KIT REVIEW

SEALIGHT

DAVE BRUMSTEAD reviews Mount Fleet Models' West Highland Coaster

With all model boat reviews there is a point when the decision is made as to the next project - it may be a kit offered by the Editor or it may be a kit obtained elsewhere which hasn't been featured as a review before.

The Sealight, from Mount Fleet Models, was decided over a cup of coffee at the IMS with the Editor, Frank and Susan Hinchliffe, proprietors of Mount Fleet Models and yours truly. Frank offered a kit for review and the Editor asked me "which one" and I plumped for the most modest kit in the range. I was promptly told that the Sealight was one of the favourites and would I like to review it. So the decision was made.

The model, to 1:32, is of a West Highland Coaster, or large "Puffer". Built in Greenock in 1930, the Sealight plied its trade until 1963 when it ran aground on "The Maidens". The full size vessel had an overall length to suit the locks of the Crinan Canal, which could accommodate vessels up to a maximum length of 88ft. The model, just under 33ins long, scales up to an equivalent of just under 88ft.

So, a few weeks after the IMS I visited the editorial offices and came away with a substantial cardboard box and went home like a kid with a new toy.

Into the workshop and with everything spread all over the bench, detailed examination and checking of the parts began. (Photo 1). The hull came in for close scrutiny; made from fibreglass with rubbing strake and plate detail moulded in, it would require only modest cleaning up. (Photo 2).

The white metal casting set was packed in its own box, and the individual parts packed in numbered bags, each of which were for a particular stage of construction. The contents of each bag were listed in the parts list. (Photo 3).

Other parts were pre-printed and plain plywood (Photo 4), wood and plastic strip, dowel, alloy tube and propshaft and in the next photo (Photo 5), a full size plan, fibreglass superstructure, ship's boat (also fibreglass), instruction manual, green material to represent canvas, two colour photos of the finished model (invaluable) and a bag of bits which also contained a block of beeswax to lay the threads of the rigging material.

The instruction manual supplied contains some useful hints and tips on weathering the boat and giving it a realistic finish. I think it is worth making a couple of points at this stage - one, this review is written in my usual style to include building notes to help the builder who has not attempted this type of kit before, and secondly the model is finished without weathering.

Making a start

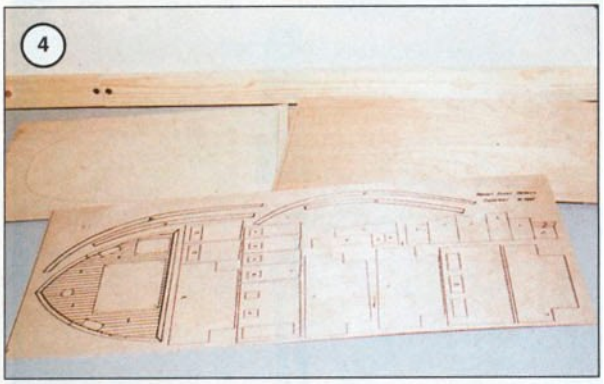
So, having read the notes and identified all the various parts it is time to start construction.

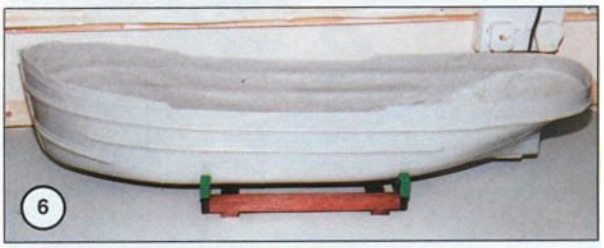
The first job is to construct a stand. Shown on the main drawing are the profiles of the stand so it is a simple job to trace these and transfer them onto suitable material. As usual I used 12mm MDF for the supports spaced with 7/8in square wood 10 3/4in long. Green self-adhesive baize was used to protect the hull. (Photo 6).

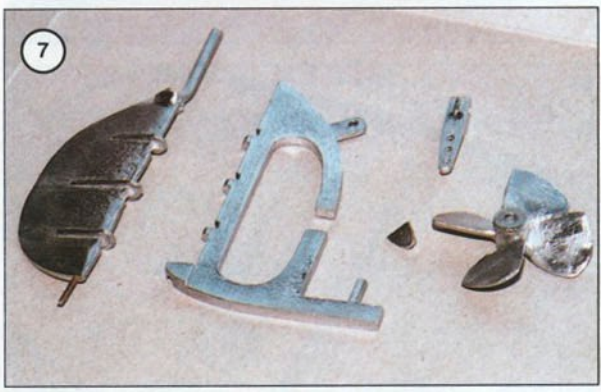
The hull was prepared next. There were one or two small spots of fibreglass resin stuck to the hull and these were removed with a sharp craft knife. The hull was then rubbed down all over with 1200 grit wet and dry used wet, taking great care not to remove any of the hull detail, such as rivet heads, etc. The hull was then put to one side while the running gear was prepared.

The various white metal parts were cleaned with a brass suede brush and sprayed with Halfords White Primer prior to fitting.(Photo 7).

I marked out the centre line of the hull and offered the stern frame into position. The hull was drilled to take the pin on the frame and when the frame was held in the correct position (after filing the keel to suit) the propshaft hole was marked and drilled. I then assembled the rudder loosely to the frame







and marked the position of the rudder stock on the hull. This was drilled 4mm to take the rudder stock, and as this gave a satisfactory position for the rudder, I opened up the hole to take the rudder tube. This material (153) was cut to length to allow the tiller arm to fit onto the rudder stock. (Photo 8). The tube was not fitted into position until later.

