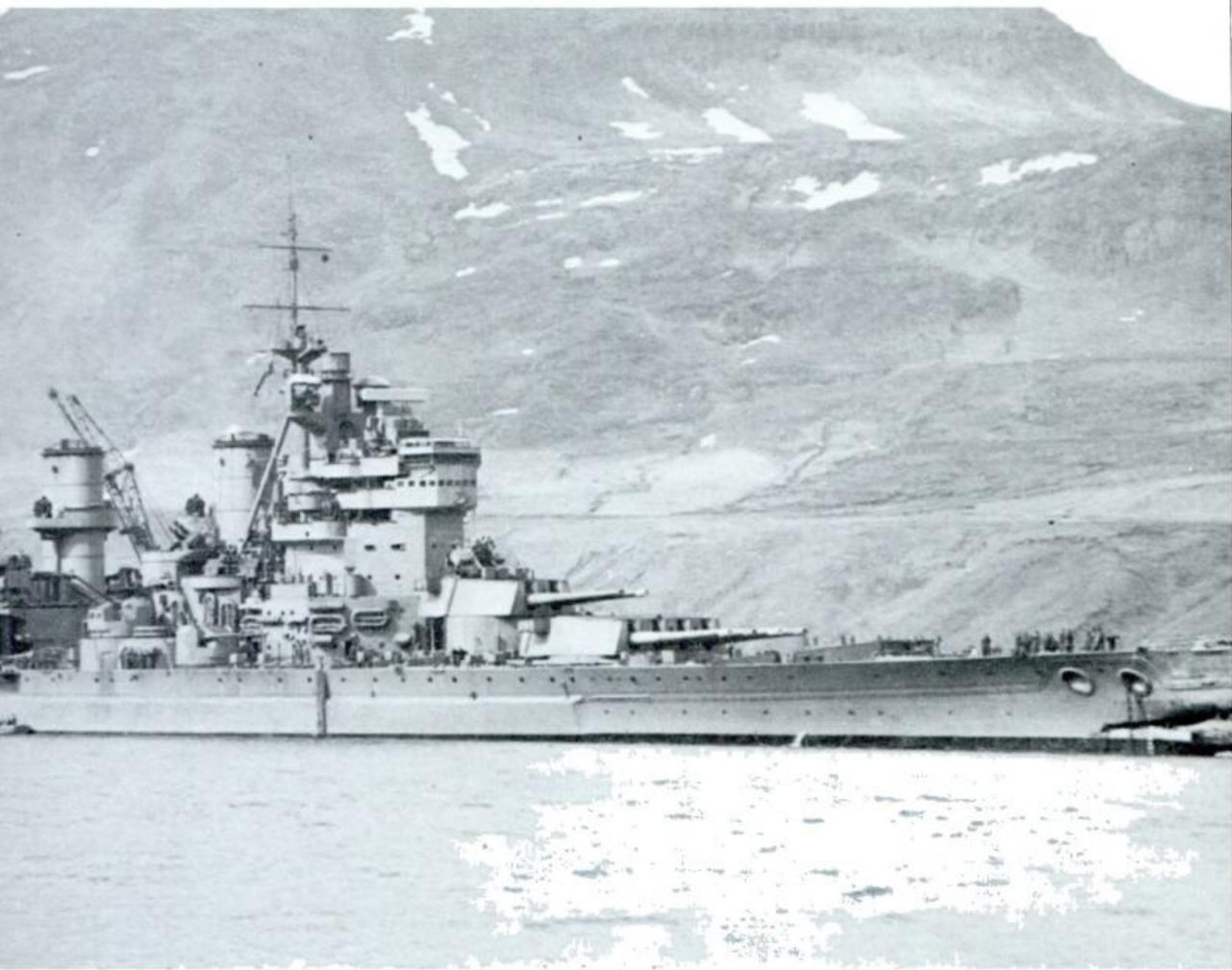
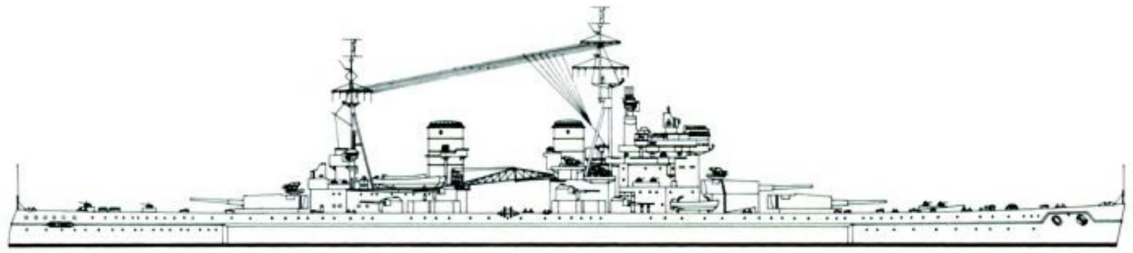
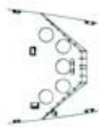
The *King George V* in May 1942 on her return from covering the Russian Convoys PQ15 and QP11. The extensive damage to the bow, which forced her early retirement from the operation, was received when she accidentally rammed and sank the destroyer *Punjabi*.
IWM



