Geoff Coughlin's scale modelling now magazine

Full Review

Revell

Handley Page Halifax B.Mk.I, II, GR II

1:72 scale

by

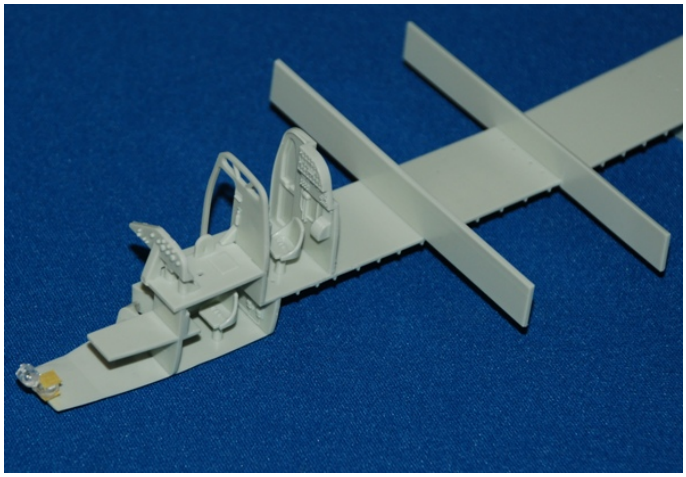
Geoff Coughlin
(May 2012)
(144 images, 70 A4 pages, 5,348 words)

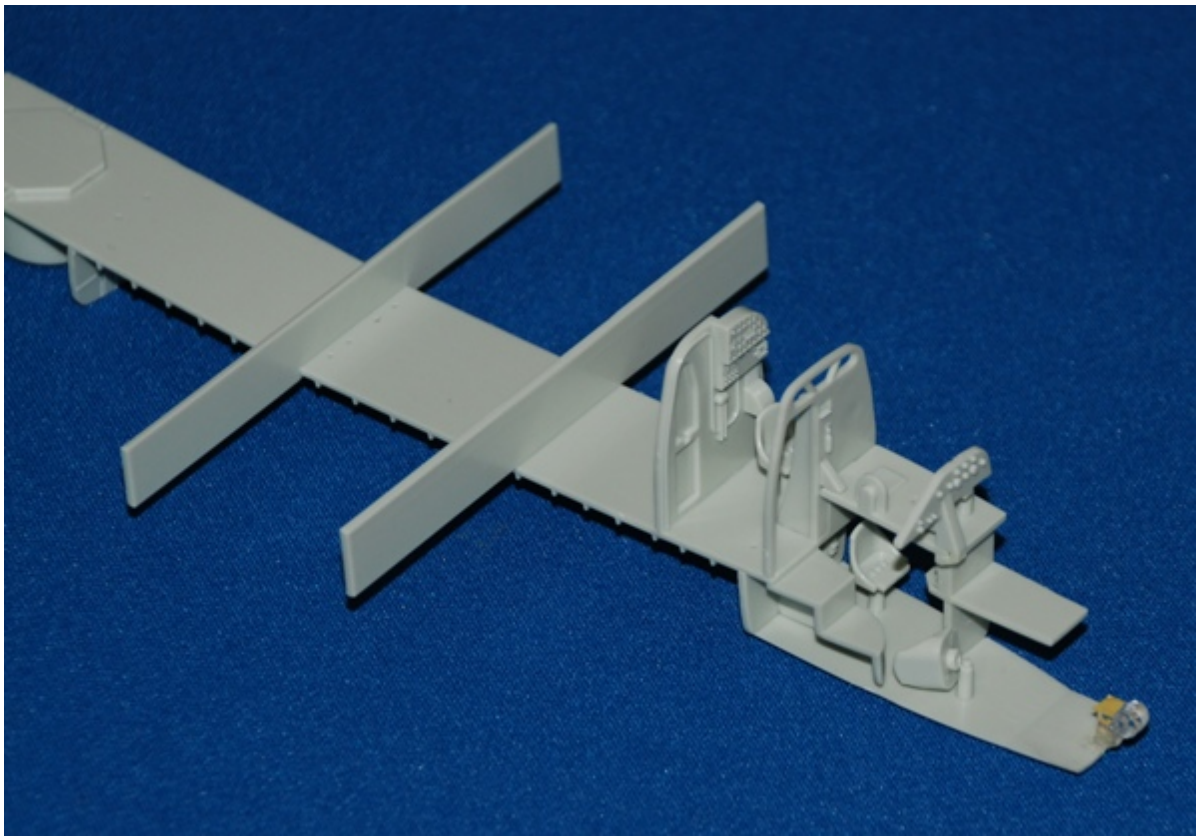
Halifax B.Mk.II, JP246, FS-B No.148 Squadron RAF, operating on long-haul bombing and supply missions like Brindisi, Italy where, sadly this aircraft crashed on 8 October 1944

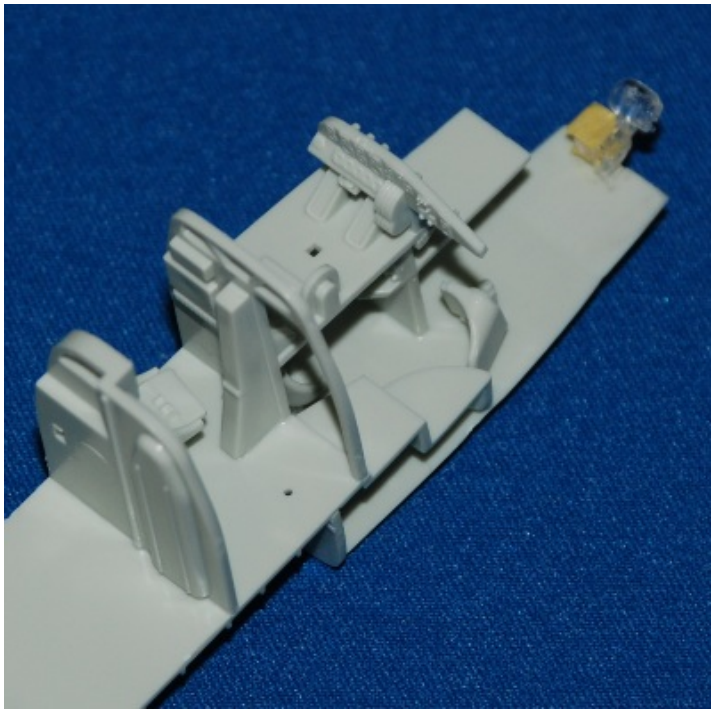
Our thanks to Revell for supplying our review sample. Revell model kits are available from all good toy and model retailers. For further information visit www.revell.eu or email ukbranch@revell.de

The Revell Kit…

Hopefully you've had a chance to read my in-box review of this all-new-tool kit in Here Now? If not, take a look – this is an impressive new kit of an important British WWII 'heavy'. Years ago I built the old Matchbox kit and still remember filling those trenches that were typical of panel line detail from that manufacturer then... but this is now, and Revell has released a state of the art 1:72 scale Handley Page Halifax. Let's build it!

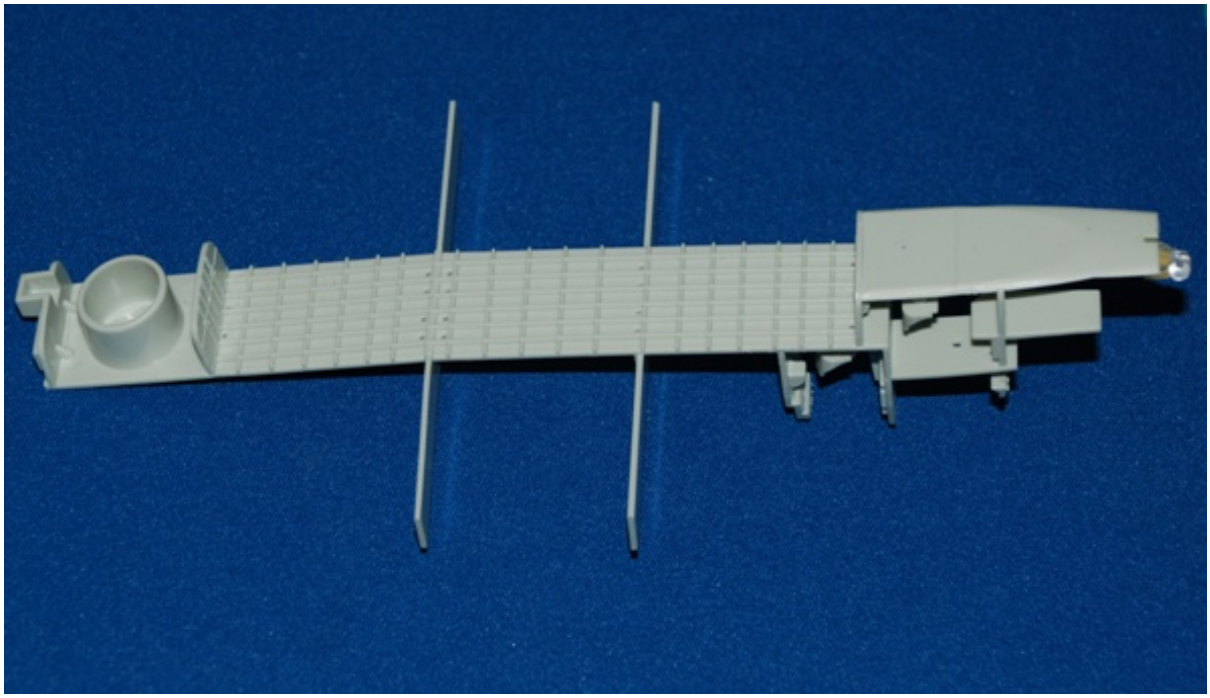


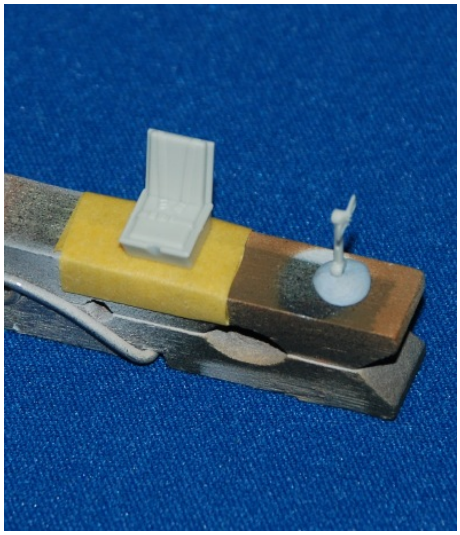


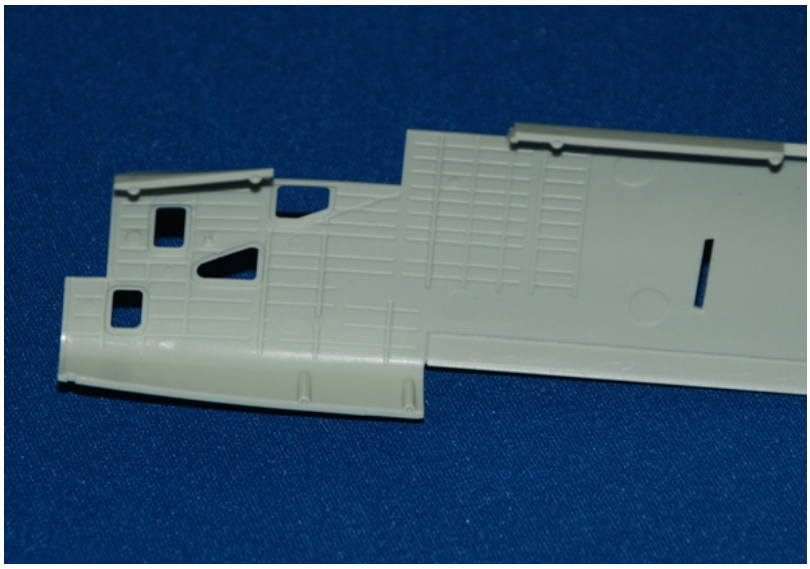


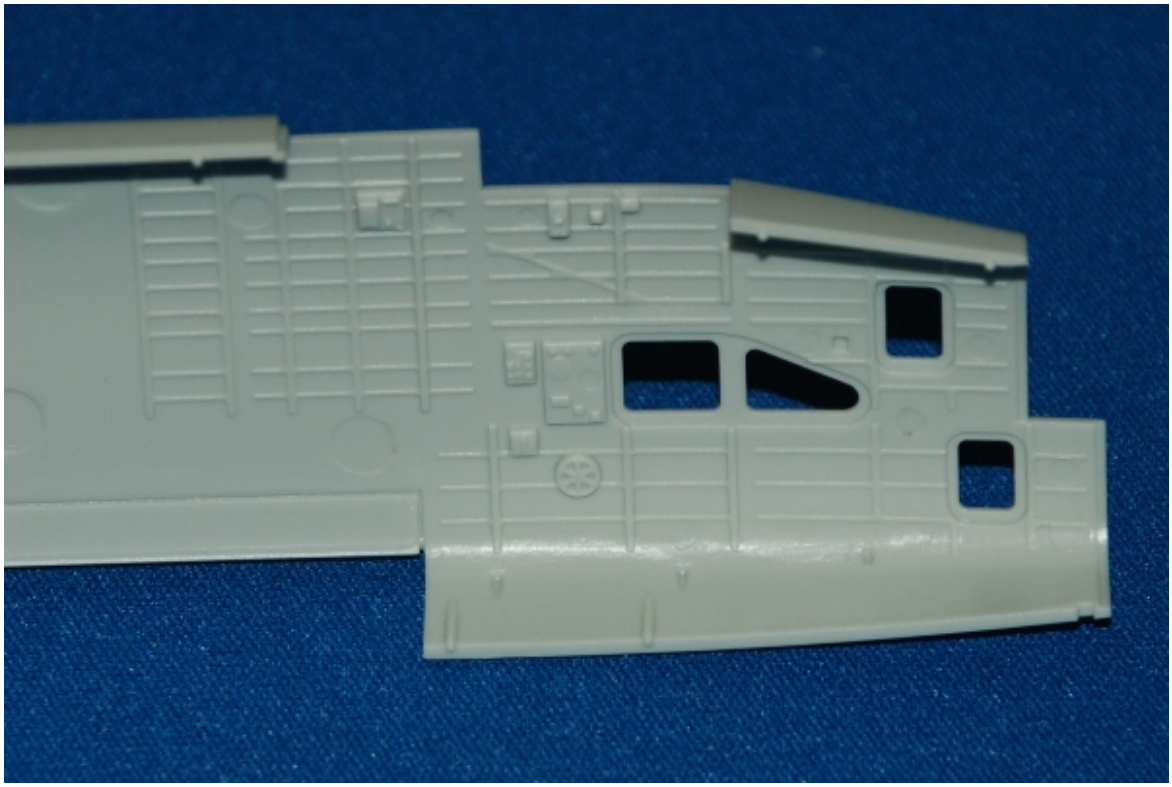
My plan...

Simple really – build this new kit straight from the box and highlight any problems along the way and suggest any fixes that will help. Having said that, it looks like an impressive bit of tooling overall and some test fitting, like the fuselage halves and cockpit parts is impressively precise.





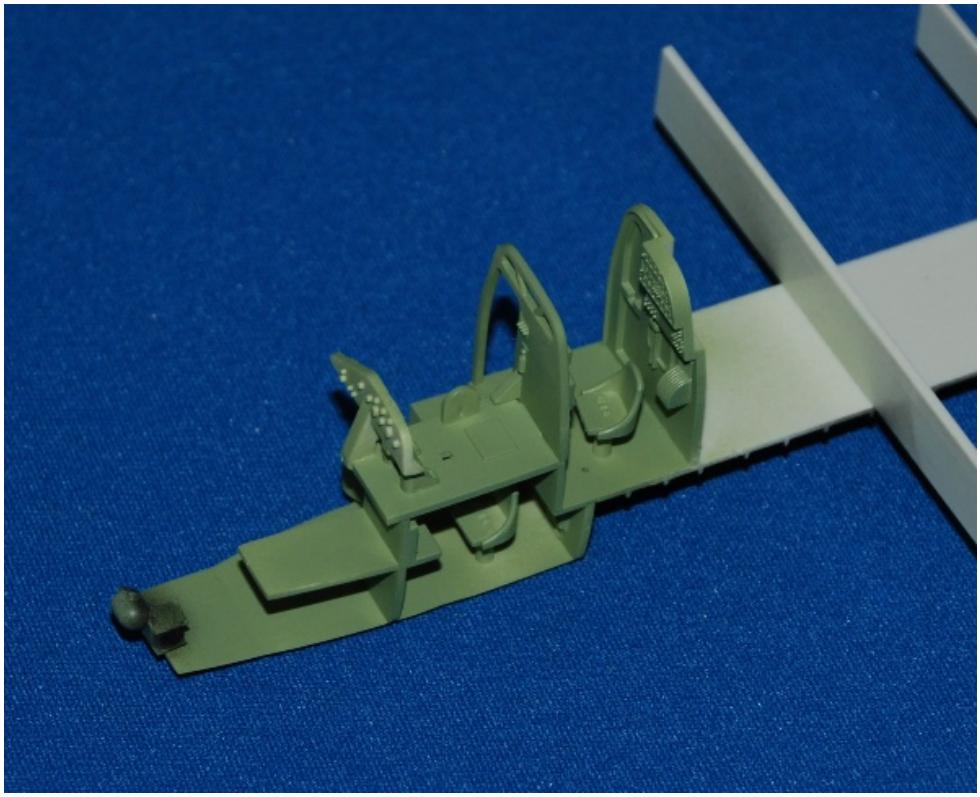




Cockpit detail...