With the hull in the stand the right way up, I fabricated a suitable wooden support for the propeller tube. The idea of making it in this fashion was to form a half bulkhead to help keep any ballast in place. Before drilling the support hole for the shaft, I had to determine what angle, if any, was on the shaft relative to the bottom of the boat as this was not shown in the drawing. I settled for having the shaft parallel to the bottom.

I marked the centreline of the inside of the hull and placed the propeller tube in position. Using a long piece of brass rod of suitable diameter in the tube, I placed a spirit level on the bottom of the hull and then adjusted the end of the tube to give the same reading. The height of the tube was measured and the measurement transferred to the wood, and after drilling a clearance hole for the tube, this was then placed in position. (Photo 9). With the extended shaft on the centreline, and the spirit level giving the correct "bubble" the wooden support was tacked in place with thick superglue. The propeller tube was roughened with sandpaper to provide a key and the whole assembly fibreglassed in place using Isopon P38. Finally the rudder assembly was put into place and the rudder tube fibreglassed in position.

Drive Motor

Now, being economically minded (mean!) I checked the bits box to see if I had a suitable drive motor and found a Deans Marine Kestral (4.8 - 12V.) 545 type motor. Although a 380/385 motor would probably be adequate, I do like a bit of extra power for some of those regatta courses that suffer from wind!

I also decided, after Tom Gorman's talk about motors and drive systems at one of the MPBA Seminars, to gear the motor down for greater efficiency. So I opted for a Model Slipway 2.3 :1 Belt Drive Reduction Gear Unit. Although supplied with a coupling, this didn't suit my application, so I used a Dynapol coupling instead. Suitable suppressers and lengths of wire were soldered in place on the motor at this stage.

As the propshaft is parallel to the hull bottom, the motor mount is straightforward. Pack the motor up until level with the shaft, measure the gap under the mounting plate, and use metal plates and blocks of wood to this dimension.

Assemble the motor and its mount and put into position, fibreglass the mount to the hull and when set remove the motor. (Photo 10).

You will see from the photos that the motor is screwed to the wooden blocks with wood screws. Two of these had to be substituted for 4mm brass bolts at a later stage due to access problems. The bolts were Superglued into the wooden block.

Deck Supports

The plastic deck supports were now fitted according to the instructions (Photo 11). A fibreglass fillet was run under the plastic strips for additional support. The decks were fitted later.

Steering Servo

Now that the height of the quarter deck was known, it was possible to fit the steering servo. The two crossbeams of 12 mm square wood were placed across the beam, and at a height which placed the servo arm at the same height as the tiller arm (Photo 12). The beams were fibreglassed in position, and when set the servo was fitted and the pushrod made up. The servo was then removed.

Battery Tray

As the boat has plenty of displacement I decided to use the largest Sealed Lead Acid battery I had, a 6v 8amp. Using a big battery helps to save on additional lead ballast. Before proceeding any further I ensured that this size battery would pass through the hatch!

The tray was made up of scrap 4mm ply, (left over from a previous model's transport box) and 12mm square wood.

I decided at this stage to make up a couple of bulkheads. The instructions say these are not necessary as the hull has sufficient strength, which is perfectly true. However I chose to insert 1.5mm Plasticard bulkheads for the simple reason if there should be any ingress of water, it should isolate it in one compartment. The bulkheads were made to fit each side of the main battery tray (Photo 13).

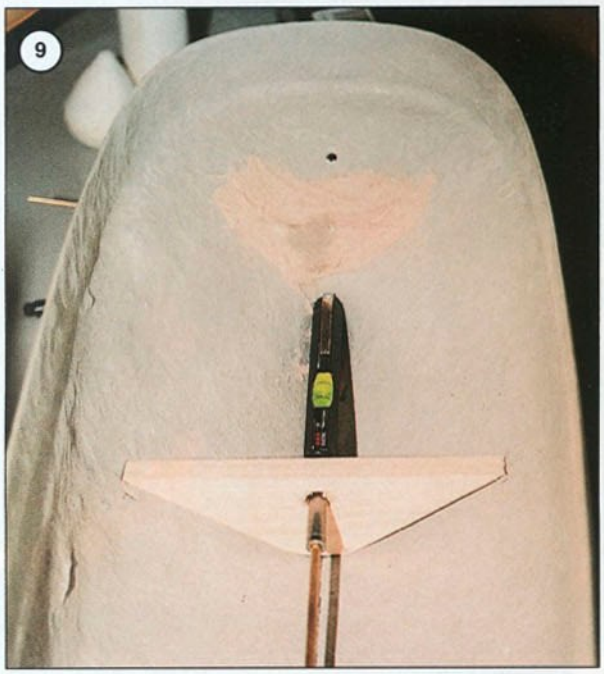
Two 12mm square wooden bearers are made next, one to fit the width of the hull, the other shorter and fixed to the forward part of the forward bulkhead. These bearers were to take the radio platform. (Photo 14). The bearers were fitted about halfway up the bulkhead to allow for ballast underneath and to keep the radio away from any water which may accumulate in the bilges.

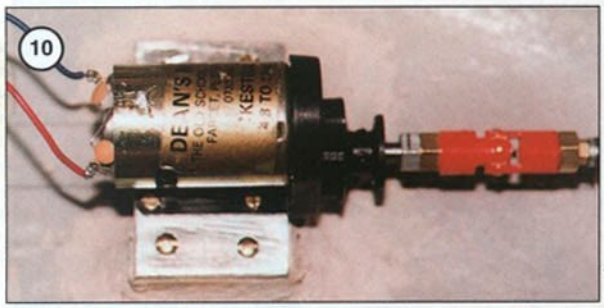
To finish off the internal fitting out, the entire inside of the hull was painted with some surplus Humbrol number 5, Gloss Dark Grey. (Photo 15).

