

# Sir Lancelot

**Jim Warren builds and reviews the Mountfleet Models kit**

Between the years of 1942 and 1943 eight minesweepers were built, all being named after the Knights of the Round Table. All of this class of minesweeper were based on the trawler 'Star of Orkney' which was built before the war by Russell of Aberdeen. The armaments were a 12 pounder HA/LA gun with a bore of 3 inches, a maximum range of 11,790 yards at 40 degrees, and a ceiling of 19,000 feet at 70 degrees. A 20 mm Oerlikon gun was also carried with a fire rate of 465 to 480 rounds per minute from a sixty round magazine. Two pairs of twin mounted Lewis guns, which could be stowed in lockers when not required, were mounted on the bridge deck. These had a calibre of 0.303 with a fire rate

of 950 to 1000 rounds per minute. Also stowed aft was a quantity of depth charges complete with launching equipment.

Sir Lancelot, pennant number T228, was built by John Lewis and Co. and was completed in 1942. It survived the war years unscathed and then under the same name took up duty as a fishery protection vessel. In 1962 it was sold on to become the 'Hair-el-din-Barbarossos' and was still in service until 1981.

The other minesweepers in this class were the 'Sir Agravaire', 'Sir Galahad', 'Sir Gareth', 'Sir Geraint', 'Sir Kay', 'Sir Lamorack' and 'Sir Tristan'. With some research and information, you could build most of the boats of this class from this one kit.

## The Kit

The model arrived in a very large, stout cardboard box that contained all of the necessary parts and materials to complete the Sir Lancelot, except for the usual motor, radio control, glues and paints. I was a little surprised that a suitable prop was not included and presume that this is left for the builder to decide which prop, motor and battery set up is preferable. In fact, most builders with the necessary previous experience to build a complex model such as this prefer to select their own power train set up.

Packed inside some bubble wrap were the five grey main GRP components – hull, ships boat funnel, main superstructure and small engine room cover. In another box were the twelve or so plastic bags containing the very

**The completed model of the 'Sir Lancelot' Round Table class Minesweeper**

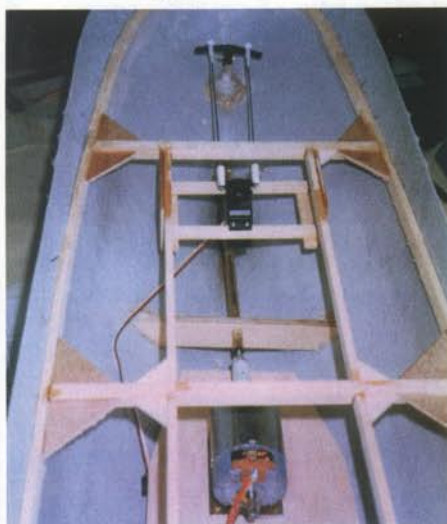




many white metal fittings, each bag numbered to coincide with the plans and building manual. Also included were screen printed ply, stock ply, printed deck overlays and strip wood dowel, together with some ragging cord, prop shaft, vac forms, all necessary items, manual and two full size plans. The building manual contains some very useful colour photographs that proved their worth during the model construction.