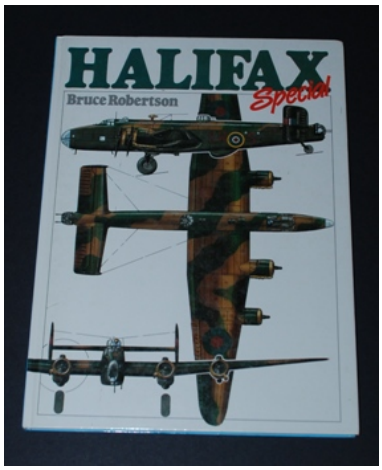
There's plenty of detail in the front fuselage and I've included some images here that show most of it. I've been caught out plenty of times adding lots of great extra detail only to discover that precious little can be seen. Some nice raised detail adorns the instrument panels and this will dry brush well later after I've sprayed the basic interior colours of dark grey (Nato Black in this case) and RAF Interior Grey-Green.

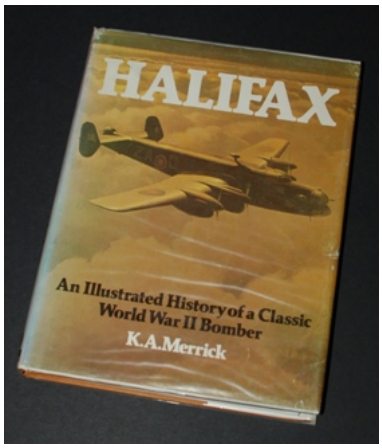
I've taken the view that details like the seat belts and leather cushions, as well as the pilot, navigator and engineer's panels can all be painted after attaching to the aircraft floor. Speaking of which the underside of the fuselage floor doubles as the roof for the bomb bay and this has some good ribbed detail. I've sprayed that here roughly in Nato Black and will ghost of some lighter grey shortly to the bomb bay as well as the fuselage side walls before dry brushing with even lighter grey. When the fuselage is sealed up it will be very dark in there and we'll need something lighter than black if you're to see anything at all!



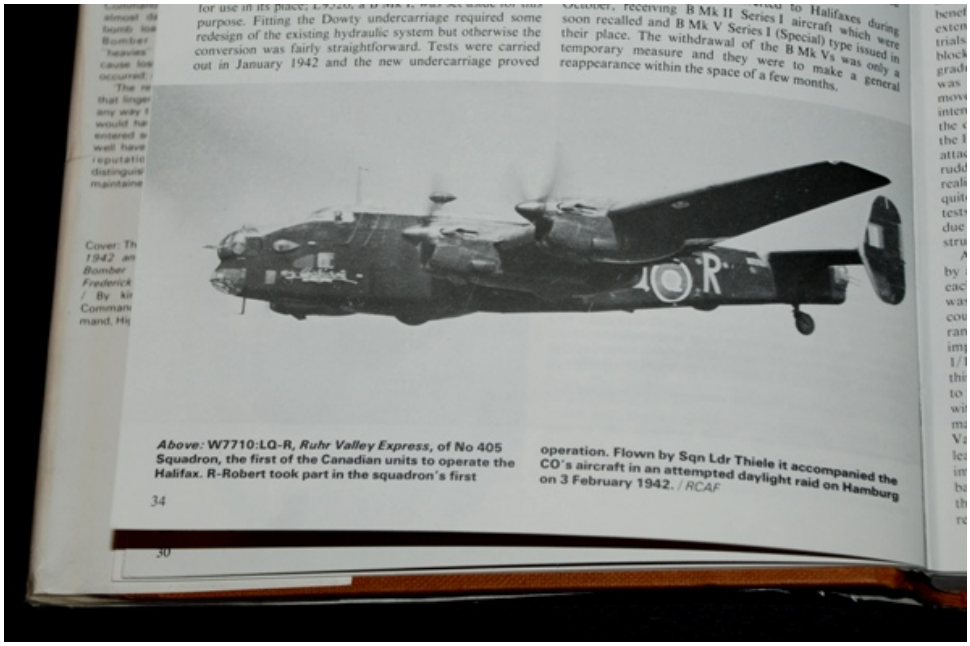
Before I go much further with this project I wanted to let you know about the 3 main reference sources I'm using for this project. They are:

- Halifax, Second to None by Victor Bingham
- Halifax Special by Bruce Robertson and
- Halifax, an illustrated history of a classic WWII bomber by K.A. (Ken) Merrick

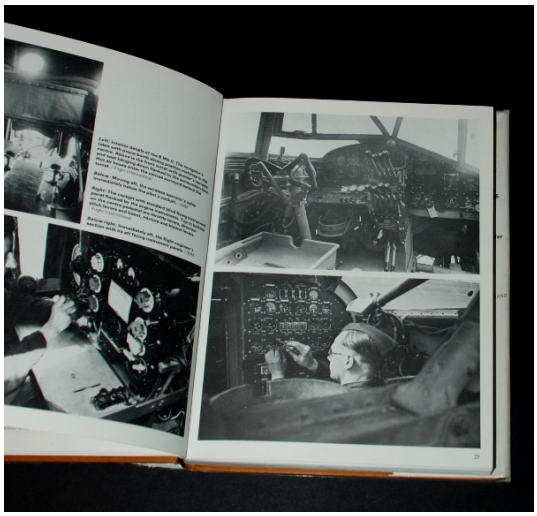


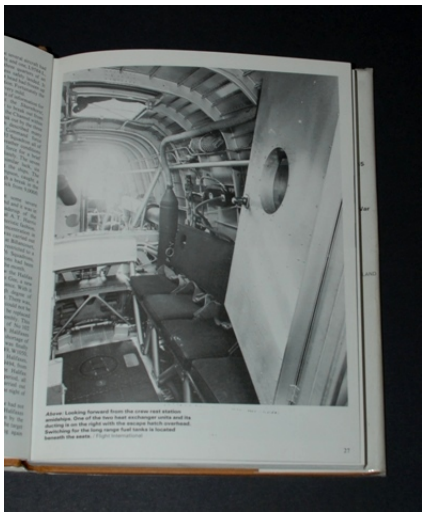


The last of these is especially useful as it has a couple of images of the very aircraft featured on Revell's decal sheet: W7710 LQ-R "Ruhr Valley Express" of No. 405 Squadron which was the first of the Canadian units to operate the Handley Page Halifax.



In addition, this great title (if you can still get hold of it...) also has some excellent internal images showing the cockpit and those enormous throttle levers as well as other internals.

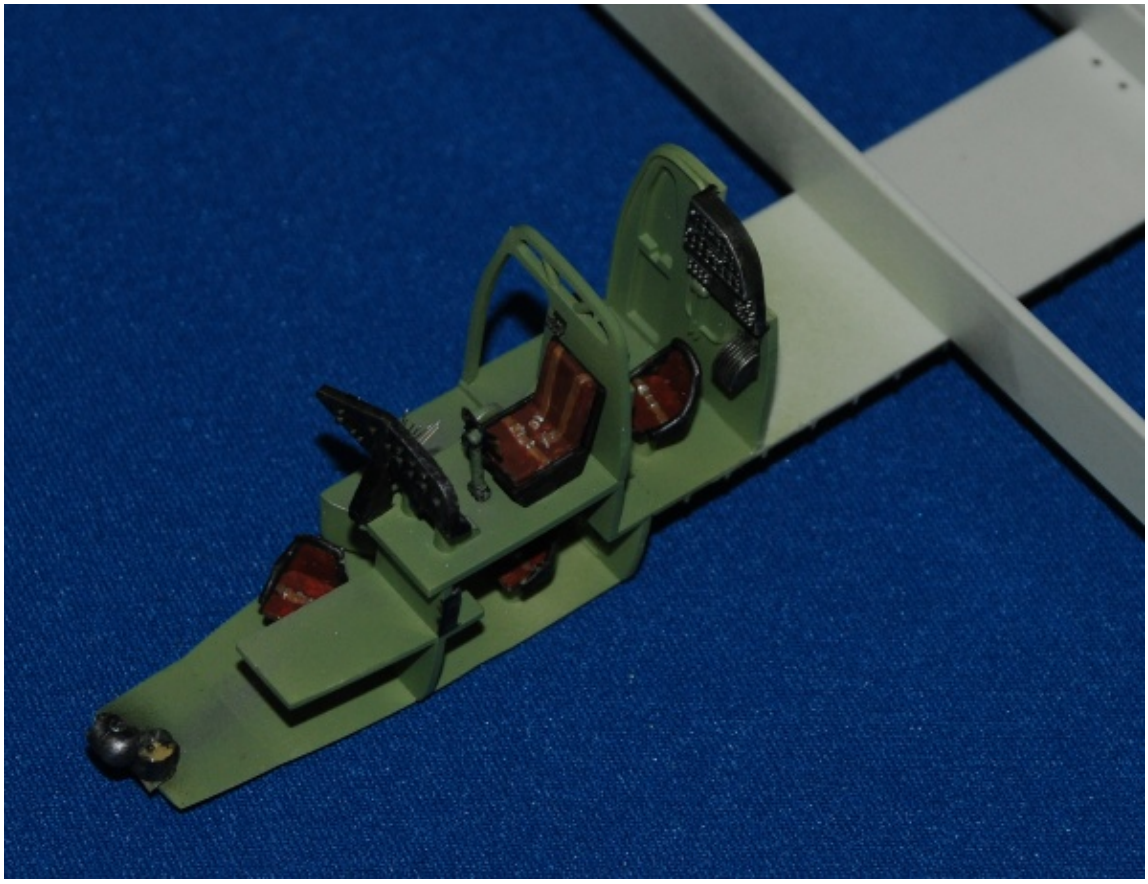


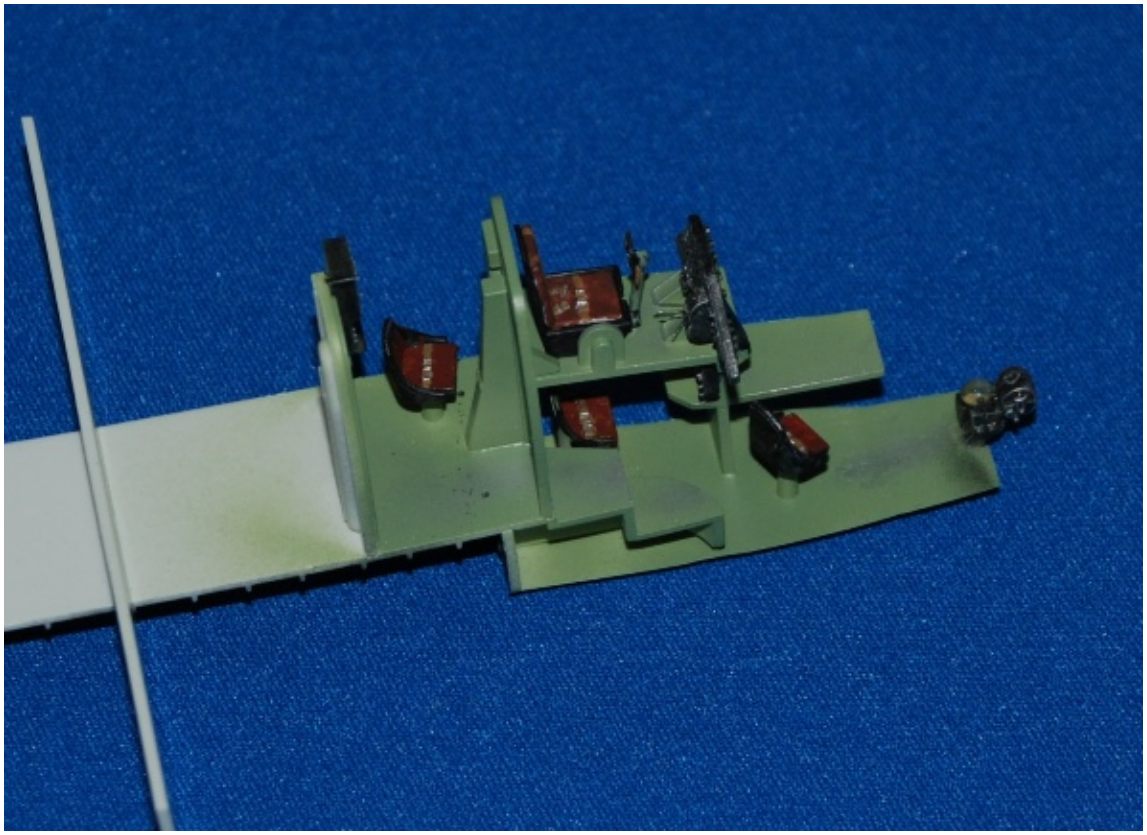


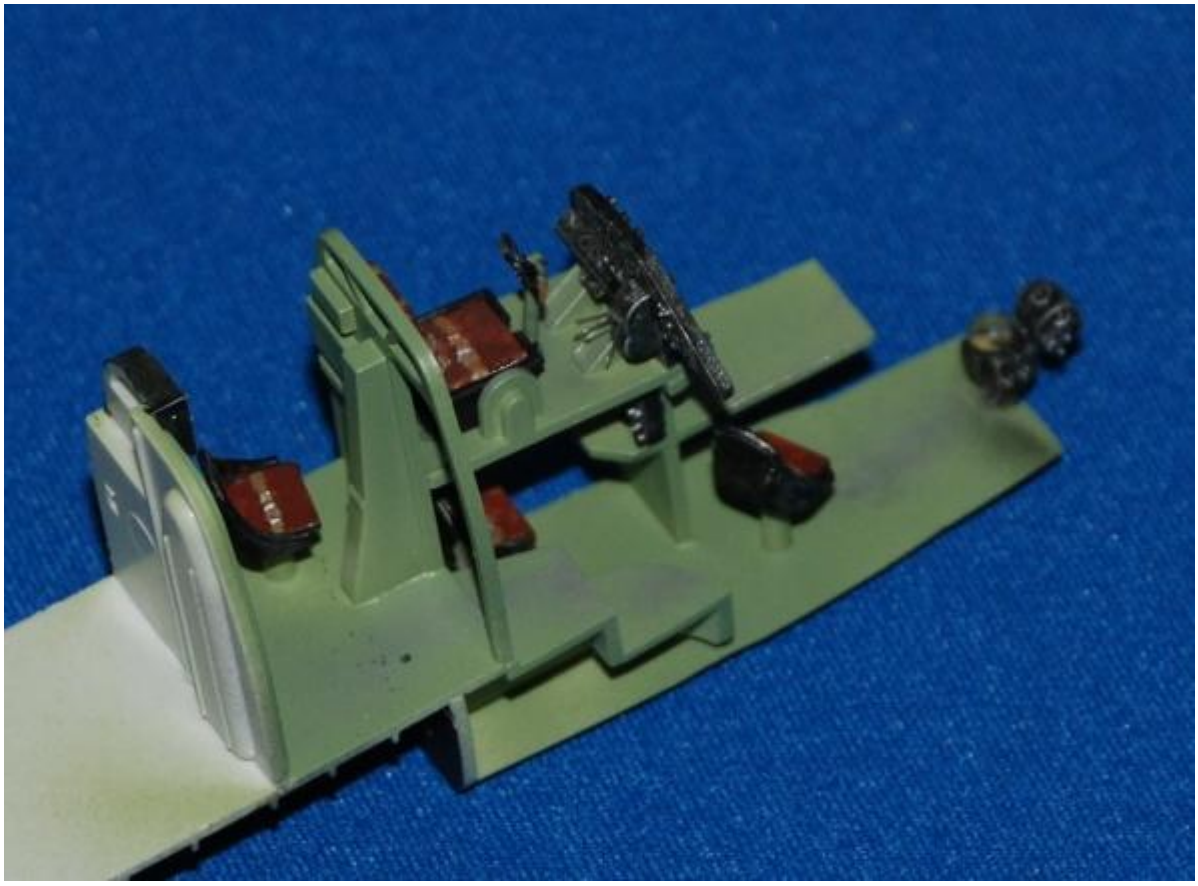
Back to the cockpit and fuselage...