KING GEORGE V

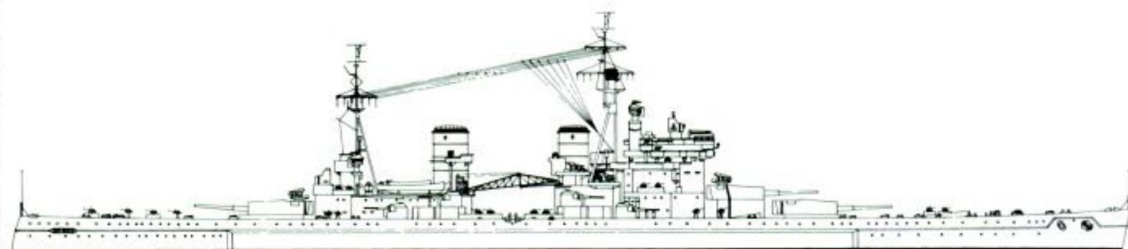
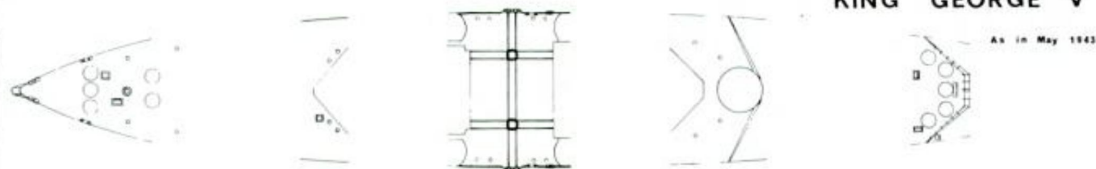
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As in December 1941



KING GEORGE V

3



284 for main armament, with aerials on forward main director. *Prince of Wales* was also fitted with four Type 285 and four Type 282 gunnery sets, with aerials on the HACS Mk IV directors and the pom-pom directors (on the lower bridge) respectively, shortly after completion. *Duke of York*: Type 281 air warning, Type 284 for main armament, four Type 285 with aerials on HACS Mk V director and six Type 282 for pom-poms (later reduced to five). *Anson* and *Howe*: As *Duke of York* except also carried Type 273 surface warning radar on foremast starfish.

Range finders: Two 41ft (12.50m) in A and X turrets; One 30ft (9.10m) in B turret; Six 15ft (4.57m) in main and secondary directors.

Speed: Normal sea speed, 27.5 knots; Maximum sea speed, 29.5 knots.

Endurance: 14 000 miles at 10 knots, 7000 miles at 14 knots, 4300 miles at 20 knots, 2400 miles at 27 knots.

