

COMPACT BUILD REVIEW

Bader's Bulldog



Neil Pinchbeck builds the spectacular 1:32nd scale Bristol Bulldog from Silver Wings and discovers a tale of tragedy leading to great heroism.

Reluctance

I admit that I have been long been reluctant to venture into 1:32 scale modelling. The main reason for this has simply been the limited space available on my display shelf. I have though, been fascinated by the growth in popularity of this scale and followed the larger scale builds by my SAM colleagues with great interest.

This has given me occasional pause for thought, as it has seemed to me that there are some manufacturers who up the scale simply in order to up the price. For me it is not sufficient simply to enlarge a standard of detail which might be appropriate and acceptable at 1:48, or even 1:72, and call that adequate for 1:32.

Lavish

I would like to say at the outset that there has been no

suggestion of such a problem with this Bristol Bulldog Mk IIA and Silver Wings have lavished heaps of scale-appropriate detail here, for our enjoyment. When this model was complete, a member of my family remarked: "That looks as if it is going to take off". For me, that says it all.

A Date with Detail...

Not surprisingly then, the build begins with a date with detail and the first four and a half pages of the instruction booklet deal with what goes inside the cockpit area and what goes where to make up a Bristol Jupiter Mk VIIF radial engine. I felt constrained to respond to all this with corresponding attention to painting and weathering and, in doing so, created myself something of a problem. The problem was namely that all this detail disappears almost completely when the fuselage is closed up.

I have never been one of the "...Ah, but I know it is there" school of

modellers. If I have put the effort in, I want to be able to see the results.

Improved Visibility

Whilst reluctant to begin even minor surgery on an offering as large and expensive as this, I decided that the best way to achieve improved visibility was to remove one of the access panels to the radio compartment. This would at least allow tantalising glimpses forward into the cockpit.

With the access panel cut out and a loose panel made from plastic card, I realised I had created myself another problem. Just about the only interior feature not included by Silver Wings was the slide-out radio tray. However, it was not difficult to follow suitable drawings and create the missing article from plastic card and stock.

Sense of Scale

The two castings of the fuselage were held together with masking tape and joined by running cyanoacrylate

Bristol Bulldog Mk IIA

Availability:

Silver Wings stockists via
www.silverwings.pl/
Hannants –
www.hannants.co.uk

Scale: 1:32

Stock Code: 32013

Price: £127.80

Paints used:

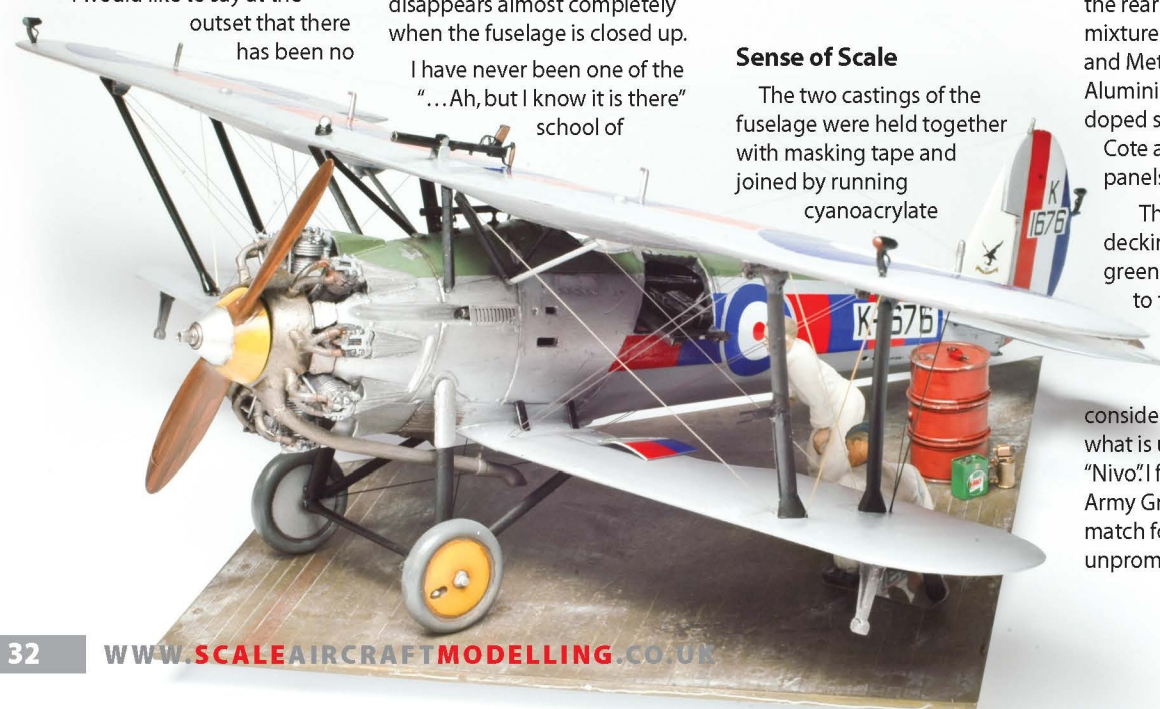
Neil Pinchbeck uses
Humbrol enamels
(33) Matt Black,
(34) Matt White,
(102) Matt Army Green,
(27002) Metal Cote Polished
Aluminium,
(27003) Metal Cote Polished
Steel

glue, off an old scalpel blade, along the join line. The tailplanes were then fixed in place. For the first time, I began to get a sense of how big this model was going to be. Up until this project my builds of the Bulldog had been confined to the Airfix 1:72 kit and this is certainly a spectacularly big difference!