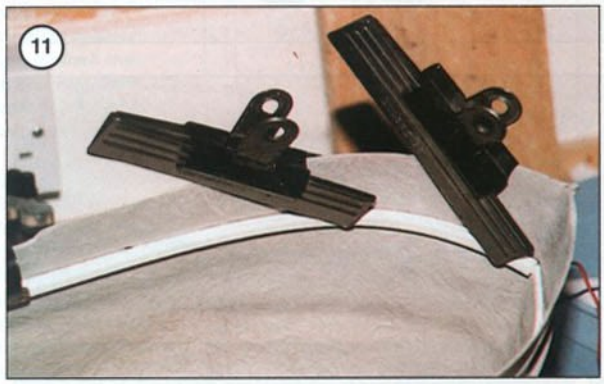
Fitting the Decks

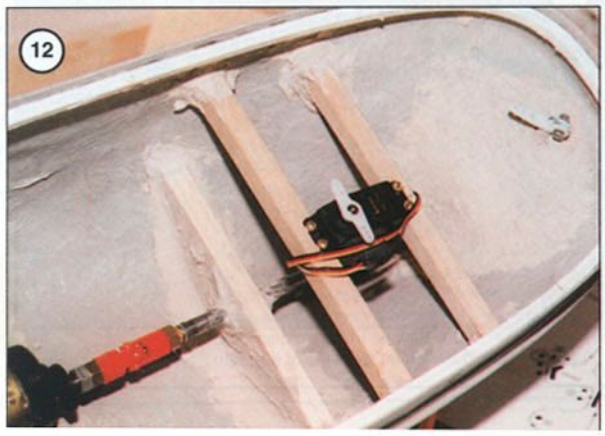
With the deck supports having been fitted earlier, centrelines were marked on the decks and the wood trimmed to shape.

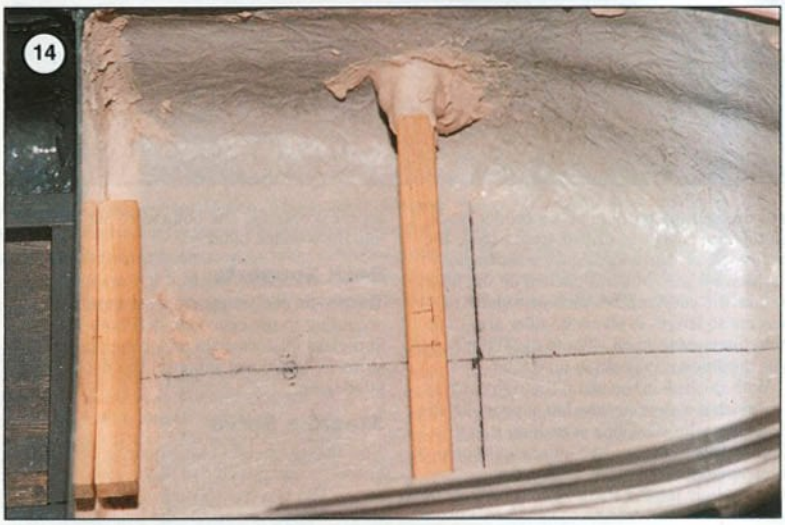
The length of the quarter deck was taken from the plan, and transferred to the wood. When this was in position, the main deck was fitted. I used a metal right-angled block to transfer the position of the front of the quarter deck to the main deck. (Photo 16). I drew a line across the maindeck at that point. Measuring 30mm forward of that line, I drew a line across the maindeck which gave me the position of the rear edge of the main

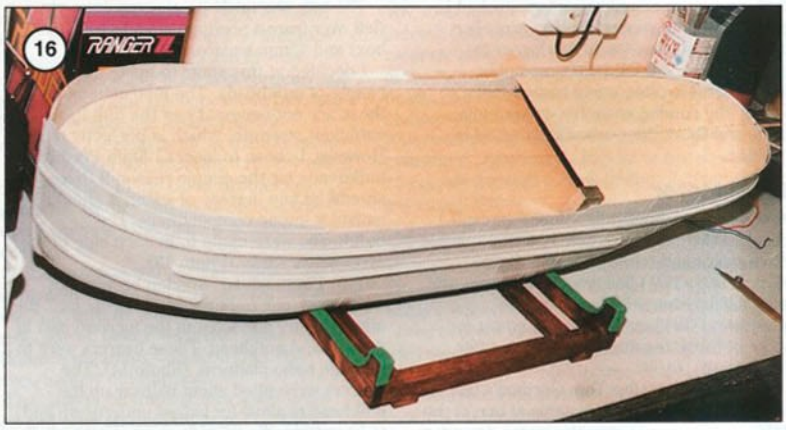












hatch. I was then able to mark out and cut out the main hatch.

I then marked out the position of the superstructure on the quarter deck as per the instructions and cut this out as well. (Photo 17). The deck cut-outs were completed by cutting out the rudder head hatch. Support pieces 148 were cut to fit and glued to the decks as instructed (Photo 18). The undersides of the deck were given a couple of coats of sanding sealer to waterproof them, taking care not to brush the sanding sealer where the glue would go to hold the decks in place.