**Contents of kit include all the usual mouldings and lots of plastic bags full of castings**



**Details of the deck beams, rudder servo linkage and motor/propshaft location**



**Ply deck glued down with metal block weights around the edge and clamps around the hull access hole**

## Commencing the Build The Hull

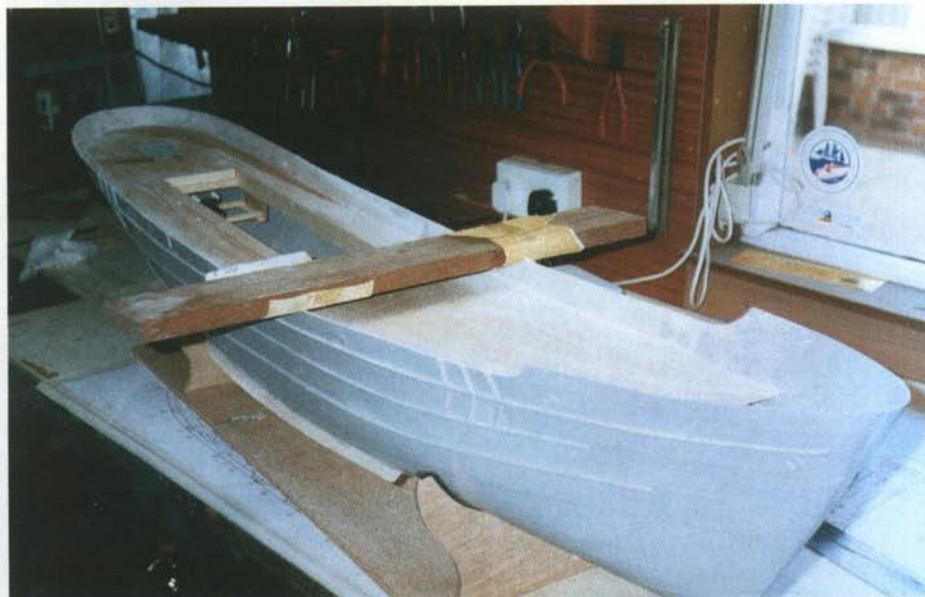
With a kit of this complexity, I think a few hours studying the plans and instructions would prove prudent in the long run. I would very much agree with the instructions when they advise the building of the model should be split up into sections such as the main winch, guns, ships boat, etc., as these are scale models in their own right due to the high level of detail.

I decided to build the kit with what I had to hand in the workshop such as motor, battery, radio, etc., but more on that later. I also wanted to follow as near as possible to the instructions and plans, but unfortunately I had to deviate somewhat from these as a certain amount of changes had to be made which will again be explained later on. I will not give a joint-by-joint account of the build as this is covered in the manual, but instead I will mention some of the key points that may cause concern and problems during construction.

Just before I start building a model, I tape up the edges of the plans with masking tape or similar to protect them from tearing. The working stand caused no problems as a template was printed on the plans, which proved very useful and saved a lot of time in getting the right curves.

As with any GRP moulding, the hull had to be washed off in soapy water to clean off any releasing agent still present. After that a very light rub down with wet and dry P360 grade for the paint to key to, and the insides of the bulwarks were then 'filled' with Davids P38 car filler and rubbed back again with wet and dry paper.

When I came to fit the metal casting stern frame, I decided to deviate from the instructions with this method working well for me. I drilled the hull to take the propshaft and then fitted the stern frame before the propshaft. After the stern frame is secured, fit the propshaft and keep the aft end of the outer tube



**Sanding down of the bulwarks with a solid timber plank wrapped with sandpaper**

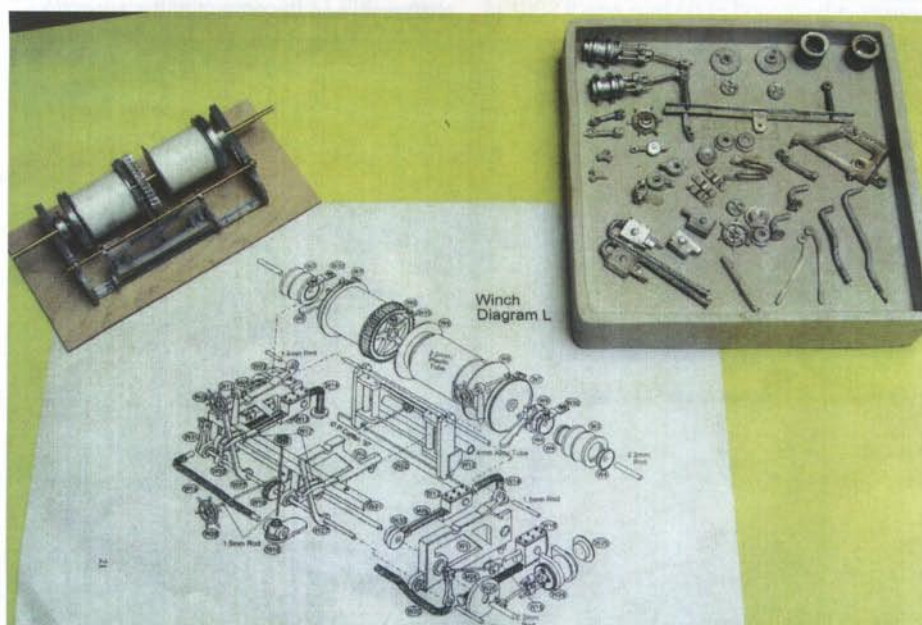


**Detail of deck plating using art paper, a very good method new to the reviewer**





**Stern area showing raised timber platforms, depth charges and Oropesa floats**



**White metal parts and diagram of main winch, a model in itself**



**Boat deck showing position of stanchions**

of the shaft flush with the outside of the stern frame. I know this is opposite to the instructions, but this method worked well for me and it will become clear when the build is actually attempted. When this is flared in to the hull with filler and set hard, prop up the hull in a near vertical position and pour in a small quantity of resin over the propshaft where it enters the hull. This will prevent any possible leaks.