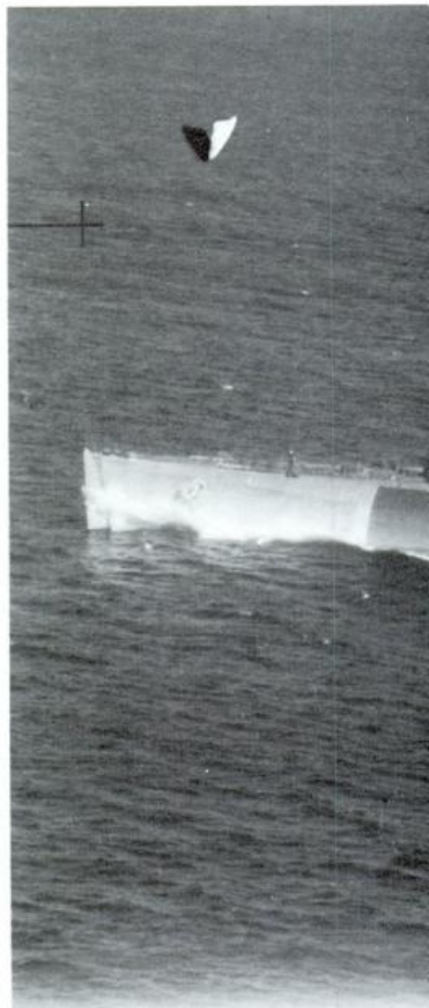
Bunker capacity: Oil fuel, 3700 tons, Petrol for seaplanes, 35 tons.

Complement: In peacetime, 1511; As fleet flagship, 1644; The complement of *Prince of Wales* when she was sunk was 1612.