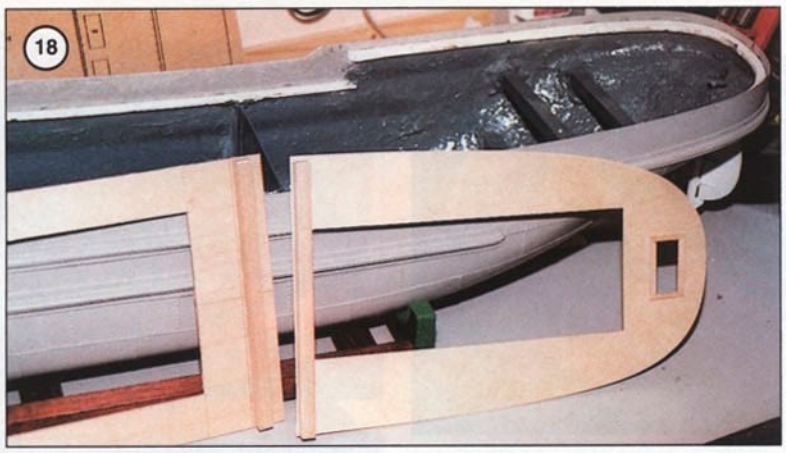
I glued the quarter deck in place first, using 5-minute epoxy, followed by the maindeck. Both decks were clamped and weighted as required. The closure ply piece was fitted between the two decks, and the two uprights for the rudder hatch cover glued in place.

Bulwark Interiors

The stem piece (which was a different shape to that shown on the plan) was shaped to fit and Superglued in place. P38 was mixed up and the inside of the bulwarks coated with a thin film ensuring any unevenness in the fibreglass hull was adequately covered, and any gaps around the edge of the decks filled at the same time. When set, the P38 was rubbed down to a smooth finish.

The decks were now Sanding Sealed (three coats) and sanded to a smooth finish. The inside of the bulwarks were given a couple of coats of Humbrol Matt White 34 to highlight any defects which were then filled again as necessary.

I decided to use the swivel freeing ports supplied and marked out the bulwarks as required. As I tend to sail on all sorts of lakes in all conditions, anything that helps to shed



water from the decks as in full size practice is a must. The freeing ports position were chain drilled, removed and filed to size (Photo 19). The ports were made up as instructed (Photo 20)and Superglued in place.

After running the 3mm ply strips up into the bow, I decided to fit the bulwark supports, 42 and 43. I plotted the position of the inboard stringer taking dimensions from the outboard strake. The bulwark supports were then cut to length to suit. The bulwark capping strip was cut to size and run into the bow as far as possible. The inboard stringer was then fitted in place (superglue) and filled as necessary. (Photo 21).

The two openings for the anchor chain through the bulwarks are shown with a flange on the outside of the hull. These were not moulded in so I decided to fabricate them. 7/16in brass tube was squeezed gently in the vice until it had the correct oval shape. 1mm brass wire was soldered around the outside and filed to shape. The holes in the hull were prepared and the flanges trimmed to suit and Superglued in place. (Photo 22).

The bow plate (24) was now offered into place and I found the centre slot out of position, so I filed a new slot, filled the old one and glued the plate into position, filling around the edges as necessary.

The Port and Starboard capping were now fitted according to the instructions and the ply platforms fitted for the bollards and fairleads. The small support plates were also fitted at this time.

I also fitted the shroud rigging screws at this time - a bad mistake! Sticking up above the bulwarks I caught them with my sleeves so many times they eventually broke! Mount Fleet were good enough to replace them for me but I kept them to one side until later. (Photo 23).

The Main Hatch

I followed the instructions for the making of the main deck hatch and coamings except I used a piece of cardboard cereal packet as a template to give me the deck sheer. This curve was then transferred onto the ply. The ply was cut out and fitted into the deck openings and the ends fitted into place.

At this stage I fabricated and fitted the coamings for the quarter deck. (Photos 24 and 25).

Returning to the main hatch, the sides and ends were cut out as directed and placed against the coamings. After checking the fit, these four parts were glued together in situ, ensuring they didn't stick to the coaming. (Photo 26). When the glue was dry, they were removed and placed on 1.5mm ply sheet, drawn around and the ply rectangle to form the top cut out. The hatch sides were replaced over the coamings and the ply top glued into position. This was weighted down to ensure good contact with the curved edges of the side pieces. (Photo 27). When this had dried, it was removed and the reinforcing strips stuck around the inside angles. The rest of the main hatch was built up according to the instructions (Photo 28) until it got to the point where the hatch boards were to be fitted.

I decided before going any further to paint the hatch with its finish colour, Humbrol 62.

The support for the hatch boards was in place at this time so I looked for two pieces of ply with which to make the boards. I found that I didn't have sufficient wood to make up the two sides, so I had to use bits and pieces. This wasn't important as I intended to cover most of the boards with the green material supplied (tarpaulin) so I ensured that the hatch boards that would be seen were fitted with the grain in the correct direction. I also decided to leave an uncovered area which would show the cargo carried. (Photo 29). As I decided to use coal as cargo, I painted this area black, so if any part of the hatch was visible through the coal, it was the right colour! (Photo 30).

The hatch boards were stained with Woodcraft Dark Oak Stain (probably about 20 years old!) After staining the planks I decided to fit the ring bolts as although they would be out of sight under the tarpaulin, their outline may show through. (Photo 31).

I obtained some real coal from John, a friend of mine who is a train modeller. We discussed coal as the commercial material available from the local model shop was suitable only for 00 gauge and would have been too small. John gave me some "real" coal which I trimmed to size with the pliers. I built up a nice pile and with a 50/50 mix of PVA glue and water poured over it, it was left to dry. (Photo 32).