The timber deck beams and layout are well explained in the manual but one small point to bear in mind is to take all measurements for deck beams from deck level, not from the bulwarks. I also fitted an extra deck beam near the bow.

At this stage I thought it would be wise to install the base ply in the hull, the motor mount and the rudder servo. I exchanged the single arm tiller arm provided, for a double push pull linkage to the servo. I think it is more of a positive action, but of course this is down to the builders' preference.

On the ply baseboard bonded to the hull, I glued two 5 mm x 5 mm timber runners approx. 100 mm apart, from the deck opening up to the bows. This will allow for a box containing sufficient lead to trim and ballast the boat at a later date.

A card template was made for the bilge keels and these were then cut from 2 mm Plasticard. Around five tongues need to be left on the Plasticard bilge keels and the hull slotted to suit, with the positions indicated on the hull moulding and plans. After these were bonded in position, car filler was used inside the hull to stop any possible leaks and it was flared in to the outside of the hull. The main ply deck can be cut and glued down, with sufficient weights being used to keep it in place until completely dry.

By this stage the hull is rigid and this is when the tops of the bulwarks can be sanded and cleaned down. My tried and tested method is to use a scrap piece of timber slightly wider than the beam of the hull with a piece of sandpaper each end, and carefully sand to shape.

The fitting out of the main and fore deck is self explanatory with the use of the plans and manual. The use of art card for the deck plates produced a very realistic finish and I must admit a new technique to me, but one I hope to use again. Supplied in the kit is a sheet of white art card of similar gauge to which greetings cards are produced which is cut into plates approx. 75 mm x 60 mm. To simulate the rivets, I applied a blunt dart to the reverse side and when glued to the ply deck using PVA glue, with a gap of about 1 mm between plates, it certainly looks very convincing and puts the finishing touch to the hull and decks.

The wooden staging at the stern carries the depth charges and davit. All this staging is supported on 4 mm x 4 mm wooden legs and I made this section removable for access to the rudder arm and linkage. This was done by making up sockets for the bottom of the legs using 4 mm internal square brass sections, cut to 5 mm long and superglued or soldered to their bases then to the deck.



## The Main Winch

The winch is based on the standard Robertson Icelandic pattern and this would be one of the scale models in their own right that I referred to earlier on. It is made up from numerous white metal castings, as can be seen in the photograph, and at this stage I began to incur problems due to parts missing or being badly moulded. I ended up turning the double rope drums, W3, on the lathe because they were so mis-shapen and not useable. Also the small cog, W10, appears to be shown on the wrong shaft on the drawing, which was quite confusing even after spending some considerable time studying the plans and drawings.

***My club is fortunate in sailing on the lake in Margam Park. Margam Park can be seen in the background of this photo***



In fairness to the manufacturer, I contacted Mountfleet and received these and other missing parts by post. Overall though, I was disappointed with the quality of the metal castings in the kit, bearing in mind the total price of the model.

After the extra work needed, painting, weathering back and roping the drums, the winch again looked very realistic. The smaller anchor winch situated on the bow went together quite easily with no problem.

## Main Deck Overlay

When I came to fit the main deck printed overlay, I ran into another problem where I found it to be considerably oversize in width but I was unable to trim it to size because of the printed curved margin and side planks. Eventually I replaced it completely and re-drew it up using a very fine black waterproof drawing pen.

## Paint and Hull Markings

The hull was painted using grey car spray primer, satin black and red oxide primer, with a coat of matt varnish for protection. The weathering back was done by using a simple method of scraping some rust powder off any well rusted metal and applying it to the model with a small artists paintbrush. Humbrol paint no.113 was then airbrushed on very lightly to give a finish that I don't think could be any more authentic than by using real rust.

I purchased a pair of brass etched name plates 45 mm x 10 mm and attached them to the stern end of the superstructure as

floats. The Carley float was shaped from block balsa using the vac form as a pattern.