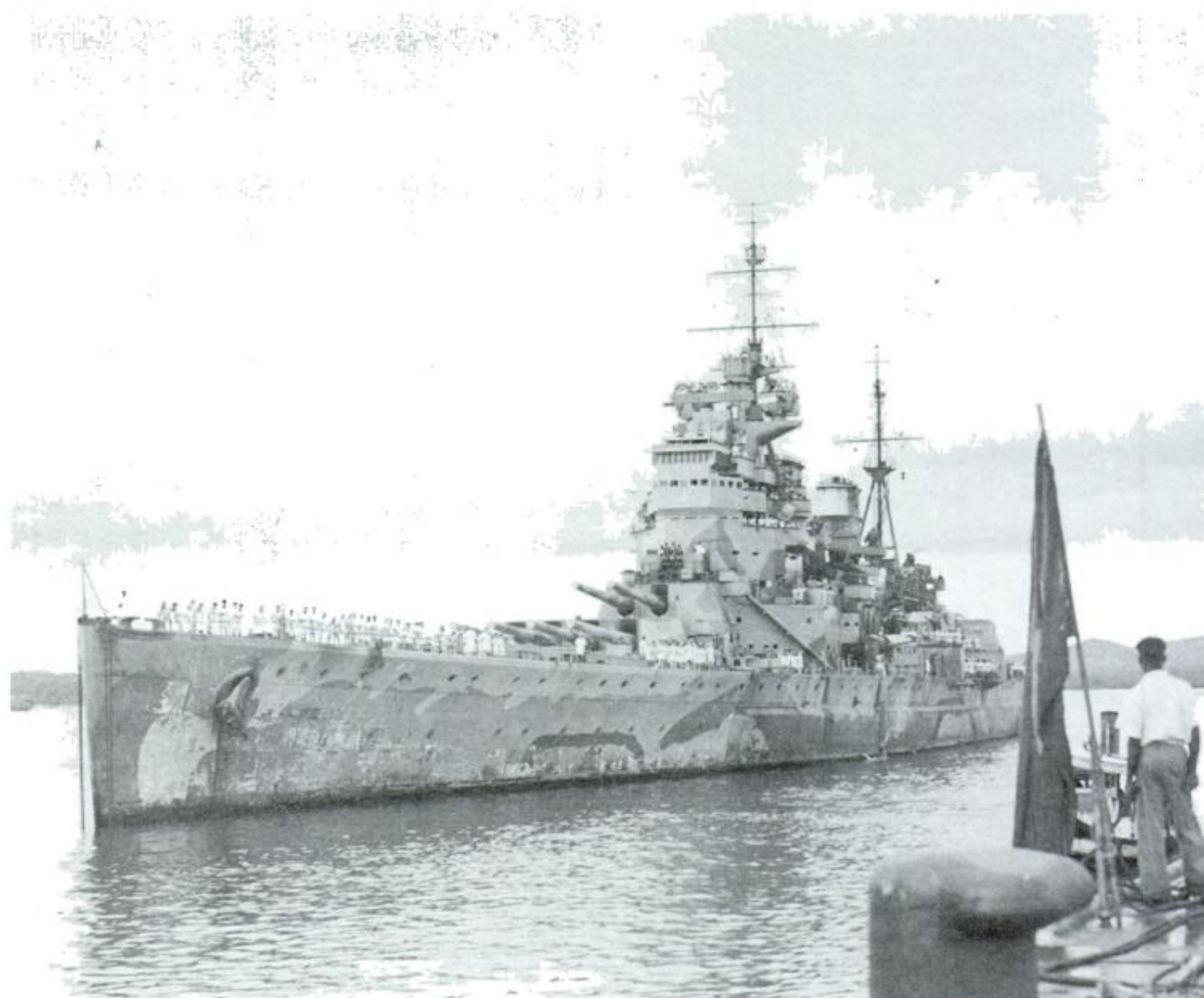
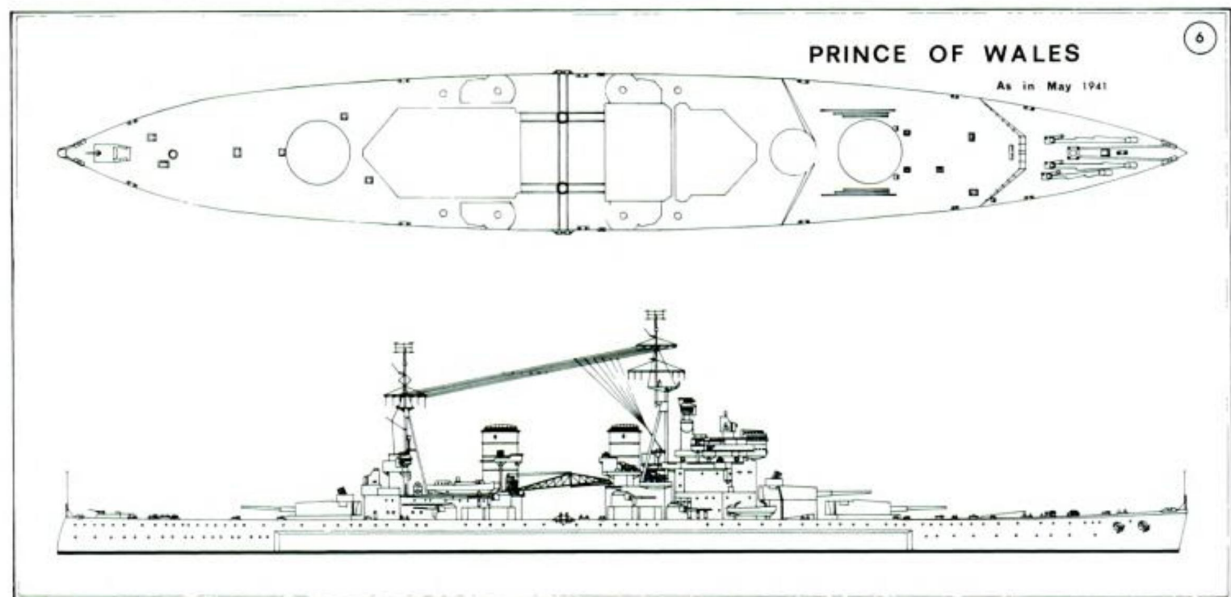
Ships boats: *King George V*, *Prince of Wales* and *Duke of York*; Three 45ft (13.7m) fast motor boats, one 45ft (13.7m) motor launch, three 25ft (7.6m) fast motor boats, two 27ft (8.2m) whalers, one 16ft (4.8m) fast motor dinghy, one (*Duke of York* two) 14ft (4.2m) sailing dinghy, two 32ft (9.76m) cutters (abreast B turret); *Anson* and *Howe*: Two 45ft (13.7m) motor boats, one 45ft (13.7m) motor launch, one 36ft (10.9m) motor pinnace, four 32ft (9.75m) cutters, two 25ft (7.6m) fast motor boats, one 16ft (4.8m) fast motor dinghy, two 14ft (4.2m) sailing dinghies, one (*Howe* two) 27ft (8.2m) whaler; Note: the majority of the boats were stowed on the after superstructure between the after funnel and mainmast. There were some differences in the positioning of boats between the ships of the class and some of the smaller types (32ft and under) were stowed in various positions – abreast X turret, on the catapult deck, before the fore funnel, etc.