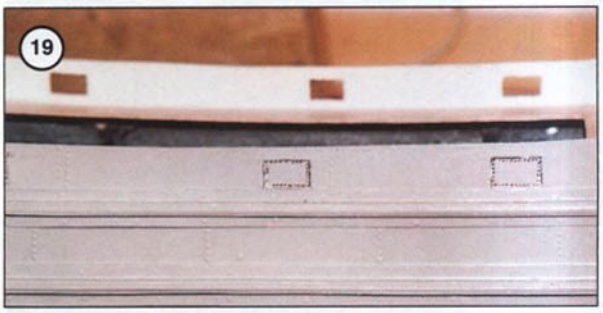
A day or so later, the glue had not quite dried out but I made up the tarpaulin from the material supplied, and also the hatch irons and wedges. The hatch irons were painted matt black (I used Halfords Matt Black Aerosol) and when dry the tarpaulin was fitted using the irons and wedges. The ship's boat was trimmed with a file and given a light rub down to remove any pips of fibreglass. This was also sprayed Matt Black and when dry placed into position and tied down. A few hatch boards were stuck at random at the top of the hatch assembly, waiting to be fitted in place over the cargo. (Photo 33). This completed the main hatch.

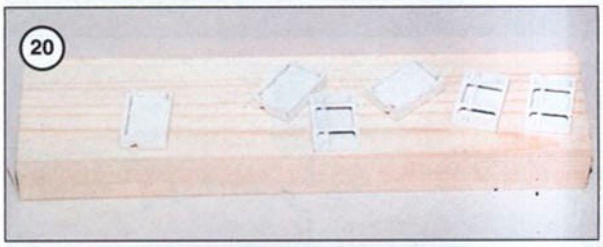
The Wheelhouse

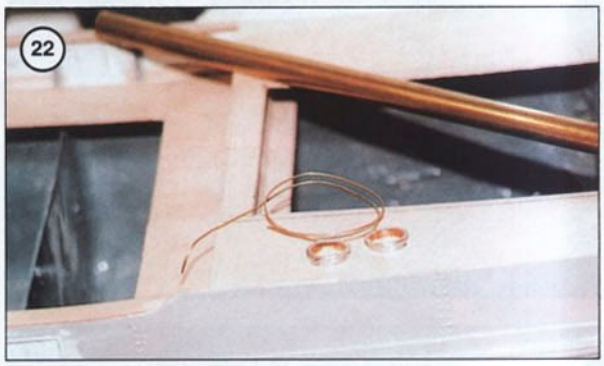
I started by cutting out all of the wooden parts, ensuring they were marked for identification. The roof assembly was glued together as shown on the main plan. This was put to one side until later. The parts D and G (two of each) were printed identically i.e., as seen from Starboard. (Photo 34). I cut out the grooves in mine until I realised this which gave me one side grooved on the outside, and the other side grooved on the inside, so to ensure consistency I grooved all of the wheelhouse part, inside and out.

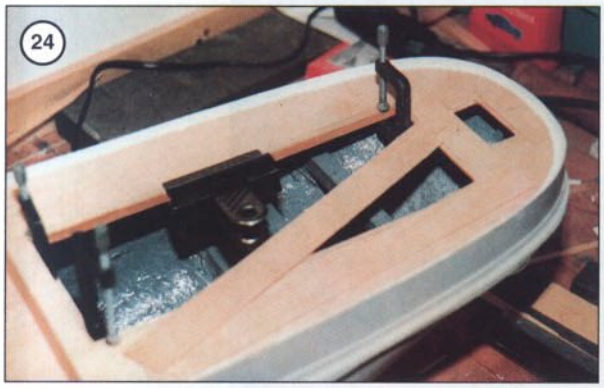
The floor was prepared next by gluing 3mm sq. strip around the edge, with cut-outs for the binnacle base and the steering chains.

When the time came to glue the sides to the floor, the hull was placed in its stand with the waterline marked bow and stern. These measurements had to be the same when measured from the bench to ensure the water-line was parallel to the bench. The fibreglass superstructure was placed in position, with the position of the wheelhouse marked on it. The wheelhouse floor was placed on the superstructure and weighted