Again, because of the weight of the metal castings on the cranes used for the floats, I decided to use Plasticard by laminating two pieces of 2 mm together. The two tapered bases for the crane were missing along with some mis-shapen parts, so this unit was also scratch built. The four gallows presented no problem being built from the printed Plasticard sheet provided and looking very good on completion. The various lockers and water tanks were made up using solid wood blocks that I sanded well and sealed, using thin Plasticard to represent the panels.

After building the two raised platforms each side of the superstructure, situated on the main deck, their exact positions on the deck were pure guesswork as the plans seemed to contradict the photographs in the manual. After some thought, I decided to go along with the photographs.

## Boat Deck

Again there was a certain amount of guesswork in this part of the build. The plans show the forward end of the boat deck with three stanchions and then the davit base, but the photograph shows four stanchions with one return stanchion and then the davit base. Which one is correct I don't know.

The ship's boat was made up according to the instructions and this finished into a very neat little unit. To save a little more weight I changed the metal oars for dowel and Plasticard.

The information on the supports and beams for the Carley float was quite vague with the pictures not giving much of a guide to the problem. Again, this needed a certain amount of guesswork.

After cleaning up the GRP funnel it went together well but the holes for the rigging lines and steam pipes need to be drilled out first. The method I used to attach the funnel to the superstructure was to insert a piece of suitable ply to the inside base of the funnel and bolt it to the deck using two 4 mm bolts. This allows it to be removed at a future date for conversion to steam if required.

## Splinter Mats

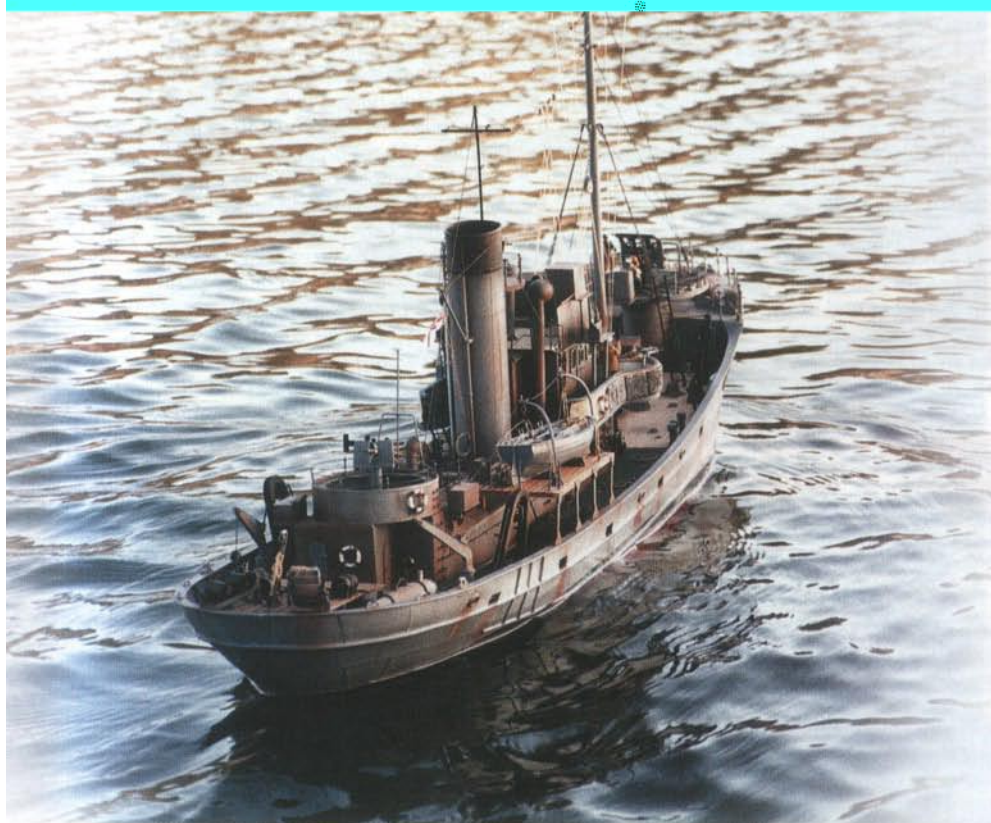
The splinter mats situated on the front of the bridge were made up from a combination of the vac formed parts and DAS air-drying clay. For the curved mats, roll the clay out on to a piece of glass with a piece of dowel rather like rolling out pastry. This needs to be rolled to approximately 2 mm thick and cut into squares of 25 mm, then make a slight indent diagonally before moulding the clay to represent canvas. The vac forms were used for the straight mats on the compass platform deck. Believe me, this is much easier to do than explain. Let the clay mats cure, which may take a few days, paint them matt grey and attach them to the model.