As you can see the seats have now been painted as well as the instrument panels and other small details like the switches and so on at the very front of the right fuselage. This build is to almost totally from the box and apart from the aerial 'wire' the only thing that I just had to add are those developing throttle levers protruding from the main instrument panel. As you can see there are eleven of them and so I expect some are to do with other functions but they are missing from the kit and will be visible on the completed model. So... out with the fuse wire and new additions are cut to length and fixed in place carefully using cyano. It's a bit fiddly but the natural metal of the fuse wire can stay unpainted as you'll

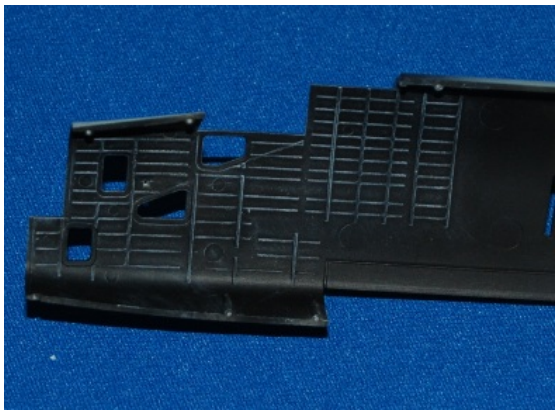
want them to be seen and light will reflect better of them as is. A small blob of paint goes on top to finish them off.

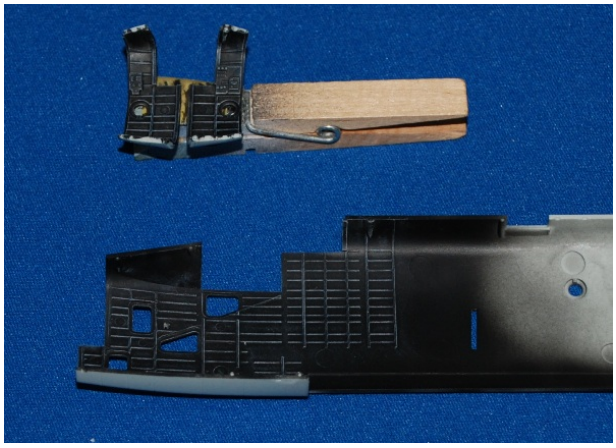






Windows in...

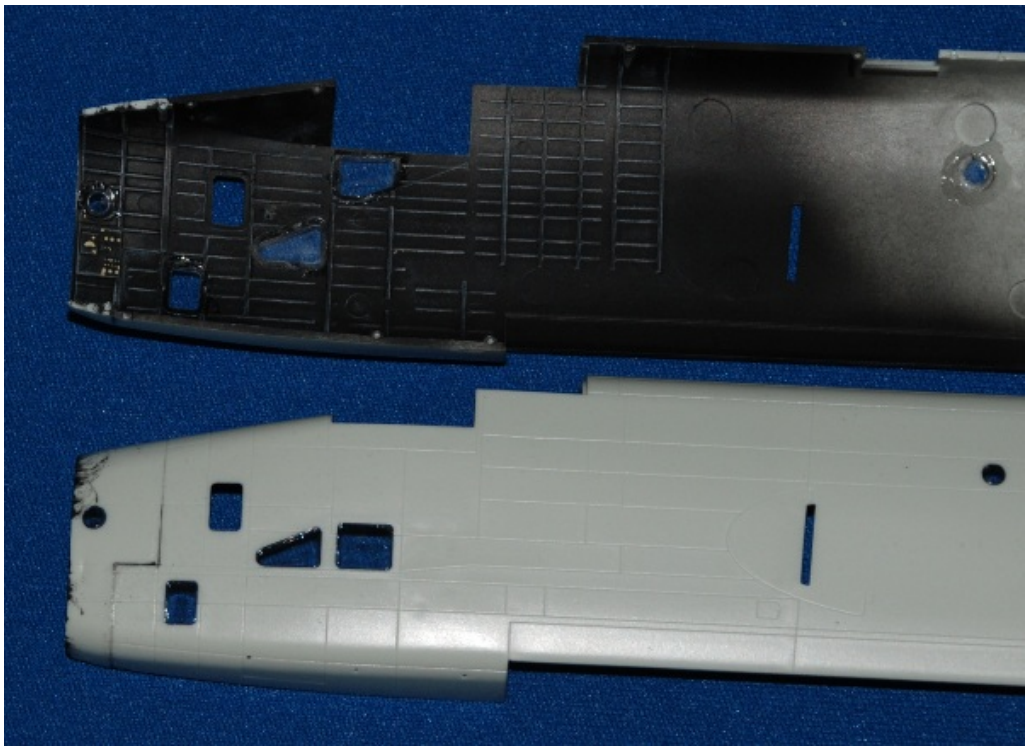


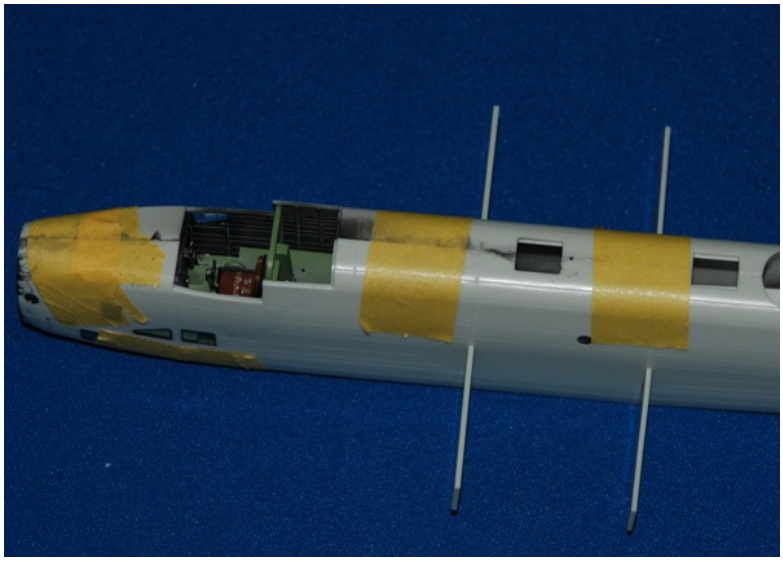


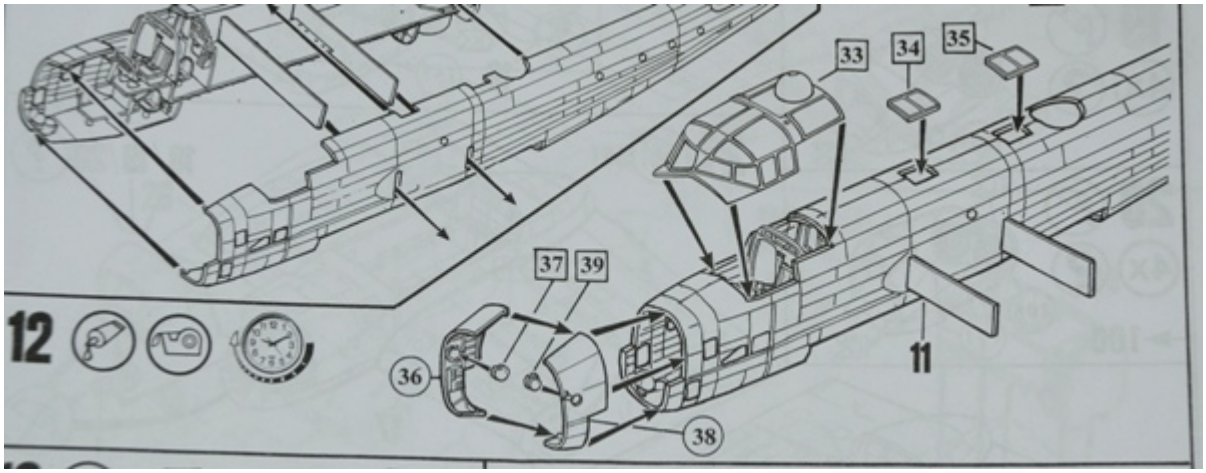
The fit of the clear parts is superb and I just added some Gaitor Glue to the recesses and dropped them in. You can see in these images that the glue dries clear and bonds well, so hopefully they should remain secure for the rest of the build. Nato Black (dark grey) is used for the interior for a decent scale black effect, but you could probably go a shade or two lighter still – your call.

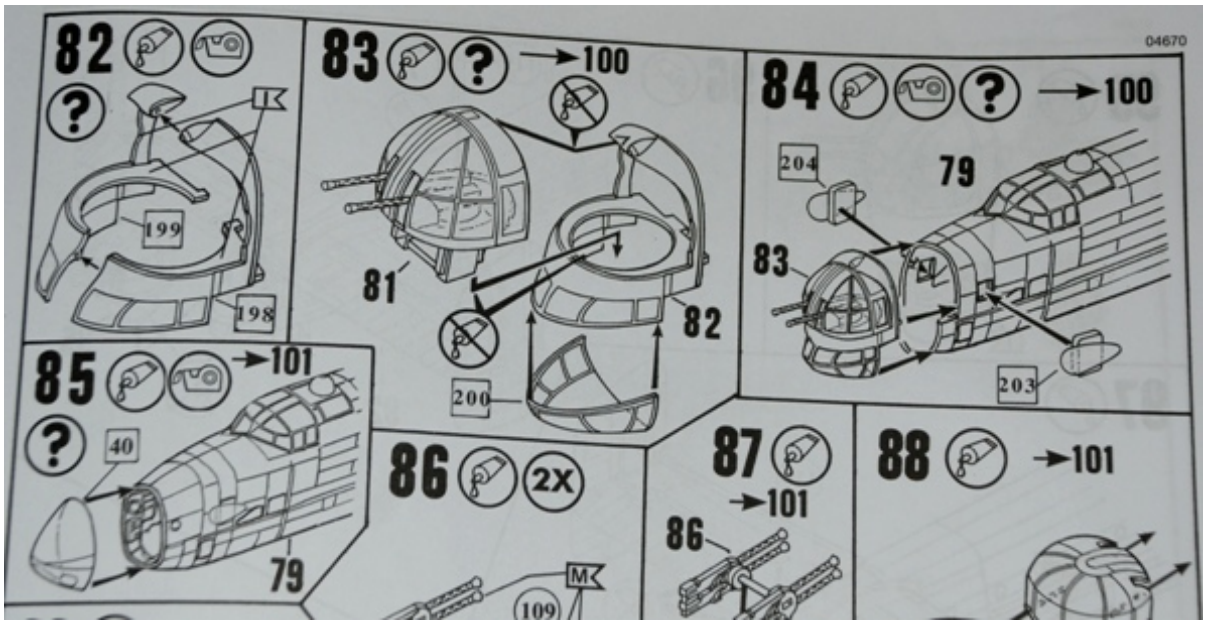
Close up that fuselage...

You can see here that I have attached the two separate forward side sections of the fuselage to their respective fuselage halves and the fit is excellent. I reckon this is safer than joining the two small sections and trying to (in effect) add a nose cone that may, or may not fit so well. You can see here that the fuselage has closed very well and is set aside to dry.







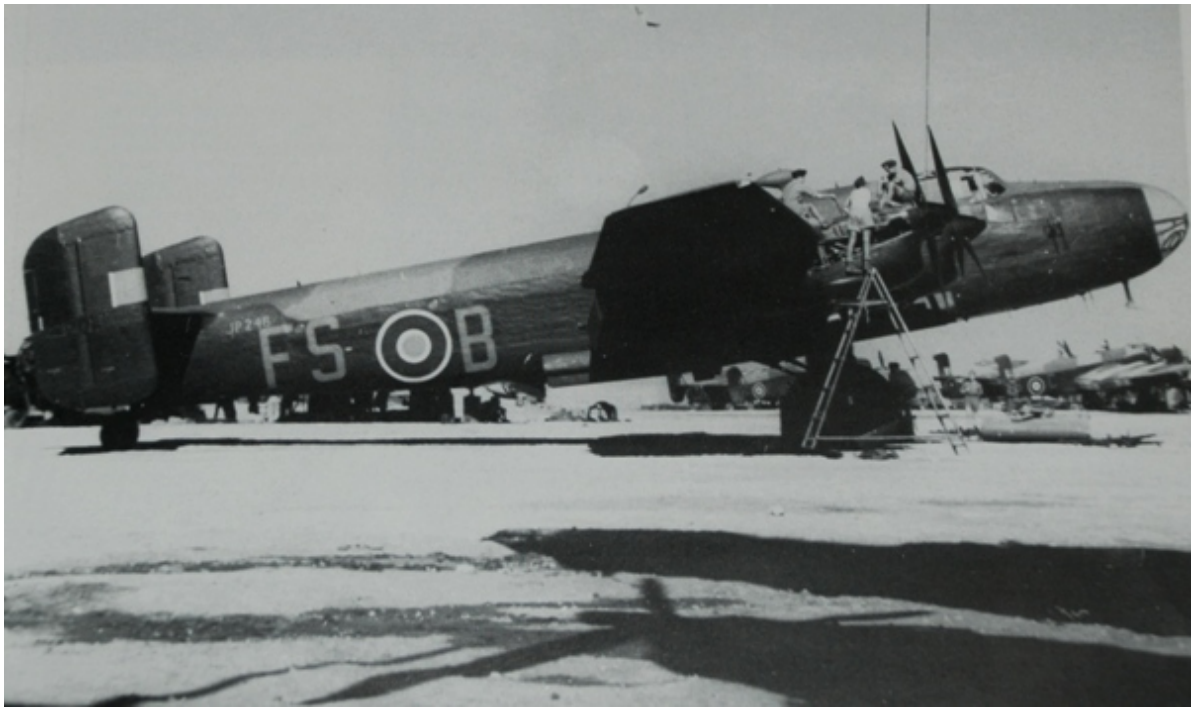


Forward fuselage...

Here's your first tip – make sure that you decide exactly what aircraft you are going to build! I was merrily following the instructions and added the forward fuselage side sections at Stage 12, only to realise after the glue had set that this is of course only applicable to the glazed nose – not an aircraft with the nose turret arrangement. How annoying is that? Ok, hands up, I should have been paying closer attention but in my mind (and maybe defence) I thought (simplistically as it turned out) that the nose turret assembly would be added later to what I had assembled – wrong! A simple warning in the instructions wouldn't have gone amiss though.

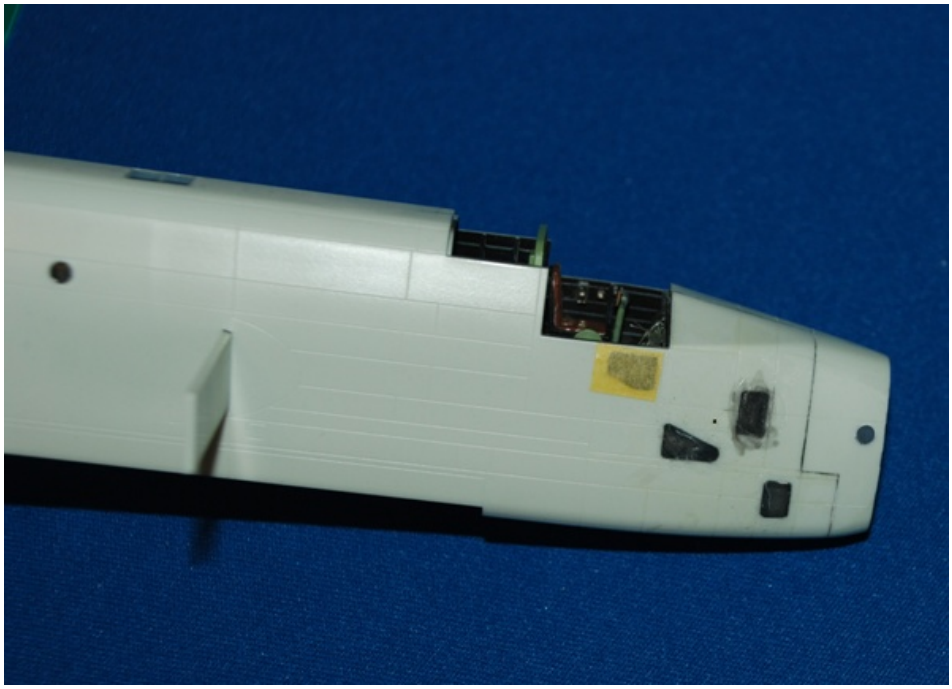
Ok, so now I better find an aircraft that I want to build... from what's available, albeit I am determined to finish my Halifax in a Night and Brown/Green camo scheme. Hmmm.

Change of tack...