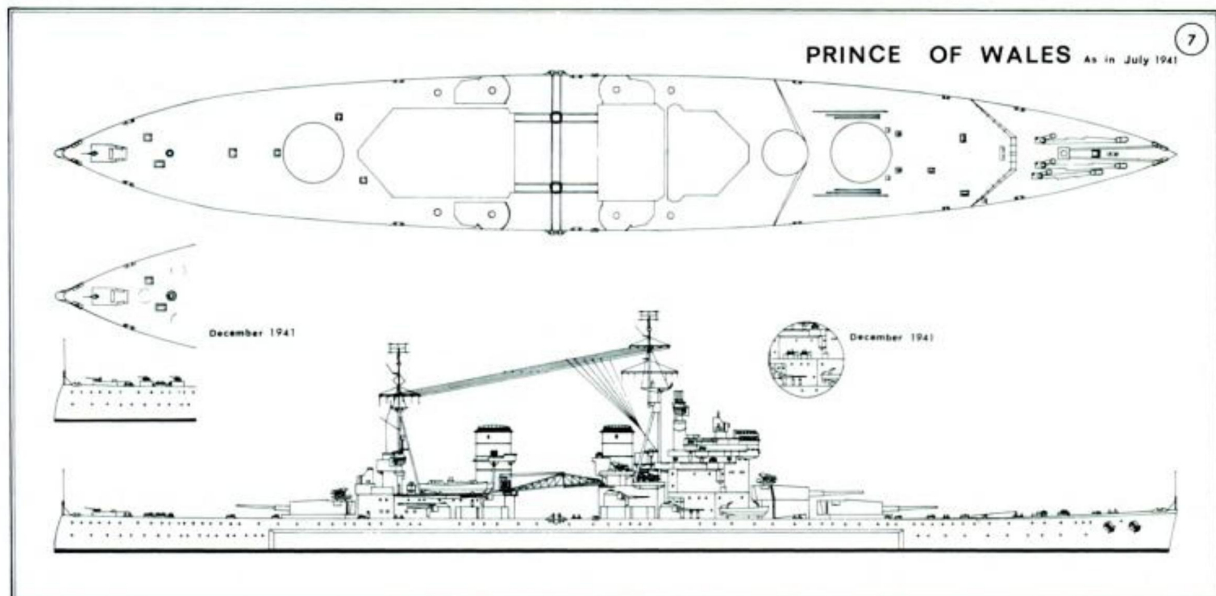
1 The *King George V* in a heavy cross sea off the north western tip of Scotland on 18 February 1943.
NMM

2 *King George V* in the Firth of Clyde on 10 July 1942. Note the Type 273 radar lantern and office on the foremast and the Type 284 aerial on the forward main director.
NMM