Obscure

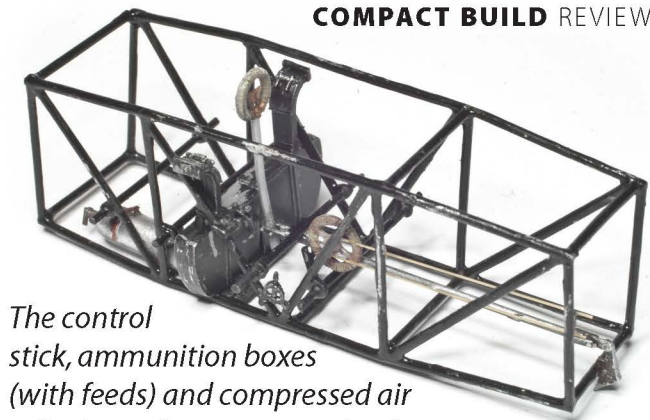
Because of the way in which the building of biplanes progresses, it is often preferable, even necessary, to do some painting and application of decals, at an early stage, before sections of the model become obscured by struts, rigging and control lines. Therefore, at this stage, the fuselage sub-assembly received paint for the bare metal panels around the nose, ply surfaces around the cockpit and fabric covered surfaces towards the rear of the fuselage. I used a mixture of Humbrol Matt White and Metal Cote Polished Aluminium for the Aluminium doped surfaces and the Metal Cote alone for the metal panels.

The upper fuselage decking of most Bulldogs was green and authors often refer to this as "Nivo". However, this colour on the restored Bulldog at Hendon is a considerably brighter green than what is usually considered as "Nivo". I found that Humbrol Army Green is a near perfect match for this shade, despite the unpromising name.





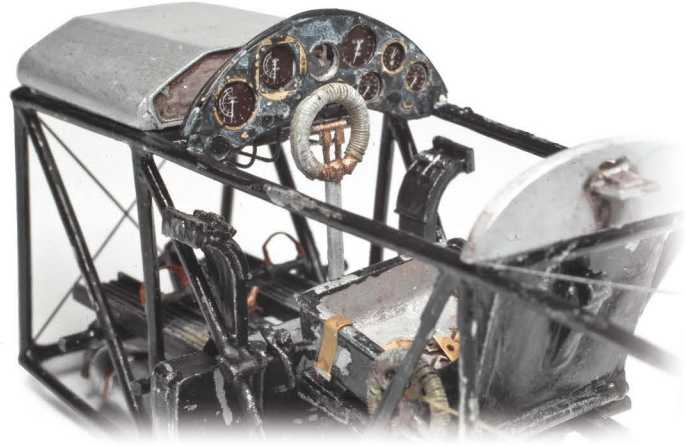
Silver Wings provide plenty of scale-appropriate detail ready to be brought to life through careful painting and weathering.



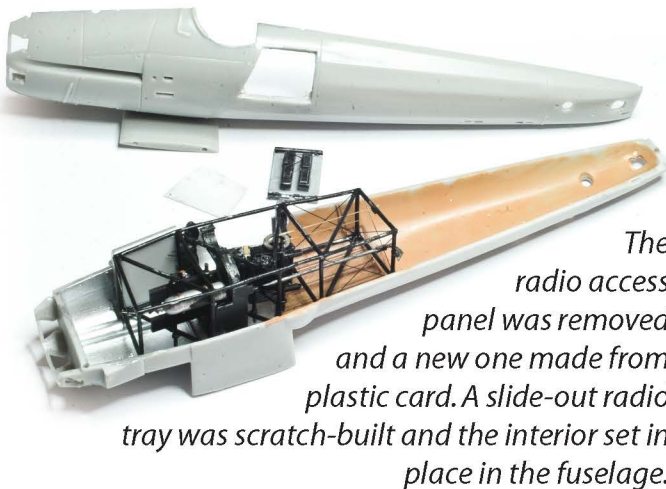
The control stick, ammunition boxes (with feeds) and compressed air cylinder to the starter mechanism were among the early arrivals in a crowded interior.