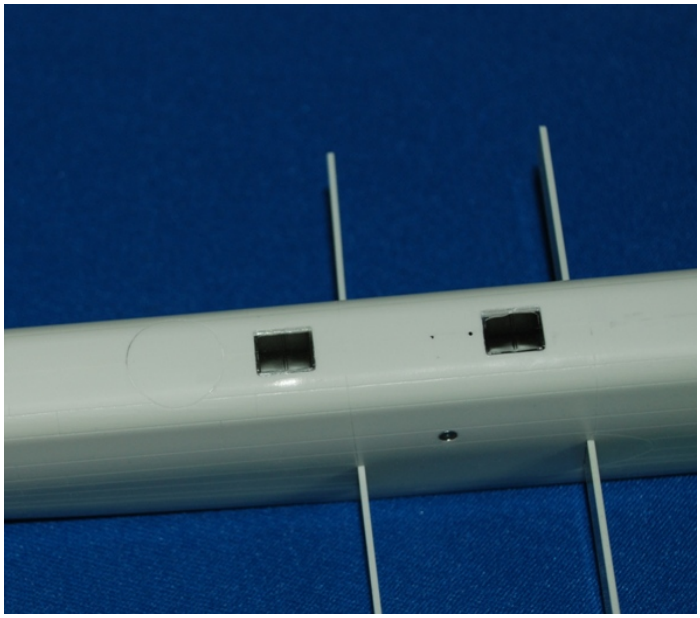


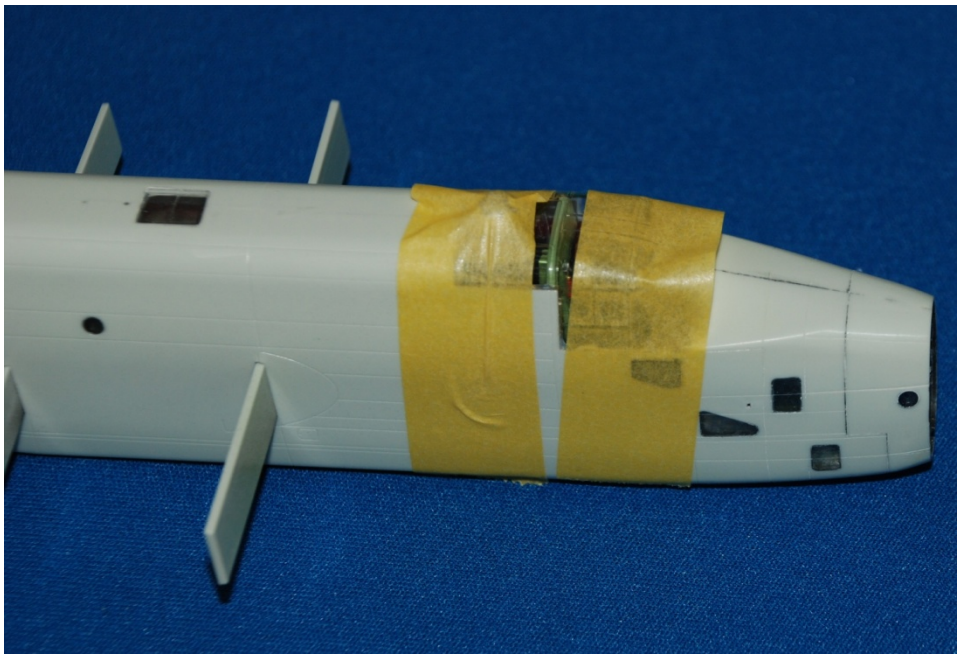
From the references it became apparent that an interesting subject would be a B.Mk.II operating overseas and long-haul ops such as this No. 148 Squadron B.II JP246 that in fact crashed at Brindisi, Italy on 8 October 1944. Note the rectangular tail fins, lack of a mid-upper turret, Messier undercarriage units, engine intake design, glazed nose and distinctive forward side fuselage glazing arrangement. Right, I'll sort some decals from those supplied in the kit and my spares box later, but this is my subject from now on in. Let's see how we go from here...

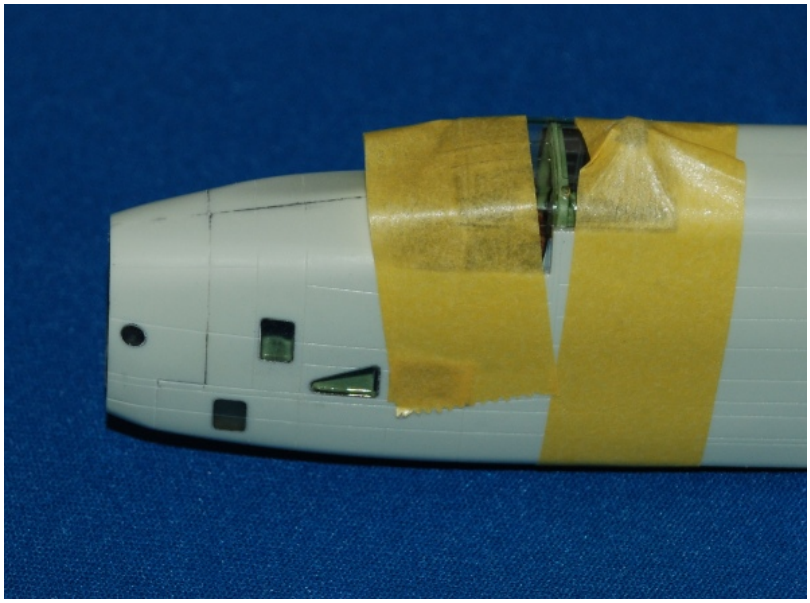
Forward fuselage glazing...



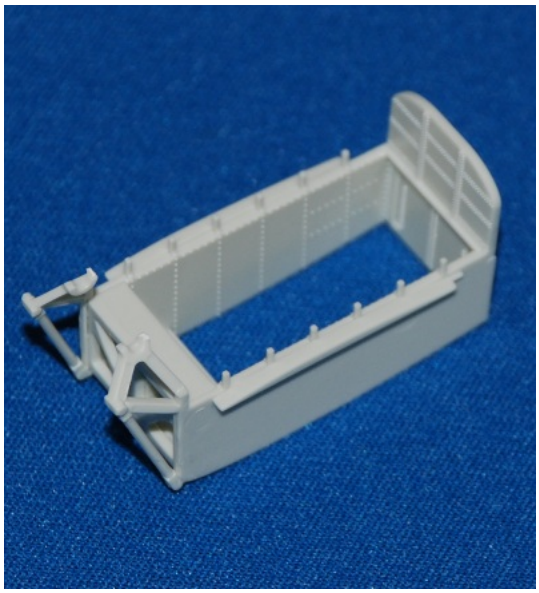
Given this subject, some of the windows installed earlier need to be filled and smoothed into the surrounding plastic. By adding the clear parts I had originally intended to leave off the corrections are simple and easy to achieve. Using cyano will help as the panel lines need to be replaced across the faired in clear parts. The remaining joins were sanded and made good, then, using sticky Dymo tape all damaged or missing panel lines were scribed (see your Techniques Bank for how to do this – there's an HD video to help too). The two clear panels in the roof were also added and I used Gator glue for this (it dries clear and doesn't fog the clear parts). Additionally, the canopy can be tested at this stage and it fitted very well, just like all the clear parts – their fit is perfect. The canopy can then be secured, again using Gator glue. You can see it is secured firmly while it dries overnight using Tamiya tape.

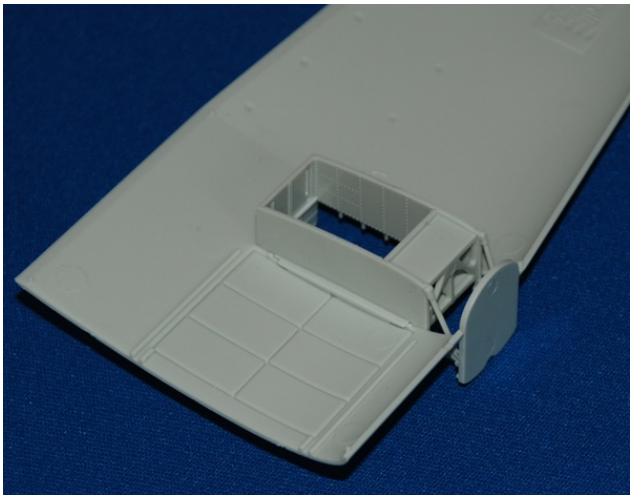


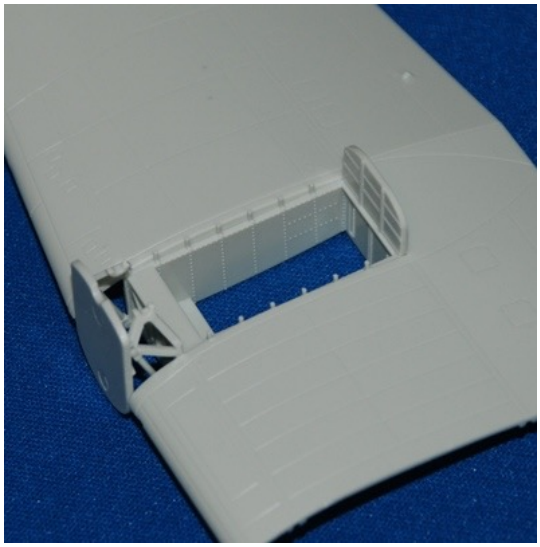




Wheel bays, wings and engine nacelles...

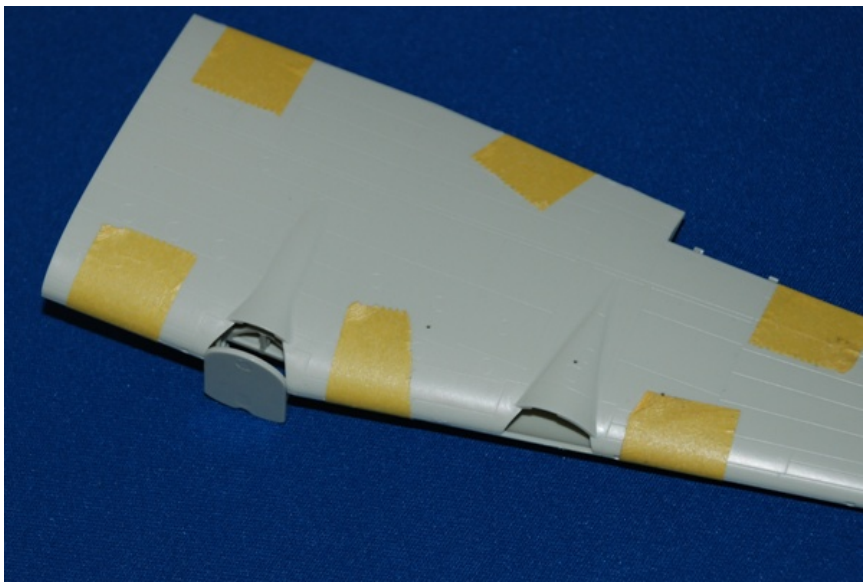






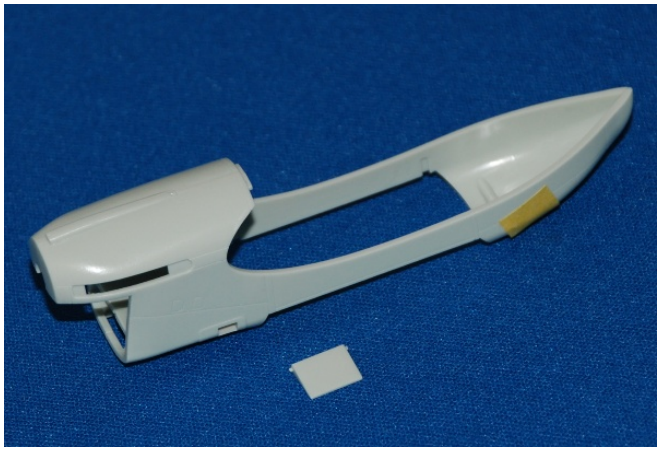
The wheel bay assemblies are straightforward and a good fit, all parts needed to go into each wing just clicking into place. There's some nice detail in there that should look good on the finished model. Remember to drill out the holes indicated in the instructions for the six fuel jettison pipes (3 under each wing) plus the small holes for the small parts above and around each engine nacelle.

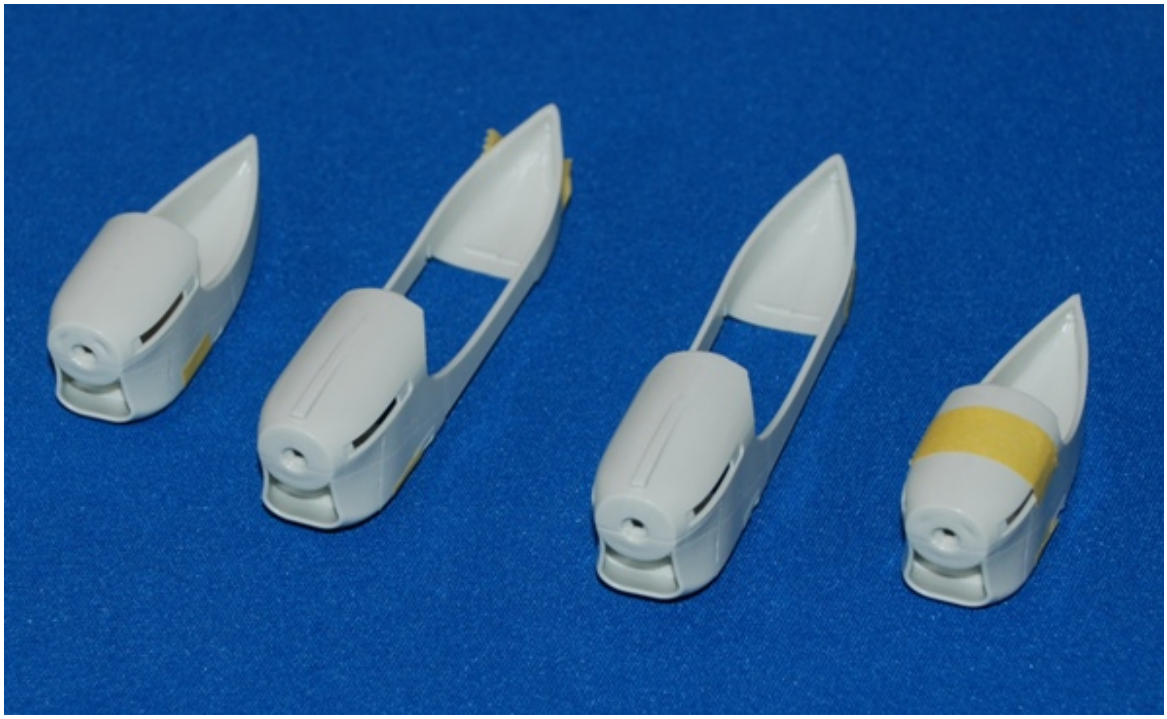
The wings can now be joined and glued – again a very good fit although the training inner wing edges have two surfaces that don't mate perfectly square. No great shakes with some tape to bind it all together and plenty of liquid poly cement. The wing assemblies are set aside to dry.



The engine nacelles are an excellent fit to the wing following some dry test-fitting – both inner and outboard nacelles. You do need to decide at this point what intake arrangement you are going to need for the aircraft that you intend building. Revell has done well including all three options applicable to various Merlin engine arrangements. From reading around the references it seems that all three types

were widely used and for my specific aircraft I need Parts 161 and 162 for the intakes. These fit extremely well and already I can see that only a little sanding will be needed to make good the joins.





I have left the nacelles to dry thoroughly and will sand and prep them ahead of attaching to the wings later. So onto the elevators...

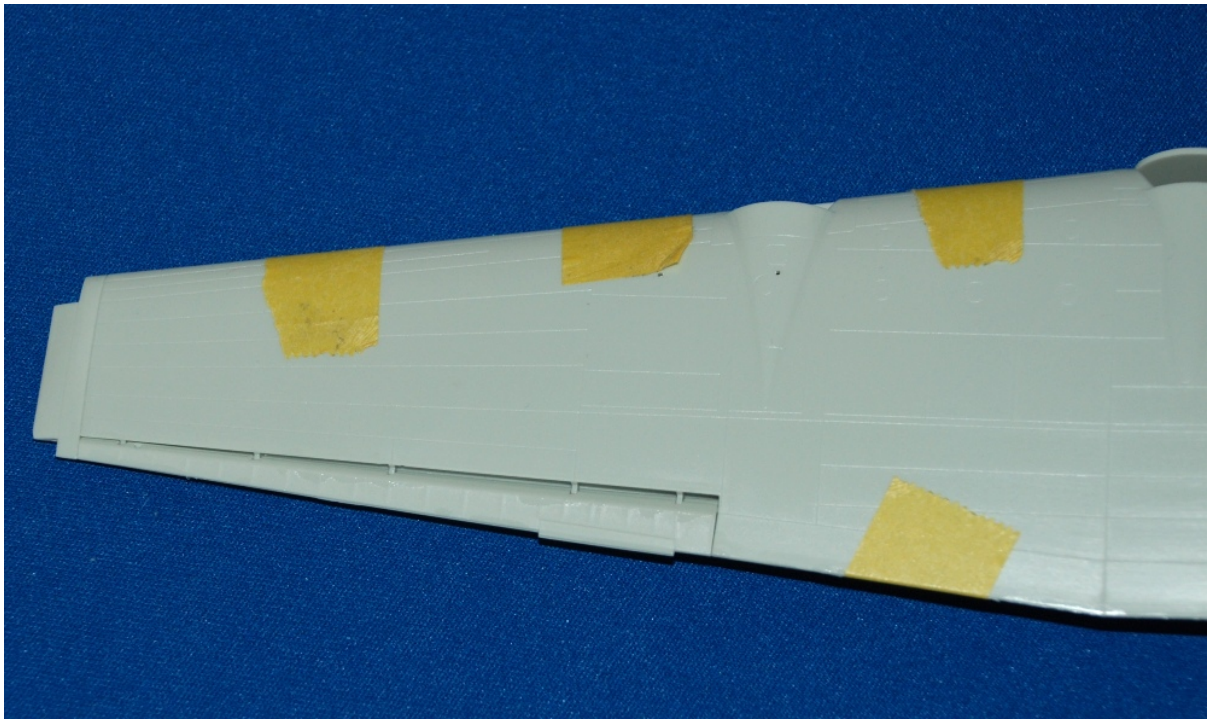
What's this?