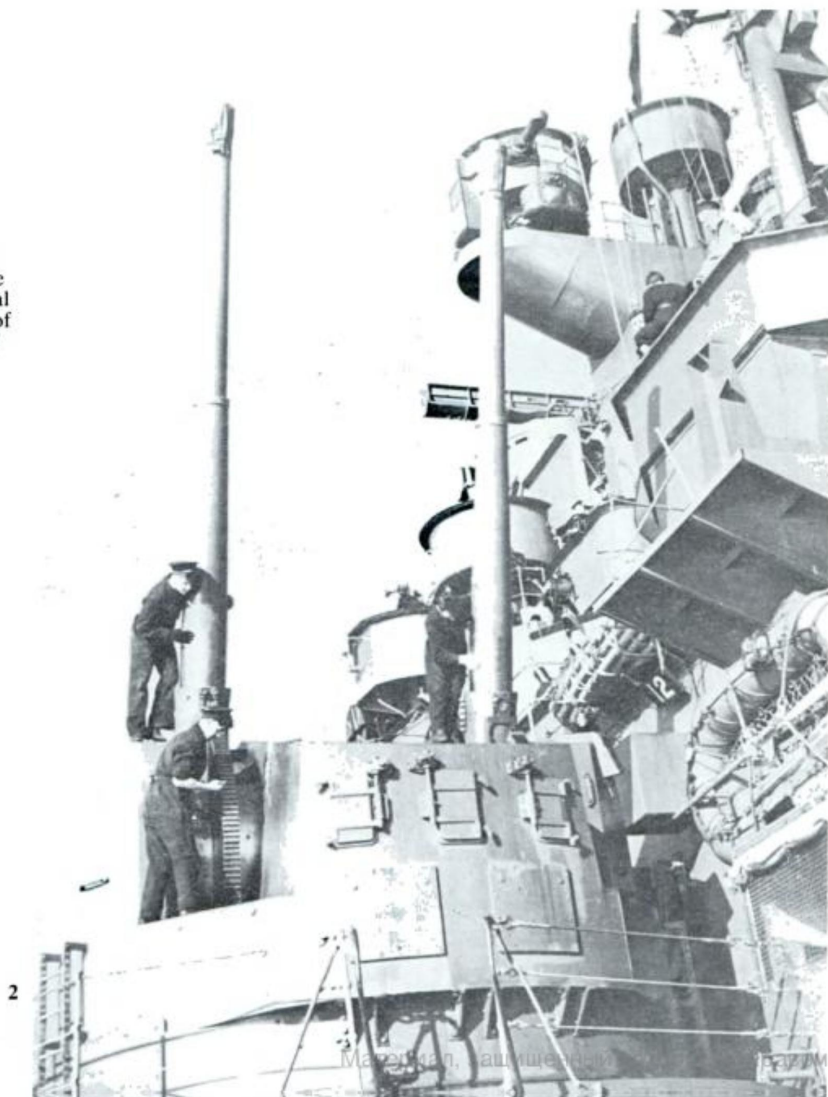






- 1 *Prince of Wales* arrives at Singapore Naval Base on 2 December 1941, six days before she was sunk.
IWM by courtesy of Roger Chesneau

- 2 One of the twin 5.25in HA/LA Mk I mountings of the *Prince of Wales* in May 1941. The port side of the bridge structure is visible in the background; note the aerial for the Type 284 gunnery radar on the roof of the main director and the HACS MkIV director (behind the muzzle of the left 5.25in gun) which had not at this time received the radar aerials of Type 285.
MoD, by courtesy of Peter Hodges



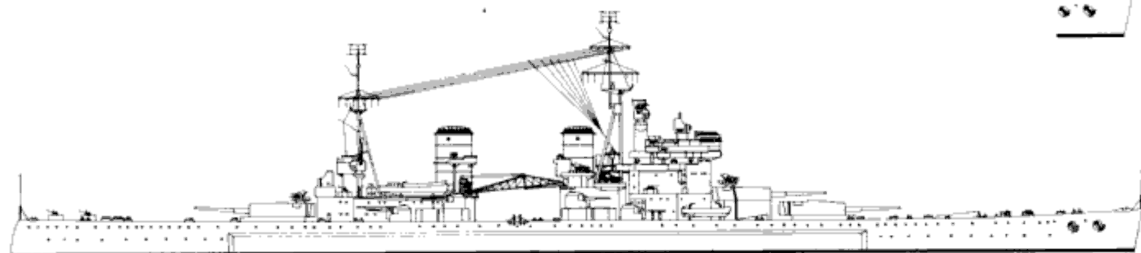
DUKE OF YORK

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As in November 1941



January 1942

Between January
and March 1942

DUKE OF YORK As in April 1942

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