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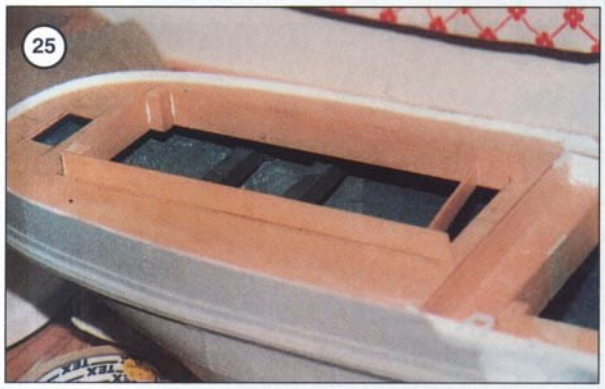
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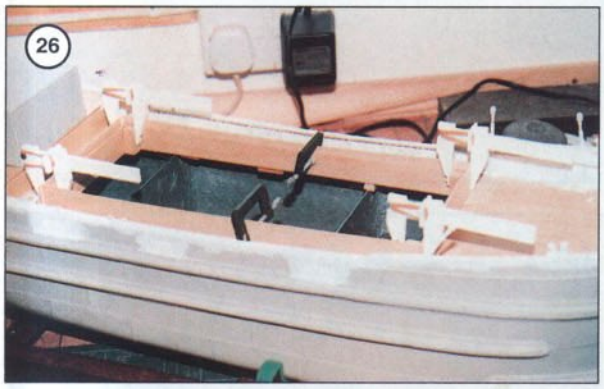
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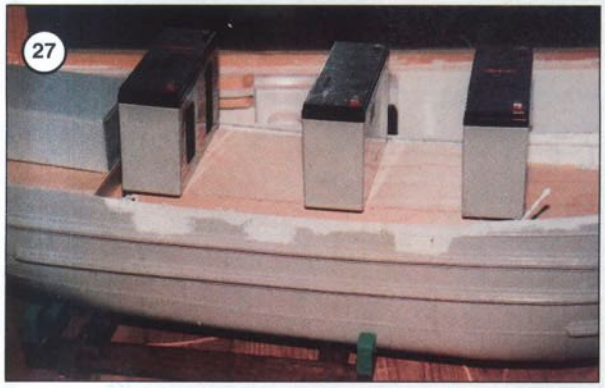
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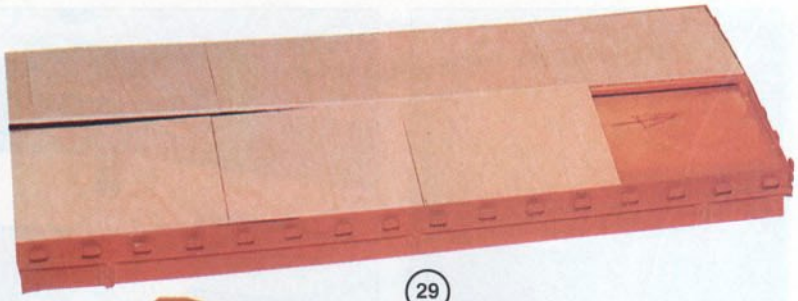
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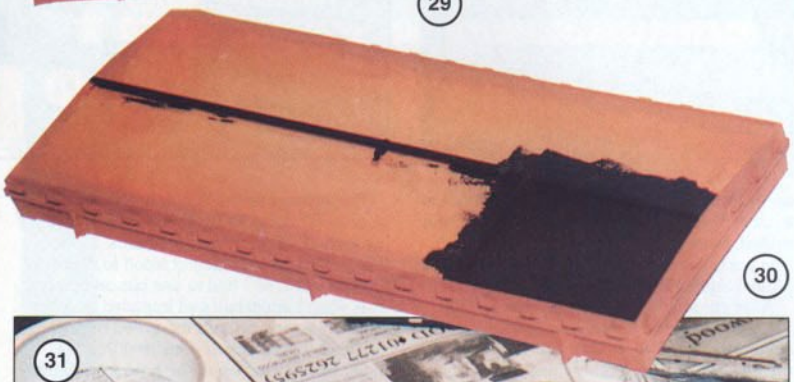
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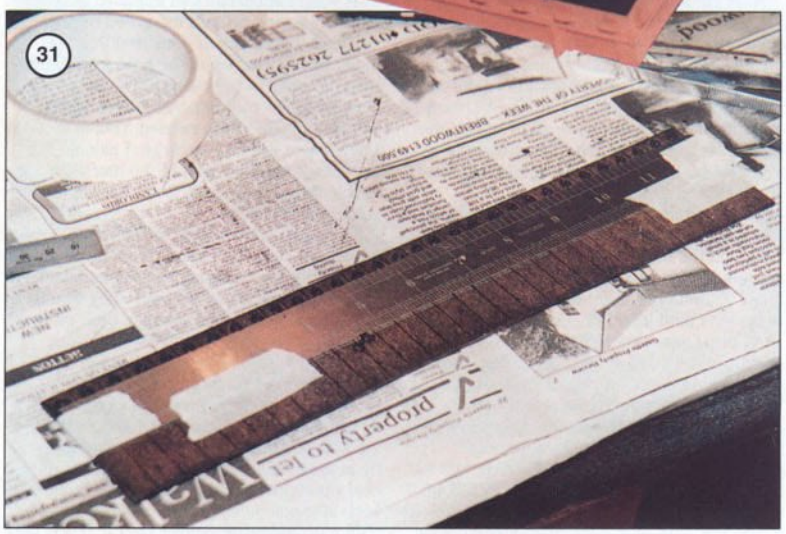
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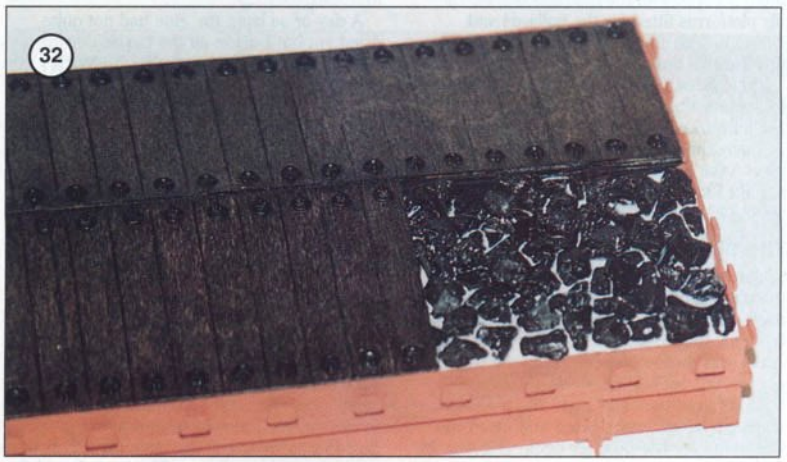
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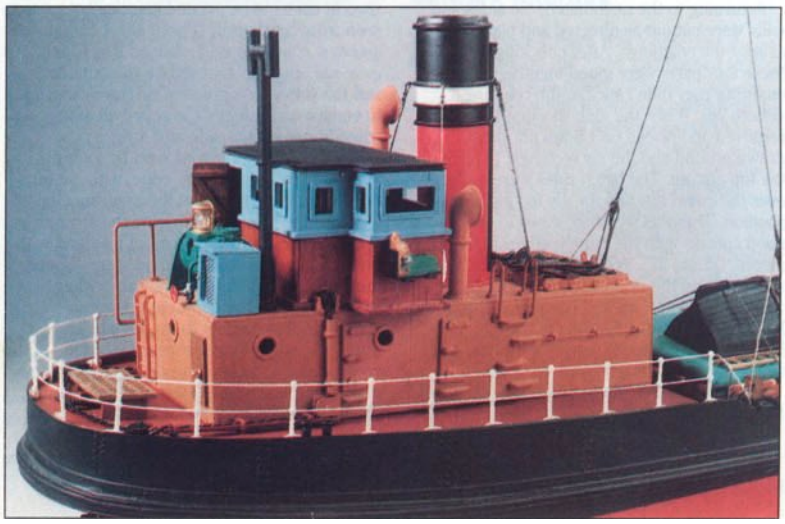