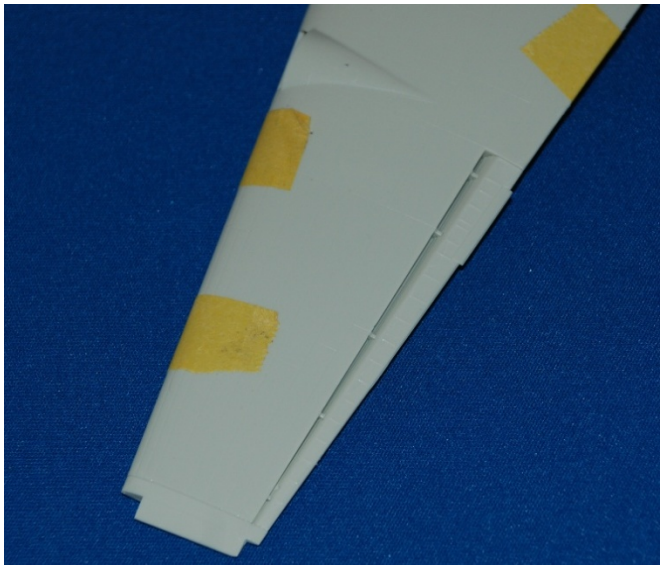
Stages 41-42 see you adding the outboard elevators to the wing sections – oh dear... we have a serious problem here I think. Revell has decided to make these parts movable – all a bit gimmicky really and more significantly they seem to have moulded the elevators incorrectly with a large gap all along the front leading edge. What's that all about? I have now trawled through dozens and dozens of images of Halifax aircraft – Mk.IIs and IIIs and nowhere can I find a single one

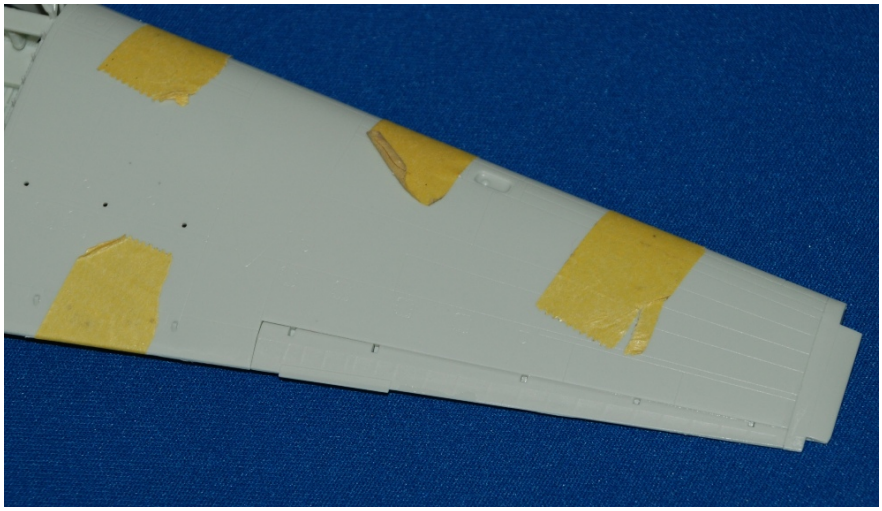
where the huge gap that exists on the Revell wing is evident. This seems bizarre, as the fit of the parts is so good – check out the underside – flawless. I kept thinking I had made a c—k up here, but I don't think it's me this time.

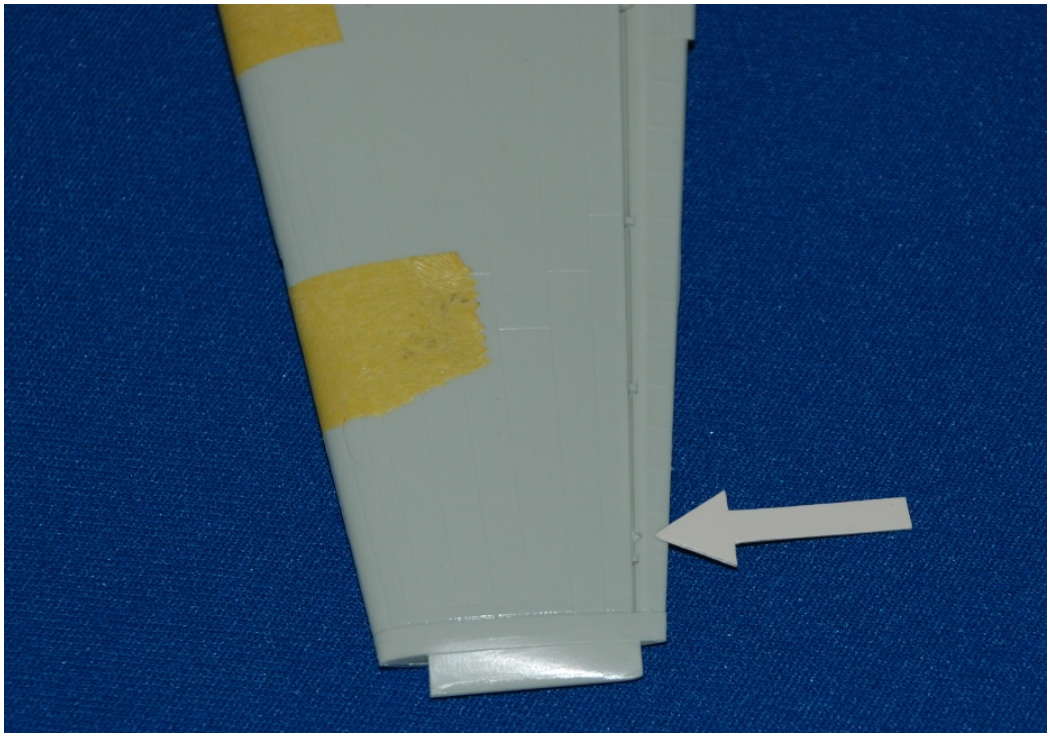
I have included two images here to show you the elevator from an aerial view – see what I mean? No gap at all on the front edge of the outboard elevators.

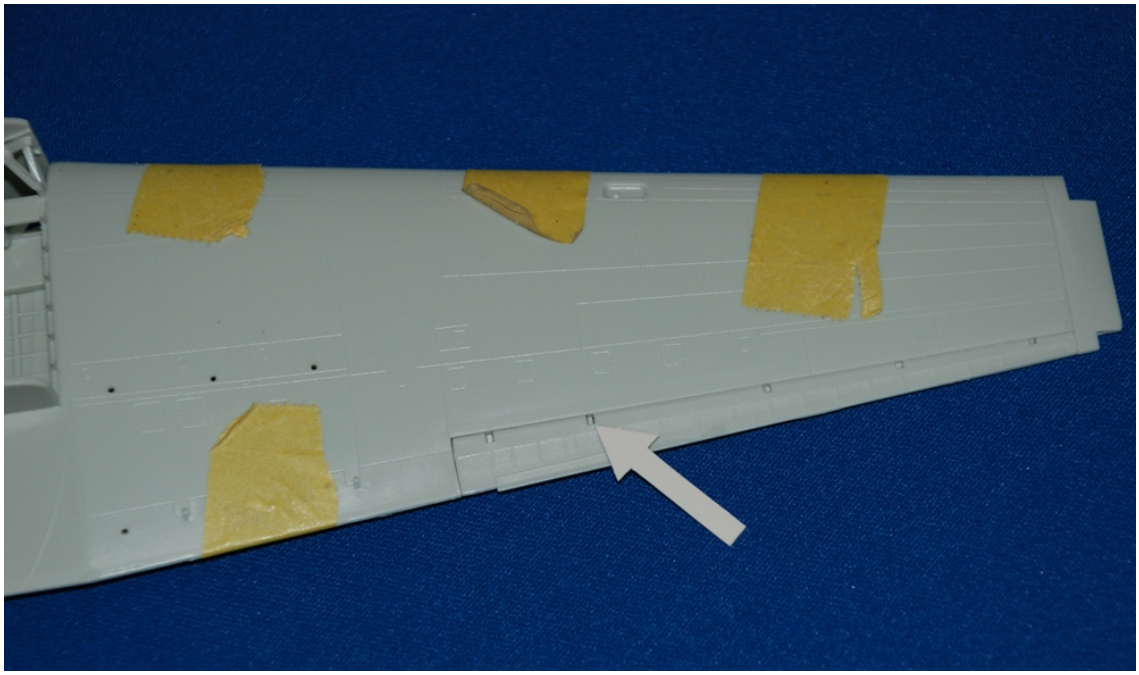
Out with the Milliput!