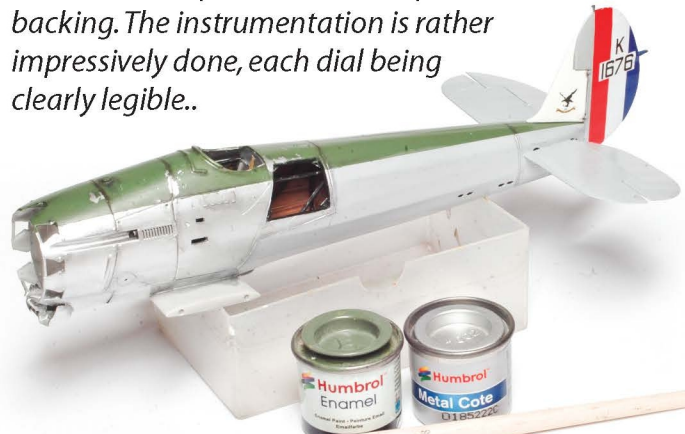
The seat, with photo-etched harness, leg rests and oil tank were added to the forward cockpit area. A degree of chipping to the framework was recreated using Humbrol Maskol.



Acetate dial faces were sandwiched between an etched control panel face and a plastic card backing. The instrumentation is rather impressively done, each dial being clearly legible..



The radio access panel was removed and a new one made from plastic card. A slide-out radio tray was scratch-built and the interior set in place in the fuselage.



A degree of painting on the fuselage and tail was carried out before elements were obscured by struts and wires of various sorts.

Locating and fixing the upper wing was the most difficult part of the build. It was worth making a template from the instructions, to set the outward rake of the interplane struts.



Vintage photographs and the Hendon museum example show double flying wires attached by a pair of brackets beneath each side of the upper wing. The brackets were scratch-built, as they are not included in the kit.

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By Jupiter

At this stage, assembly and painting also began for the many parts that make up the Bristol Jupiter engine. The engine was painted with Humbrol Metal Cote (27003) Polished Steel. Once this was thoroughly dry and buffed with a stiff bristle brush, it was given an acrylic wash of oily brown colour and finished off with a light dry-brush with polished aluminium. The next construction step was fixing the lower wings in place and with this came the need to consider the rigging and how it was to be achieved.

Rigging Achievement

Vintage photographs (and the example at Hendon) show that double flying wires from lower wing inboard to upper wing outboard, terminate

in fixing brackets beneath the lower wing. These brackets are not provided in the kit and it was necessary, and not difficult, to fabricate four of them from 'L' section plastic stock. Nylon monofilament wires were fixed to these brackets and the single landing wires anchored into a blind hole in the upper wing.

Holes were made through the lower wing for both sets of wires to pass through and be anchored. Rather than drill these holes, they were made with a heated steel needle held in forceps. Whilst this does create a certain amount of charring, it is not difficult to clean up.

The Difficult Bit

By far the most difficult stage of this build was the fixing in place of the upper wing. Although this is only a single bay biplane, the difficulty is that the interplane struts have both a forward and outward rake and the front and rear struts are not parallel.

The instructions have a scale part front elevation, from which it was possible to make a template for the outward angle. The two

different forward angles had to be largely determined by eye and more help at this point would have been appreciated.

Although the family say I went a very strange colour, a satisfactory result was achieved in the end.

Bulldog Rolls Over

Threading and anchoring the rigging lines was much easier with the model inverted, as was locating and fixing the undercarriage. The undercarriage struts are made up of individual sections and it was helpful to join the four side struts into two 'V' struts before attempting to fix them.

Colourful Canines

There are two separate decal sheets, each for an aircraft typical of this colourful age in the history of the Royal Air Force. K2159 bears the blue and white chequers of 19 Squadron. Chequers on the tailplane as well as the usual position at the sides of the fuselage and over the upper wing, proclaim this to be the machine flown by newly appointed Squadron Leader Clifford Sanderson (DFC) at RAF Duxford in the spring of 1931. Other indications of

rank are the Squadron Leader's pennant on the white band of the rudder bars and blue and white streamers at the trailing edges of lower wing and rudder. If you choose to model this one, you will need to supply your own streamers.

K1676 carries the blue and scarlet bars of 23 Squadron, based at RAF Kenley in 1931. Insignia Yellow wheel hubs and propeller hub also mark the flight to which the young Douglas Bader had just been posted.

Fateful Day

At RAF Kenley in Surrey, on Monday morning, 14th December 1931, Bristol Bulldog Mk IIA (K1676), in company with two other machines from 23 Squadron, set off on a courtesy visit to Reading Aero Club at nearby Woodley. By the end of the day, the Bulldog was a pile of tangled wreckage on the Woodley turf. The young man who was pulled from the mangled cockpit was fighting for his life following the amputation of both legs.

So began one of the most remarkable stories of heroism of the 20th century as Douglas Bader began the fight back, not just to life but also to the air, achieving the status of fighter ace and much more.



Recommended Reference:

Warpaint Series 66: Bristol Bulldog

Availability: Guideline Publications - www.warpaint-books.com