shown on the plan. The pennant number, ensign flag and bow depth markings were supplied by B.E.C.C. Accessories, and when these were applied it certainly started to bring the Sir Lancelot to life.

## Vac Formed Styrene Sheets

With a kit of this price, I was surprised with the use of the vac formed sheet supplied and I encountered quite a few problems in this area. I can understand the need to use them for the splinter mats on the bridge because of the top weights, but for the Carley float and Oropesa floats I think perhaps a resin or similar casting would have been a better choice. I failed miserably building them in styrene so it was back to some scratch building, where I tapered some suitable size dowel and used Plasticard scraps for the fins of the Oropesa





Round Table class minesweeper

**SCALE:** 1:32  
**LENGTH:** 56" (1402 mm)  
**BEAM:** 10" (255 mm)  
**DISPLACEMENT:** 45 lb  
 (23.5 kg)  
**UK KIT PRICE:** £525

**MANUFACTURER:**  
 Mountfleet Models  
 79 Holmfirth Road  
 Meltham  
 Huddersfield  
 HD7 3DA  
 Tel./Fax: 01484 851569

*Sir Lancelot sets off on her first voyage*

## Radio Equipment and Electrics

For the radio control, I used my Futaba Skysport four function transmitter with one channel for Electronize ESC and one channel for the rudder through a standard Futaba servo. The main drive motor is an M.F.A. Marlin working off a 12 volt, 6 amp gel battery, which is turning a 70 mm four bladed brass prop from Simon at the Prop Shop. The other electronics consisted of an Action two way switcher unit for controlling a ships bell and fog horn, the sound coming from two small speakers situated under the two forward companion ways, which is why you will notice the two doors being left open. All the sound units were again by Action and I must say that I was very impressed by how realistic the sound was when completed.

## Ballasting and Trimming

Ballasting the Sir Lancelot had to be carried out on my small outside fish pond because unfortunately my state of the art indoor development and testing facility, the bath, was just too small to accommodate the 56" long hull. Every builder has their own way of adding ballast but I used lead shot and small re-sealable plastic bags,

which allowed me to mould the bags into the shape of the hull keeping the weight as low and as far back to the stern as possible. For the bow weight, I used sheet lead in a ply box and slid it forward between the two timber guides that I glued in as mentioned previously. This was made removable, as is the battery for ease of transport.

## On The Water

At last a dry and sunny day arrived and it was off to my local club water at Margam Park. With the battery in place and everything ready to go, I had to place 6 lb of lead in the box that slid into the guides already installed in the bows. This brought the boat down to near the waterline, and just a little more lead was used to fine trim.

Models of this size always look impressive on the water because of their weight and displacement and the Sir Lancelot is no exception. I was delighted with the way she answered to the rudder control and her overall handling capabilities, with no further adjustments needed.

To sum up, with the wealth of detail and its sound system, on the water Sir Lancelot must be one of the most realistic models I have seen.

## Conclusion

In some respects I have been somewhat critical and disappointed with this particular kit, which at around £525 is rather costly. I appreciate that the Sir Lancelot is not aimed at the novice but even so, I would say that it could be quite a challenge to the more experienced builder. Some of the materials I changed out of personal choice but there were others that I had to change out of necessity, such as some of the metal castings that were of poor quality and had to be replaced or re-made. In fairness to Mountfleet, they do state in the manual that the builder can change some fittings for lighter materials and they also replaced the poorly formed fittings promptly and without charge.

The two sheet plans were very good and comprehensive but I found the building manual lacked clarity and direction occasionally.

Over the years I have built a number of Mountfleet models and have found them a pleasure to build, with the finished models always an eye catcher at the waterside or in an exhibition. Having dealt with the problems I had, on completion the Sir Lancelot is no exception and has built into a handsome, highly detailed model of an armed minesweeper that would grace any museum or exhibition. **mmf**