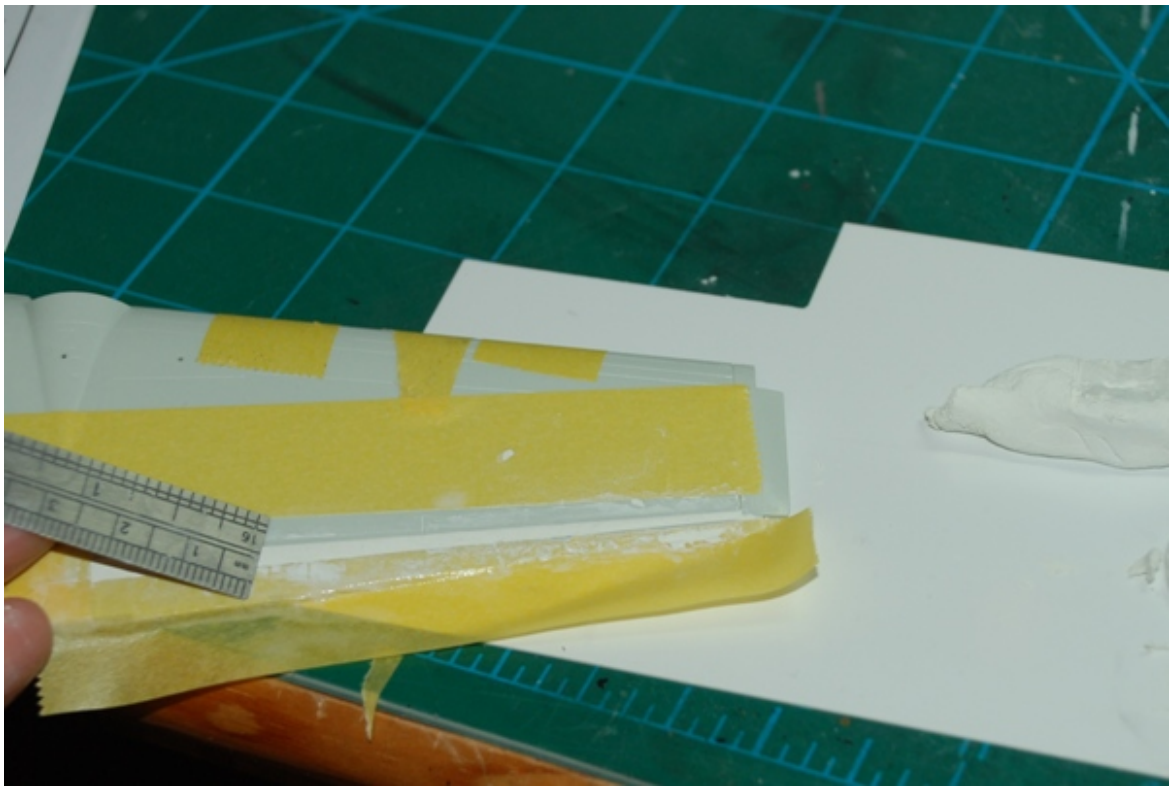


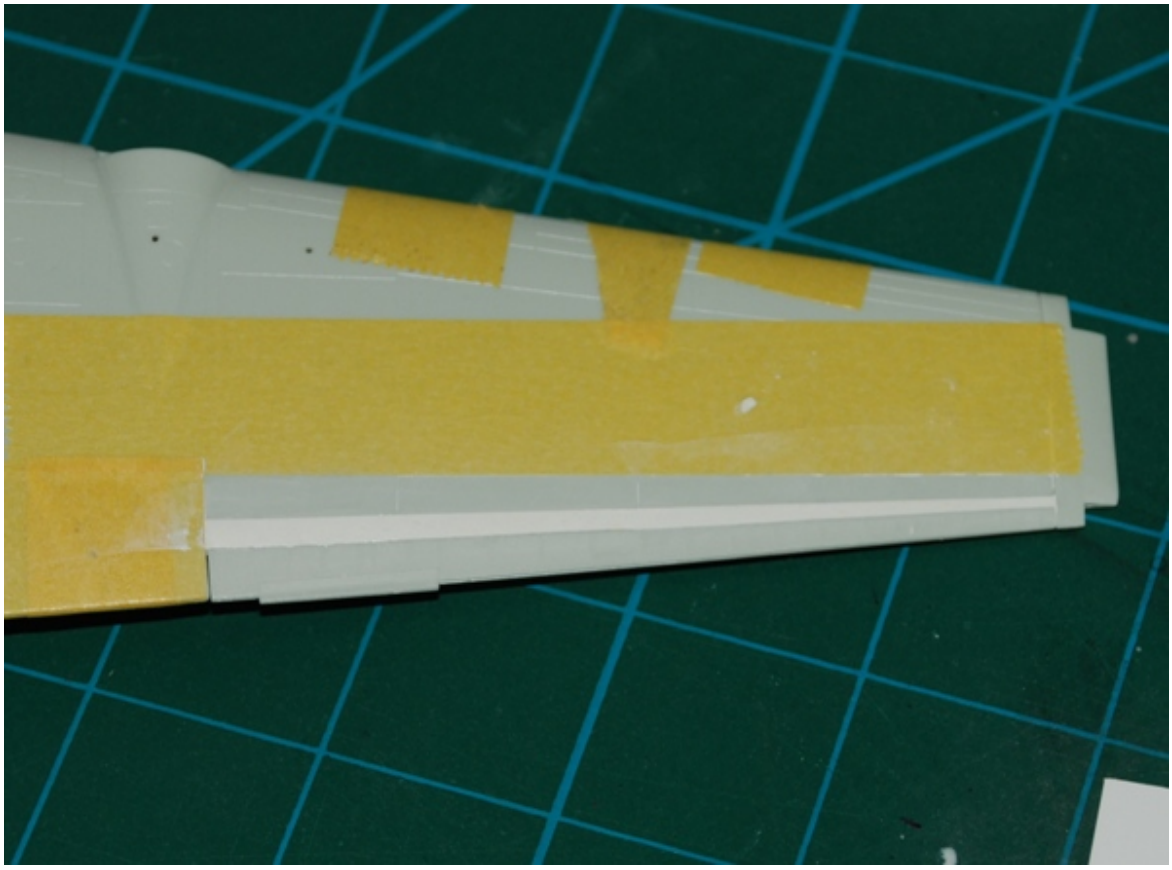


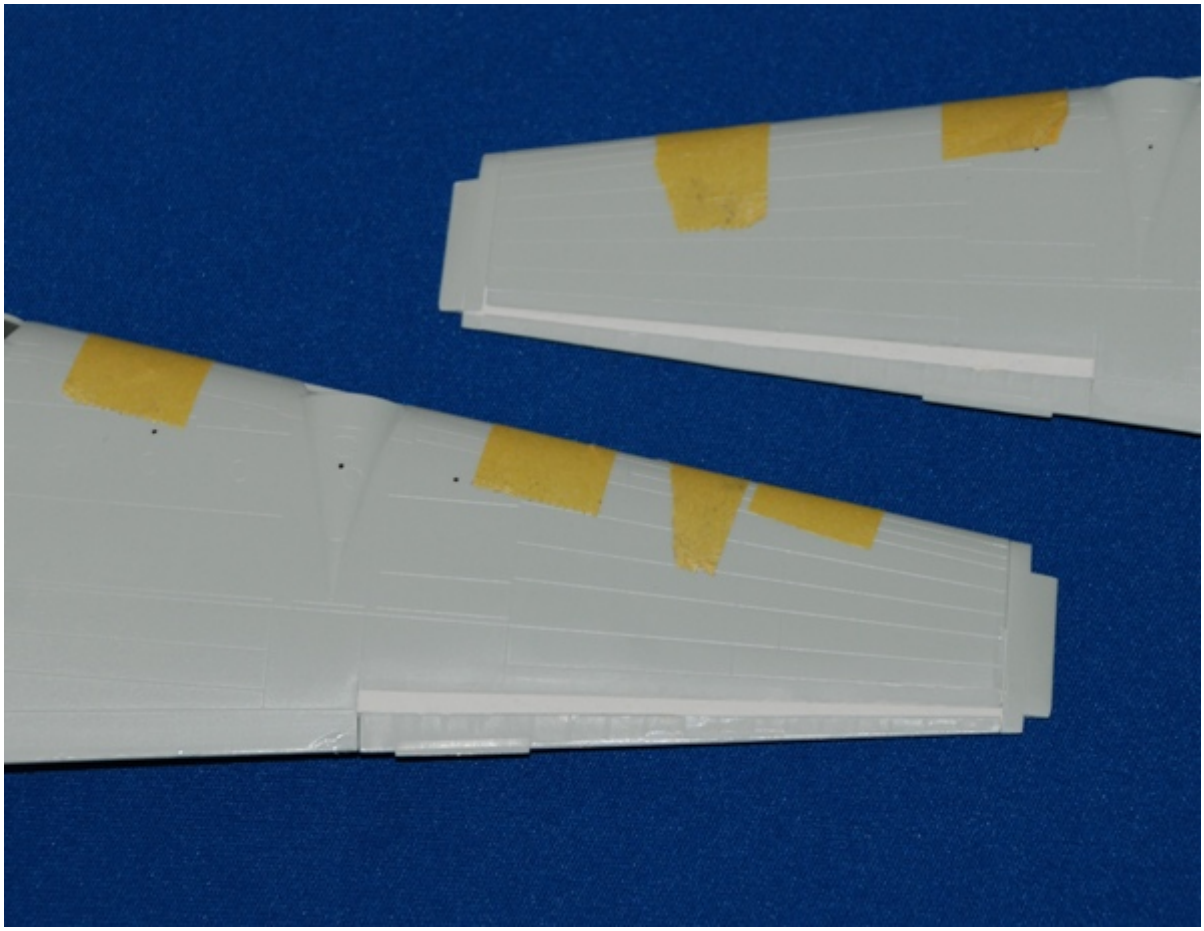


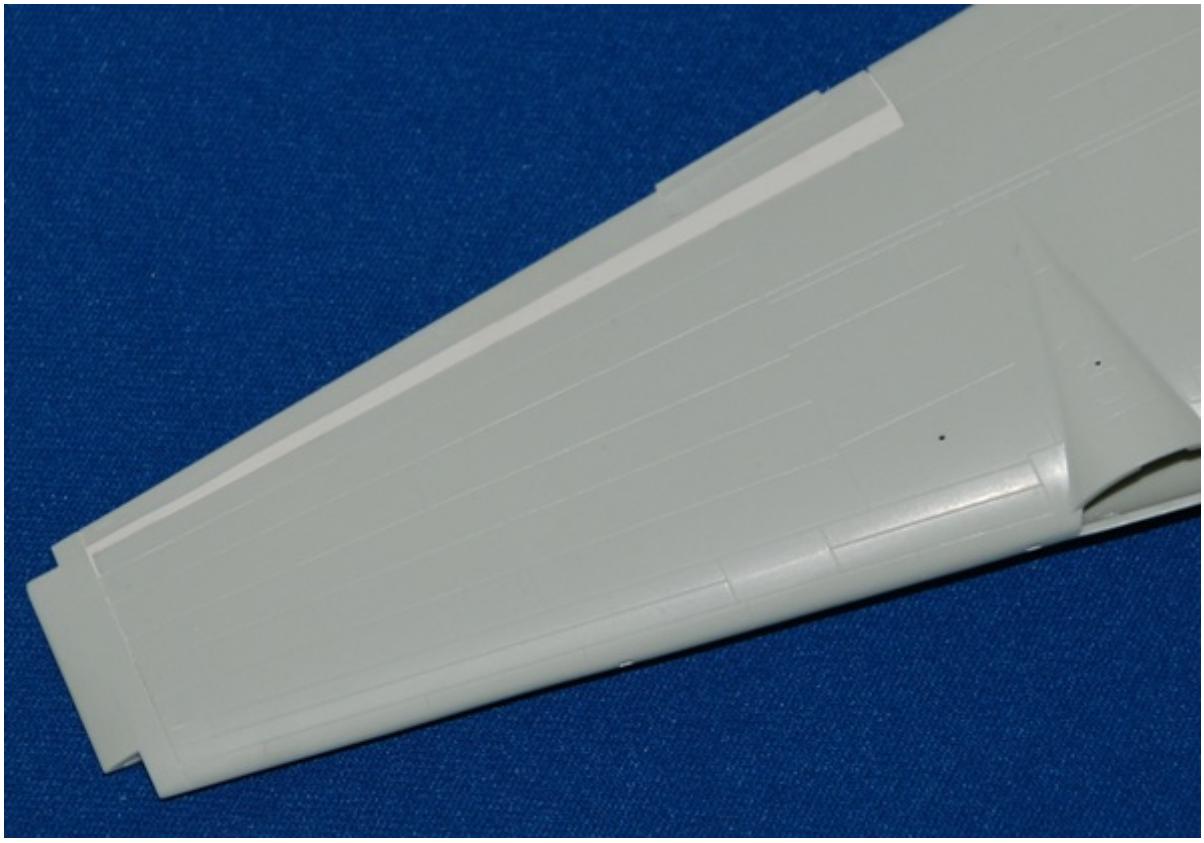


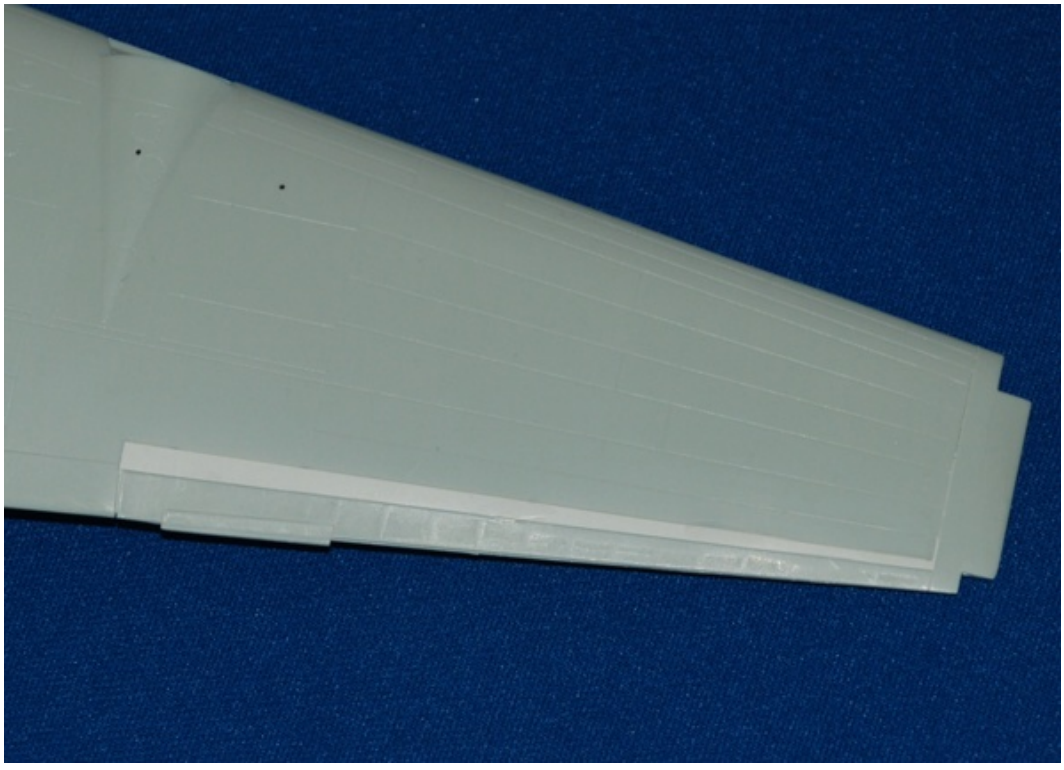
You can see in these sequences the problem up close and so I masked off the trenches and filled them with thin rolls of Milliput. This two-part filler is excellent and using water the excess is smoothed into the hole and excess removed with the edge of a steel rule. The masking tape you can see here is used to protect the surrounding area and doing this means that there will be minimal sanding tomorrow when I come back to it.











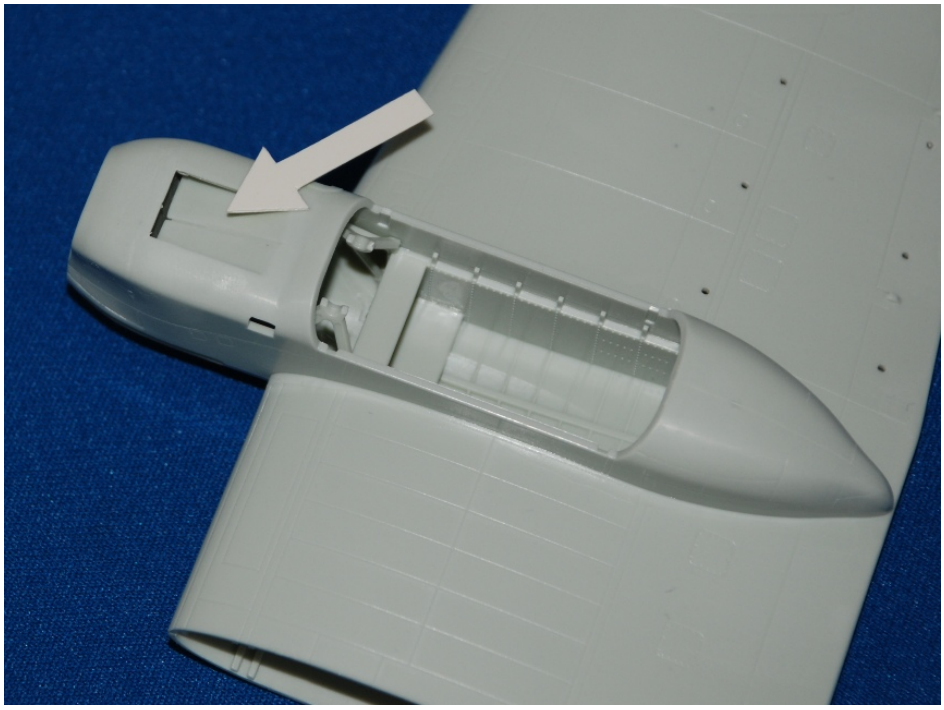
How did it turn out?

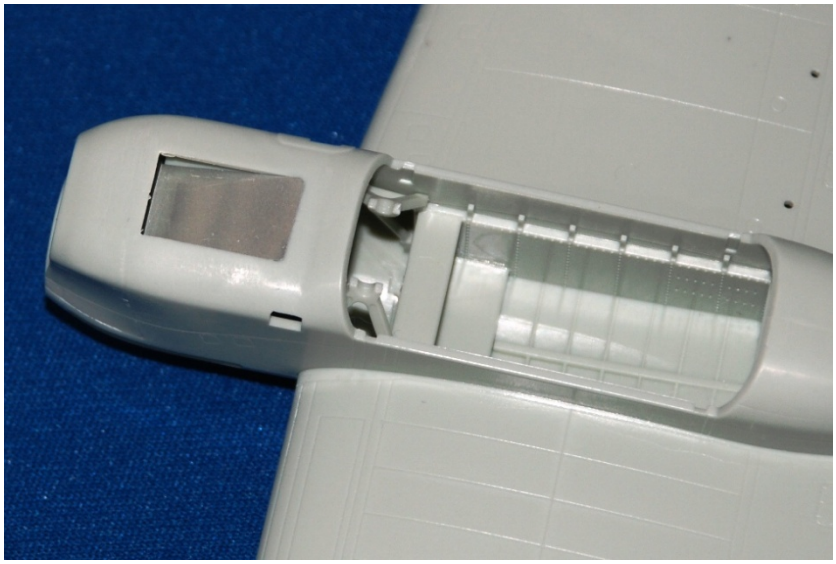
Pretty well I reckon. What I like about Milliput is that it dries rock hard and can be scribed using your preferred scribing tool (in my case the Olfa P-Cutter – check out

your Techniques Bank for some tips on using Milliput and the P-Cutter). I will undercoat the whole model later using light grey primer to blend everything in, but this is ok for now.

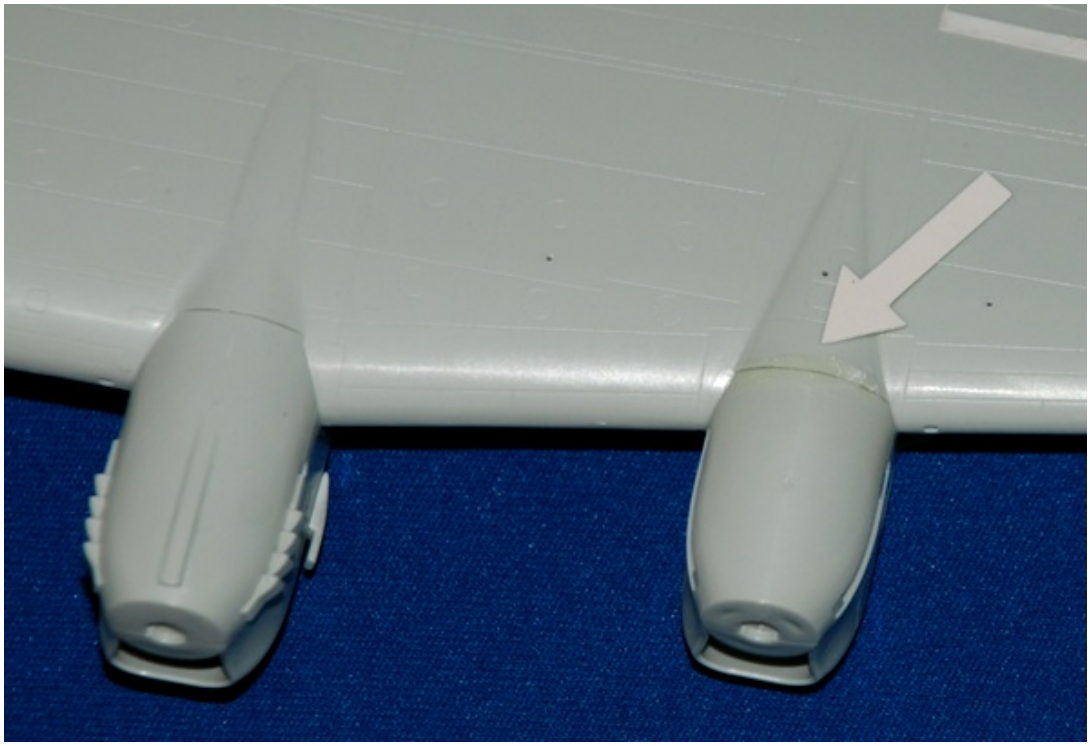
Onto the engine nacelles...

The engine nacelles have an almost flawless fit to the wings and that's a real strength of the kit and the good fit of parts is replicated across the board.