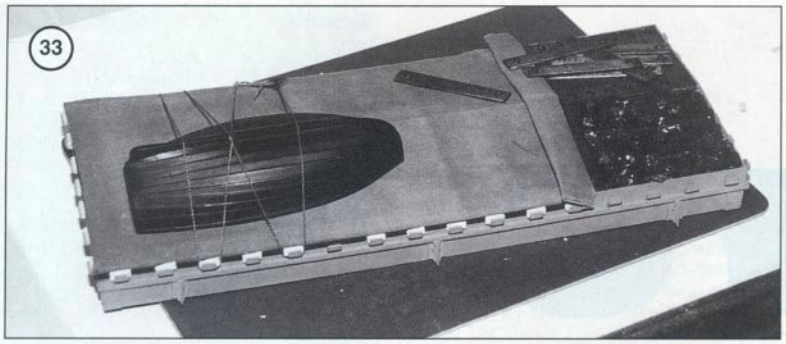

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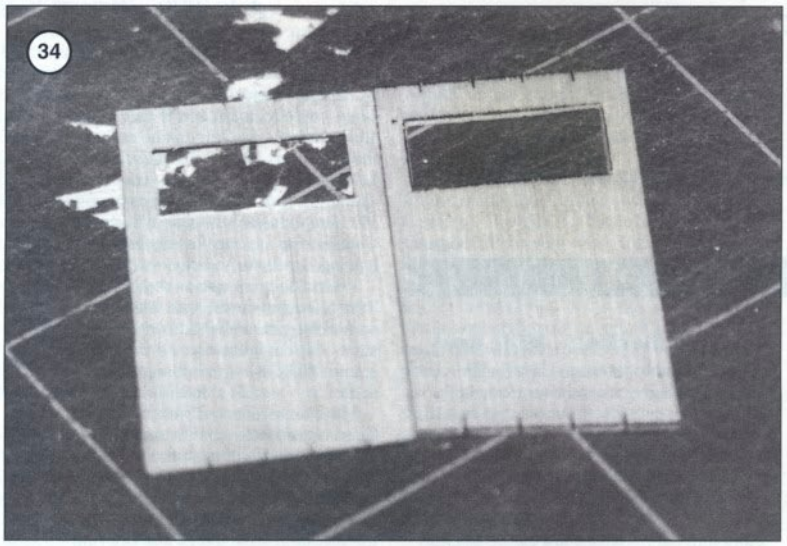

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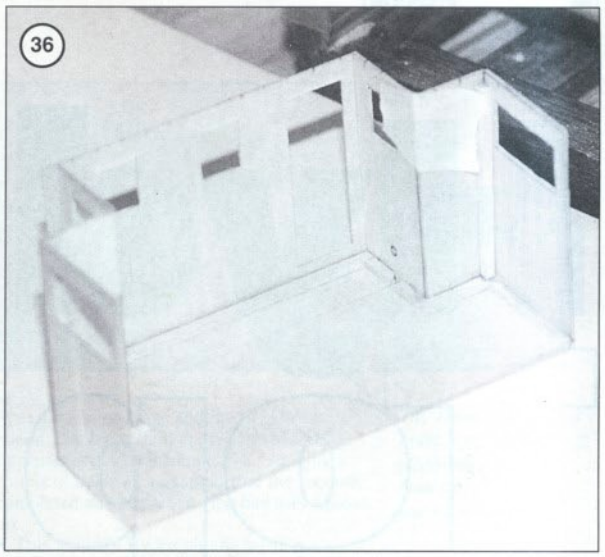

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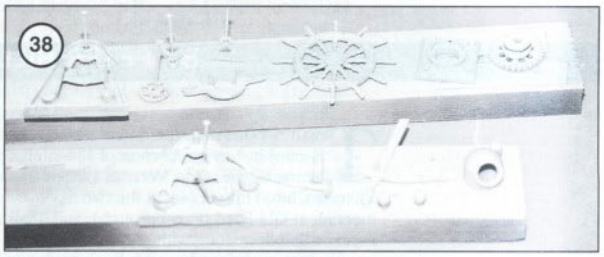

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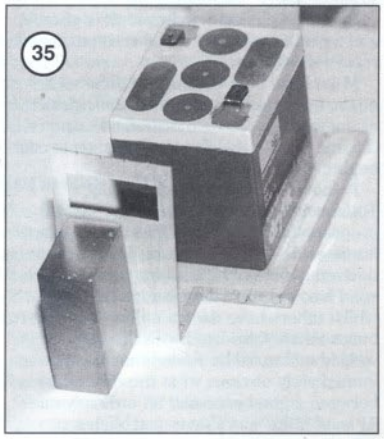