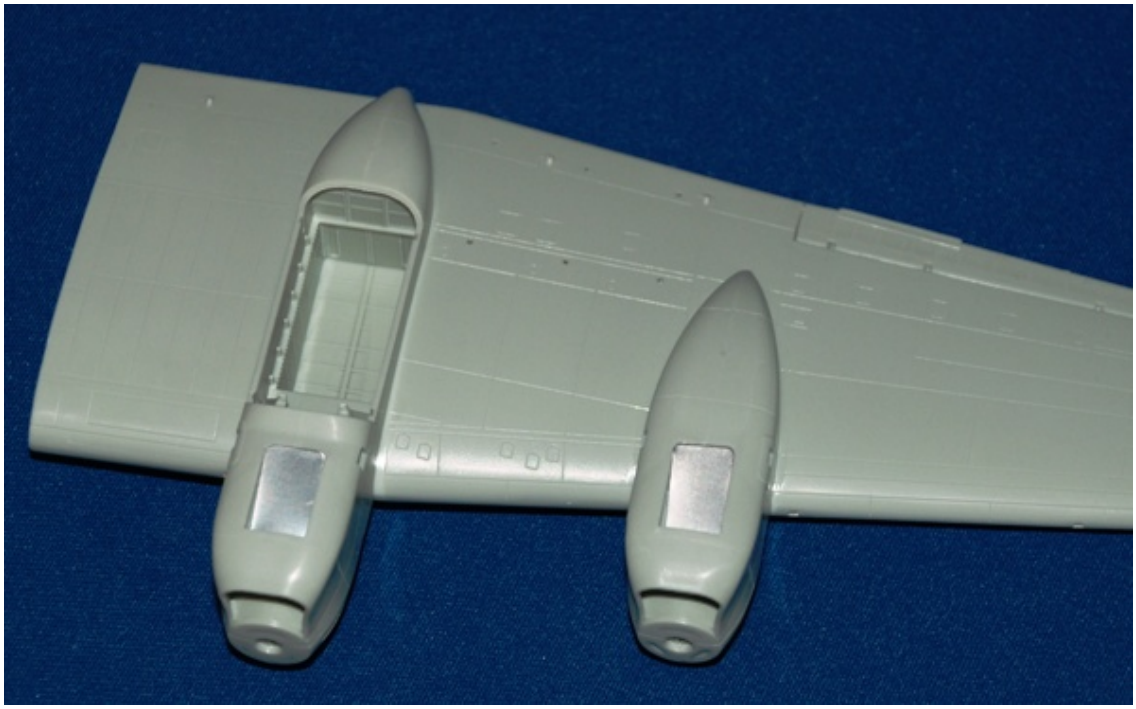


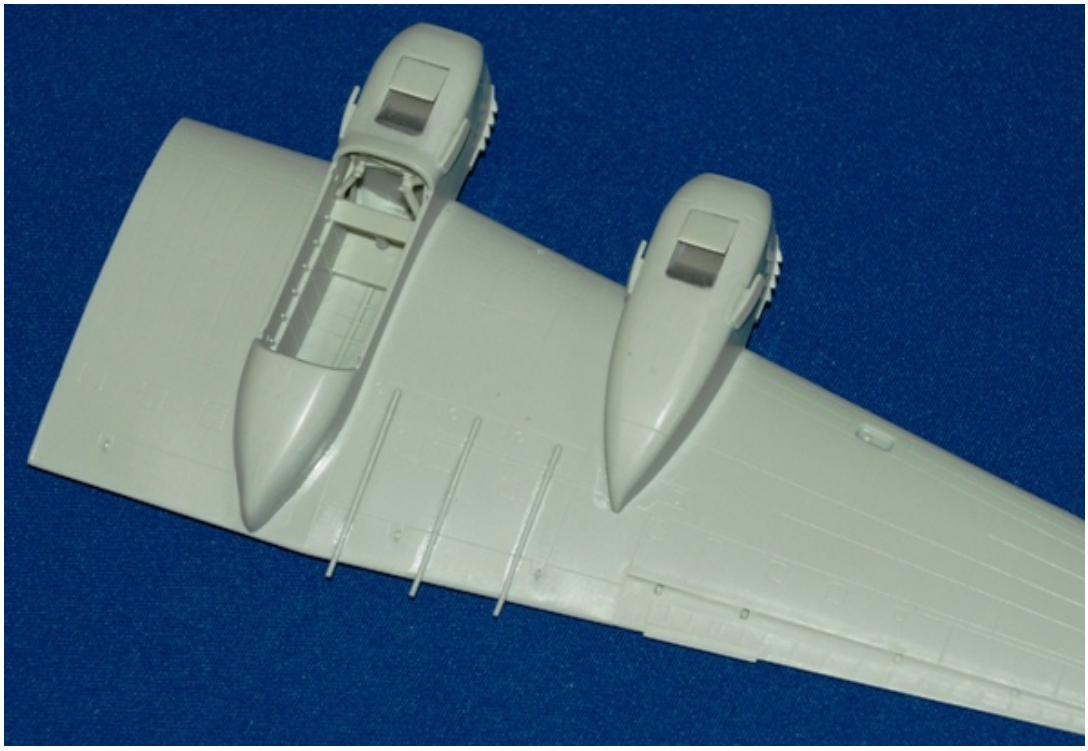


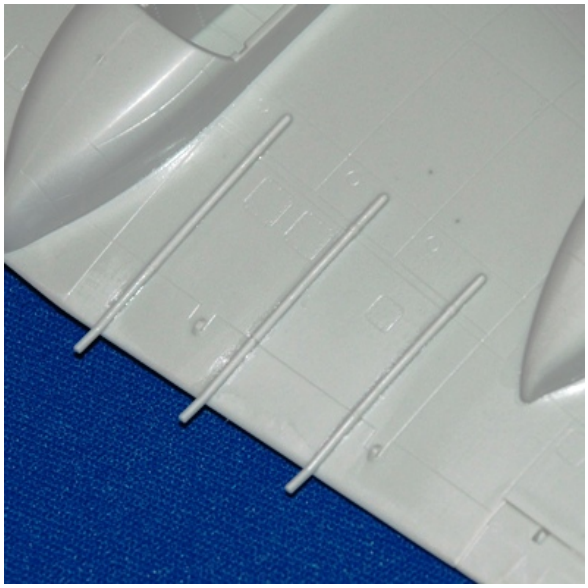
The inboard engine bays have a join line on the underside that is tricky to get at for sanding and so you can choose to blank it off as I have done here using metal foil, cut and trimmed to size and attached using cyano. The final effect is great as no join is visible and it takes minutes to do using eye and guestimation and a trim here and there.



On top of each nacelle there is the inevitable join and this is easy to remove using cyano to fill and some sanding and buffing.





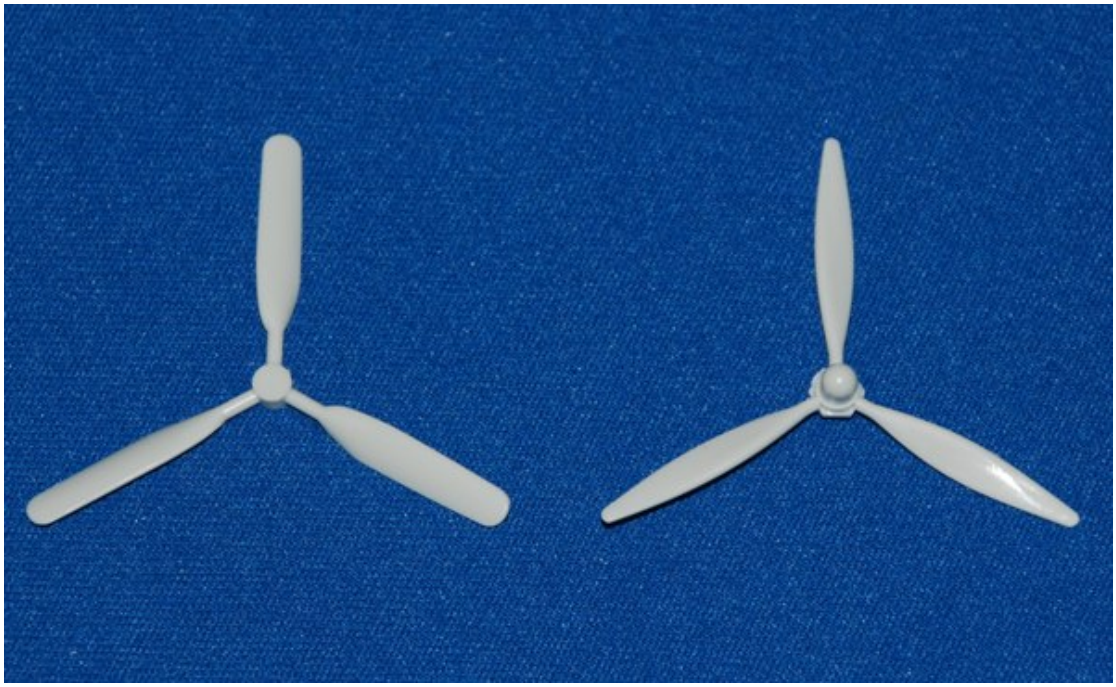


The underside of the wing needs the 3 fuel dump pipes added and, again, these fit very well and were added at this stage. You might want to leave them off to avoid damage as they will fit well, but that's your call.

Those propellers!

Right, well I decided that a couple of hours were needed about now to sort the propeller situation – those supplied in the kit are completely the wrong shape! (This really in inexcusable given that many areas of this model are superbly engineered and produced – enough said). There aren't too many options readily

available to the builder to fix the problem, but this is my suggestion – again, your call on what you want to do.



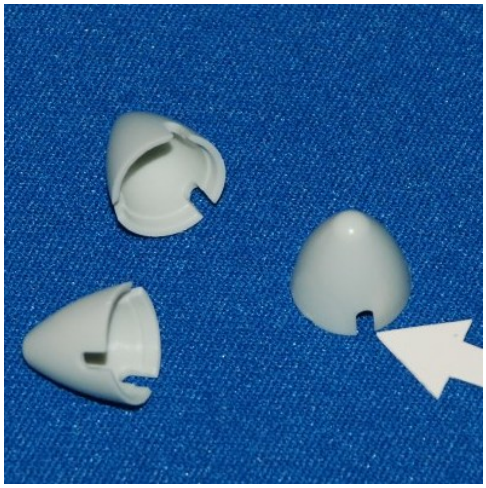
This image shows the kit prop as supplied on the left and one of those supplied in the Revell Lancaster kit on the right. I have the Lanc in the stash and so decided to go that option – take the pointy prop blade set from the Lanc kit and use it here. The Paddle blades (shown on the left) are also supplied in the Lancaster kit and so this seems the best way to go to me.

What about re-shaping the kit parts as supplied?

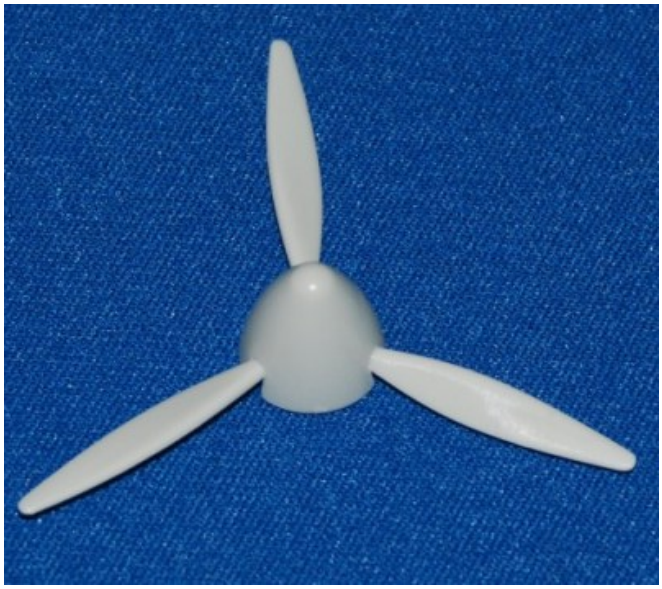
I think there's just too much work in this option, the base of the Halifax kit prop is much too thin and, frankly, life's too short! It was the Lanc props for this project.

Modifying the Lancaster props for use with the Halifax spinners

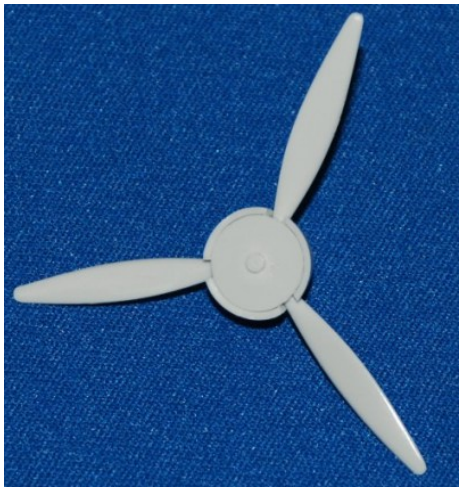
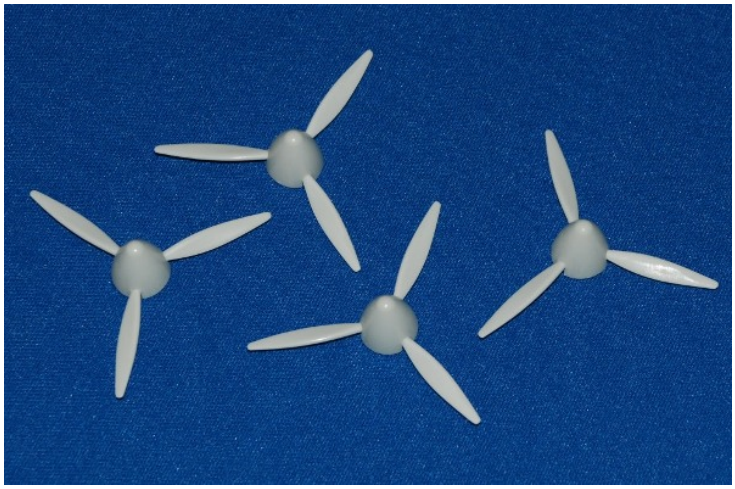
This is quite a quick task and the following sequence illustrates each stage of the process.



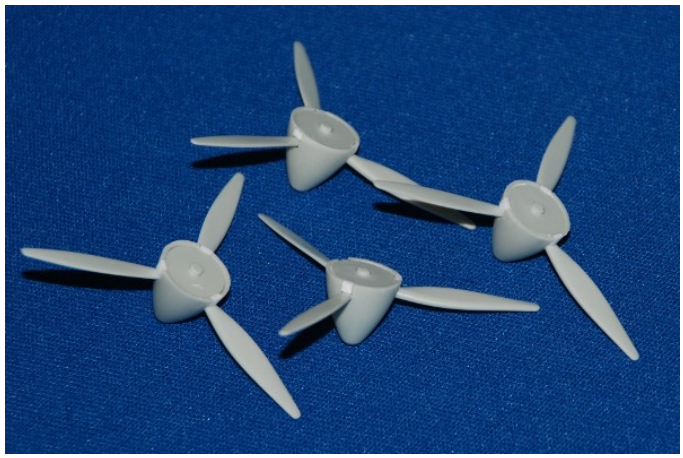
Step 1 – what's needed here is to slightly flare out (open up) the rear of the opening into which each prop blade will be inserted. A simple flat file achieves this in moments

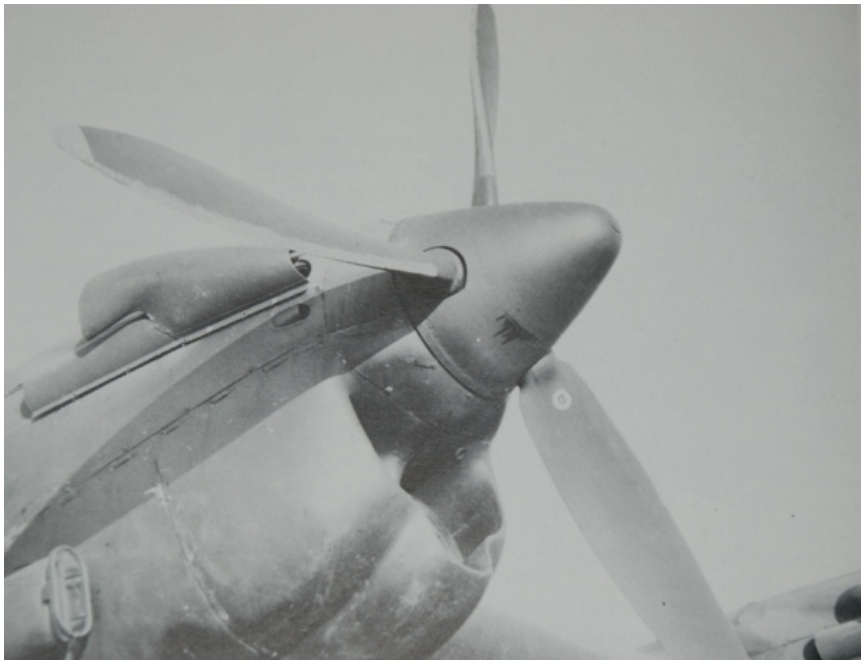


Step 2 – the prop blades are pushed fully into the recess and up against the forward curved edge

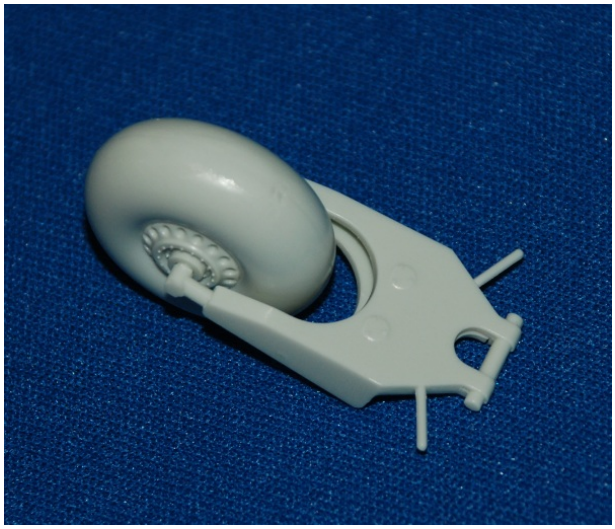
Step 3 – the rear of the spinner sees the small disc supplied in the Halifax kit inserted over the pin. The hole will need opening up slightly to allow the disc to be pushed fully down into the spinner

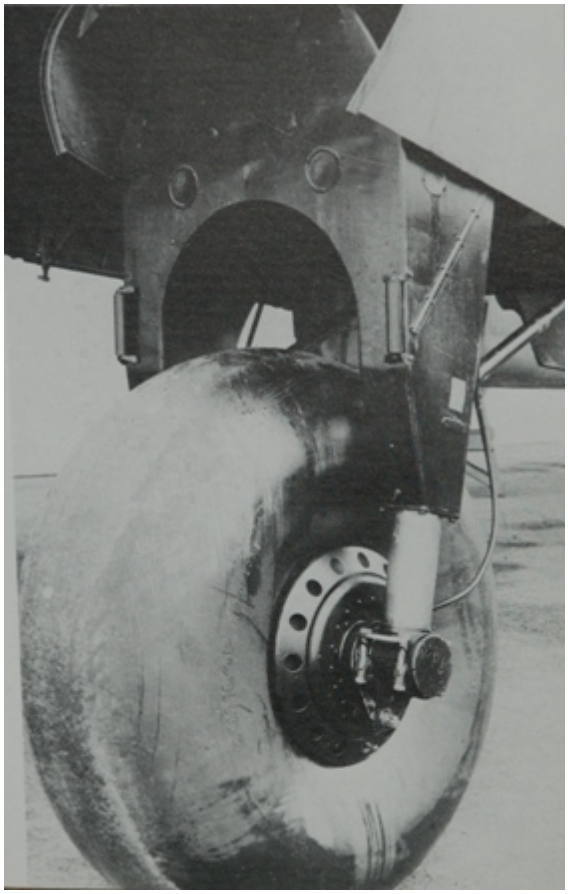





Step 4 – small 'blocks' of plasticard need to be added to the back of each blade to close the gap that is prominent but not there on the real aircraft – see the attached image showing a close up of the propeller spinner/blade location point

Wheels and undercarriage...