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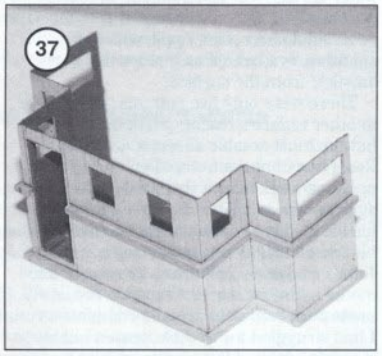

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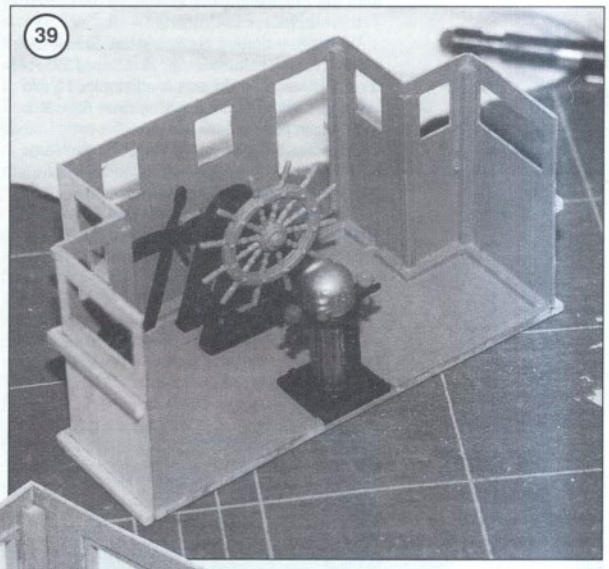

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down and then the sides placed against it. The front and rear edges of the sides were then checked from the bench to ensure they were perpendicular which of course ensured they were perpendicular to the water-line. Once I was satisfied, the sides were stuck to the floor. (Photo 35). The rest of the wheelhouse wooden parts, with the exception of the front and roof, were stuck in place. (Photo 36). The corners were reinforced with 3mm square wood and the line for the external timber strip below the windows marked in place.

The interior was now painted with Humbrol 110. (Photo 37).

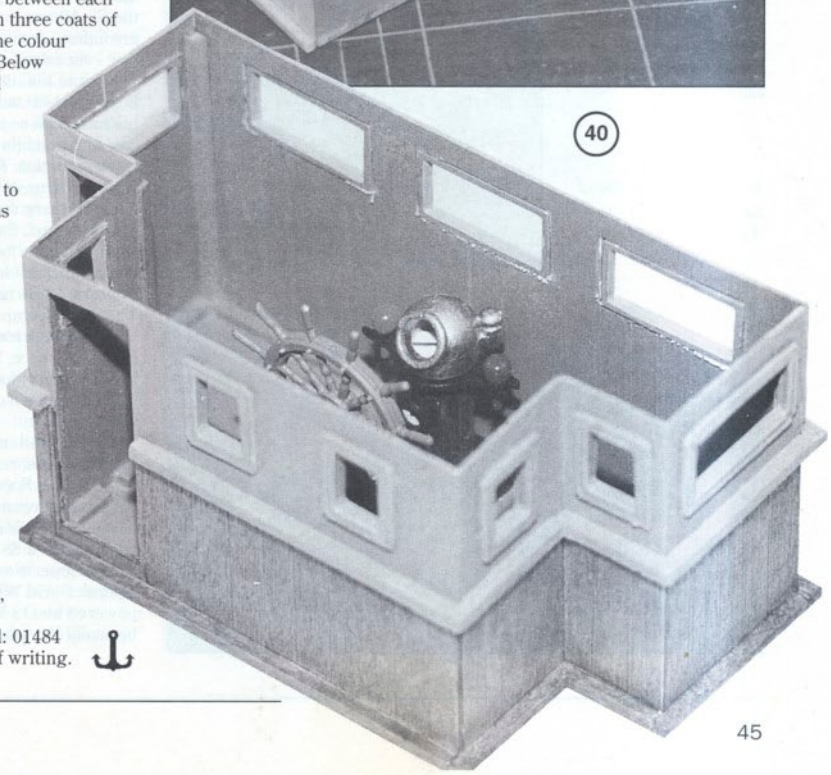
The white metal fittings were prepared in the usual fashion, i.e., brushing with a suede brush before being primed with Halfords White Primer. The black parts were sprayed with Halfords Matt Black and the remainder brush painted their respective colours as detailed in the instructions. (Photo 38).

These parts were now assembled to the wheelhouse (Photo 39) ensuring that the guides on the wheel standards align with the chain holes in the sides of the wheelhouse, or this may cause a problem later.

The white metal window frames were prepared and fitted in place. The wheelhouse front was glued into position and the wood above the 3mm strip treated with three coats of sanding sealer, rubbing down between each coat. This area was then given three coats of Humbrol 89, blue, to match the colour photos supplied with the kit. Below this line the wood was treated with Cuprinol Brown Mahogany Woodstain, also three coats. (Photo 40). A wooden bead of 3mm sq. was glued to the inside of the roof to make it into a lid. The roof was painted Matt Black on the outside, and Matt White on the inside. Two small holes were drilled, one in each side of the wheelhouse roof assembly, to allow two brass pins to be pushed in to hold the roof in place. It was my intention to put crew into the wheelhouse and also to be able to open it up to allow the detail to be seen.

Next time we will move on to the superstructure and completion.

The Sealight can be obtained direct from Mount Fleet Models, Laurel Mount, Holmfirth Road, Meltham, Huddersfield, HD7 3DA, Tel: 01484 851569. price £195 at time of writing.



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