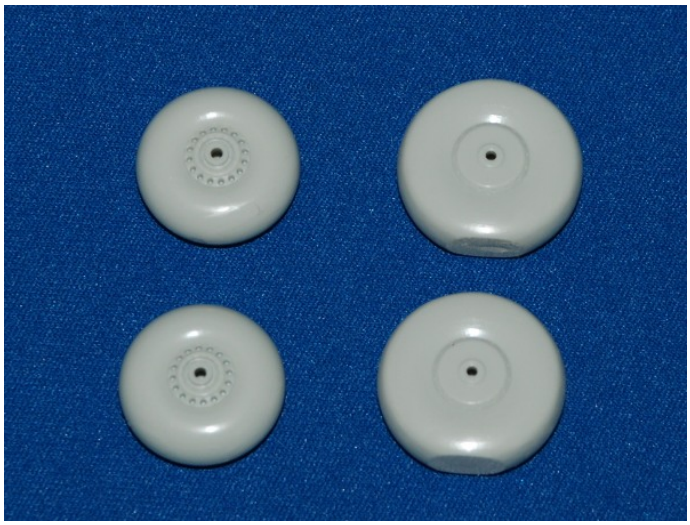




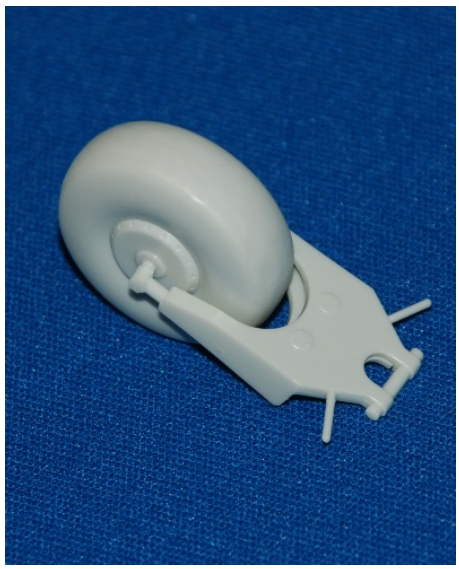
The main gear units are well detailed and fit together superbly. Add to this the detailed wheel bays and the overall level of what's provided is very good.

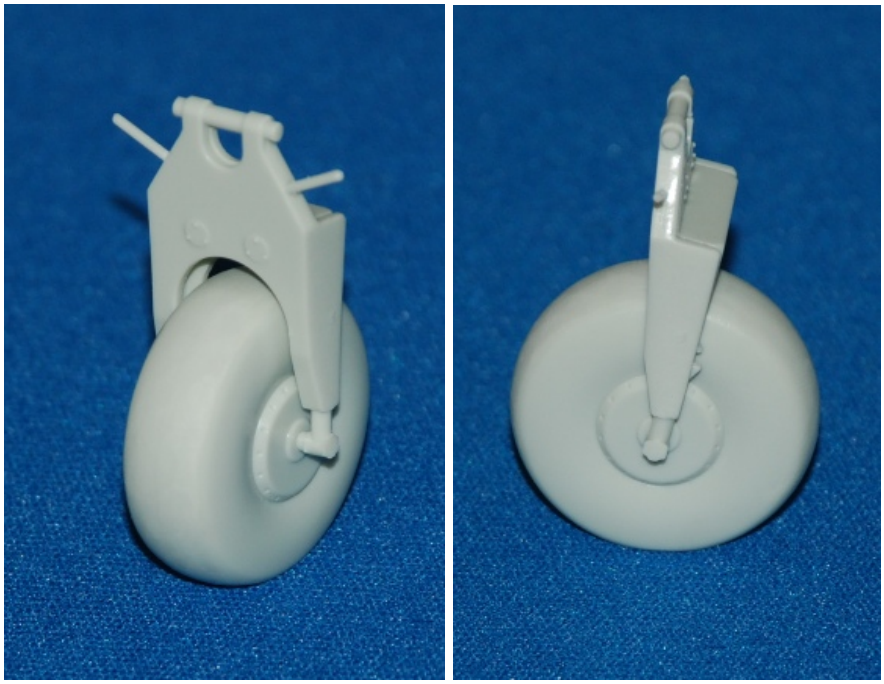
However, there is some debate about the size of the main wheels, considered by some modellers to be too small. Those supplied in the kit are definitely in scale and look ‘right’ when used with the kit undercarriage parts (note the gap at the top of the tyre between it at the arch of the Messier undercarriage unit).

Options...?



Well I guess you could raid your Revell Lancaster kit again (the larger Lancaster wheels can be seen on the right of the image), although that would pretty much put an end to building that kit (except an in-flight option perhaps? Not very satisfactory...). The Lanc wheels do fit into the Revell Halifax Messier undercarriage units, although as you can see from the accompanying images, the gap above the tyre is too small to look convincing to me.



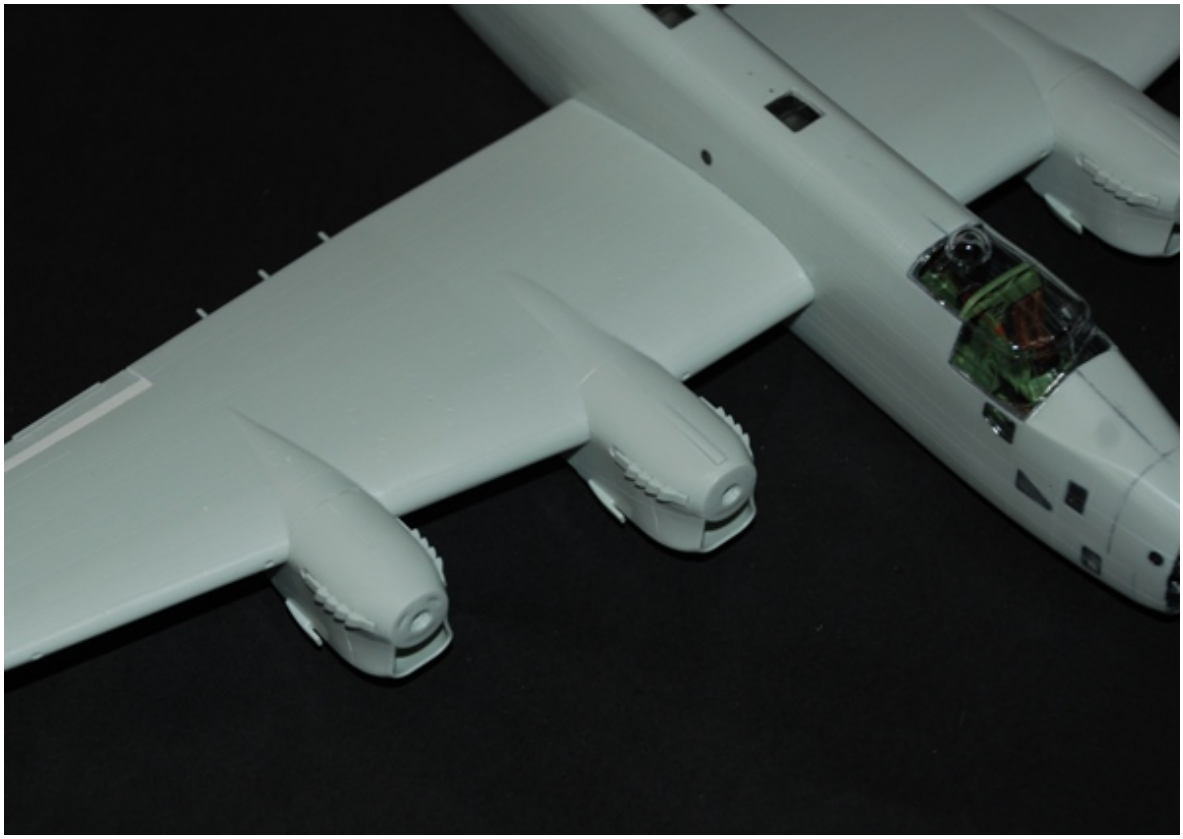


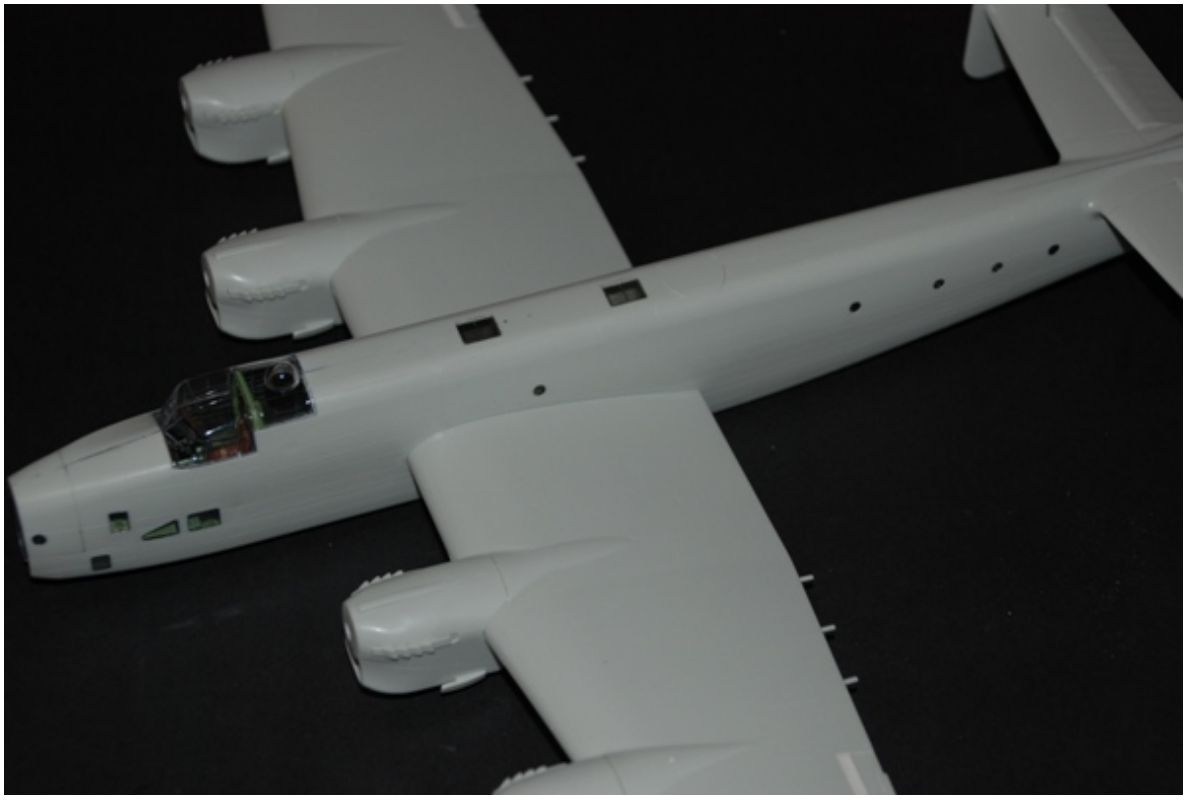
Decision - use the Halifax wheels...

You may choose the Lancaster wheel option but I reckon on looking at a number of images of both aircraft that the Halifax wheels were in fact slightly smaller than the Lancaster – reasonable due the higher bomb tonnage capacity of the Lancaster. Of course it would have been ideal to have an image of both types nose to nose but of course that's not going to happen so you just need to make your own choice of which way to go.

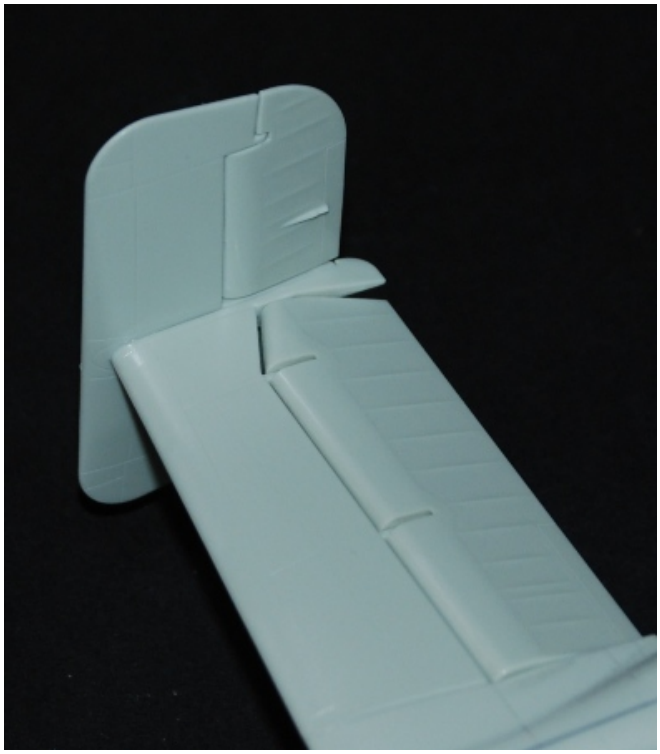
For me then, it's to stay with the Revell Halifax wheels and we can always change them later if the model doesn't look right. Note the flats sanded onto the bottom of each tyre.

Fuselage comes together...

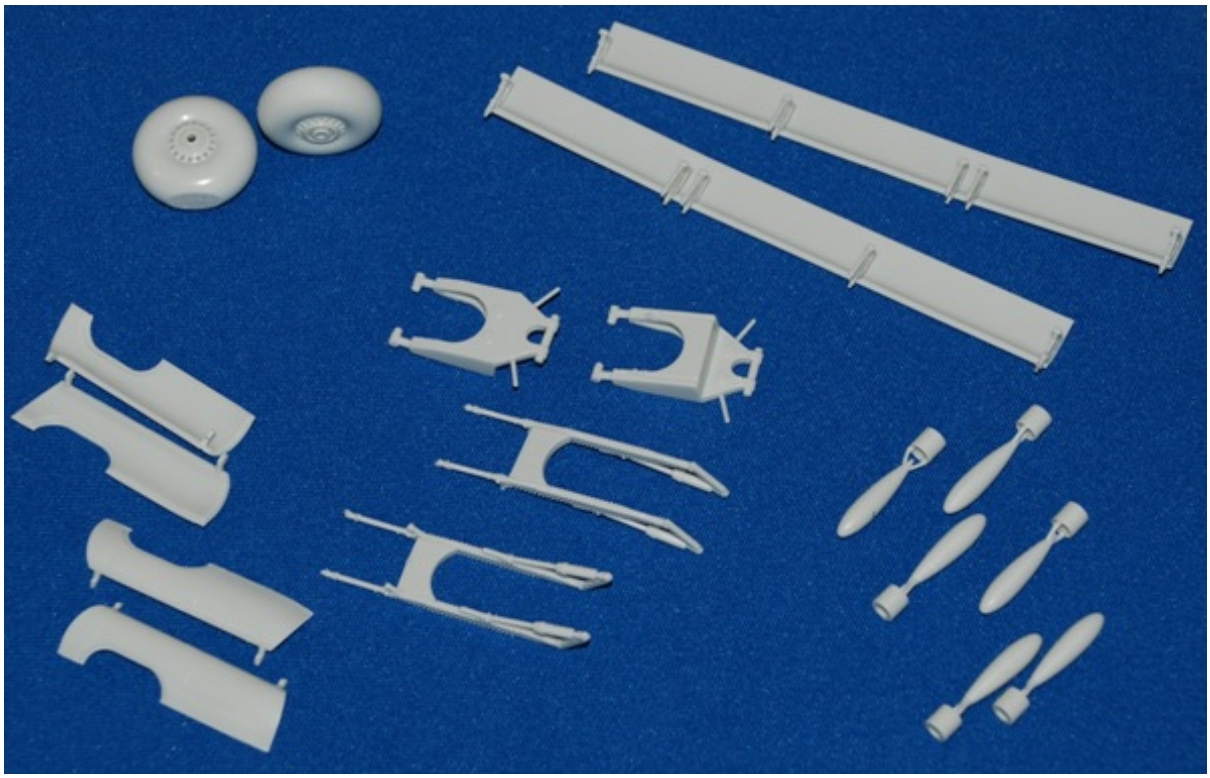




The main wings, tailplanes and fins are all added now and the latter have extremely thin training edges that are another highlight of this model – a really mixed ‘Bag is emerging... (pun intended!).



Sub assemblies...

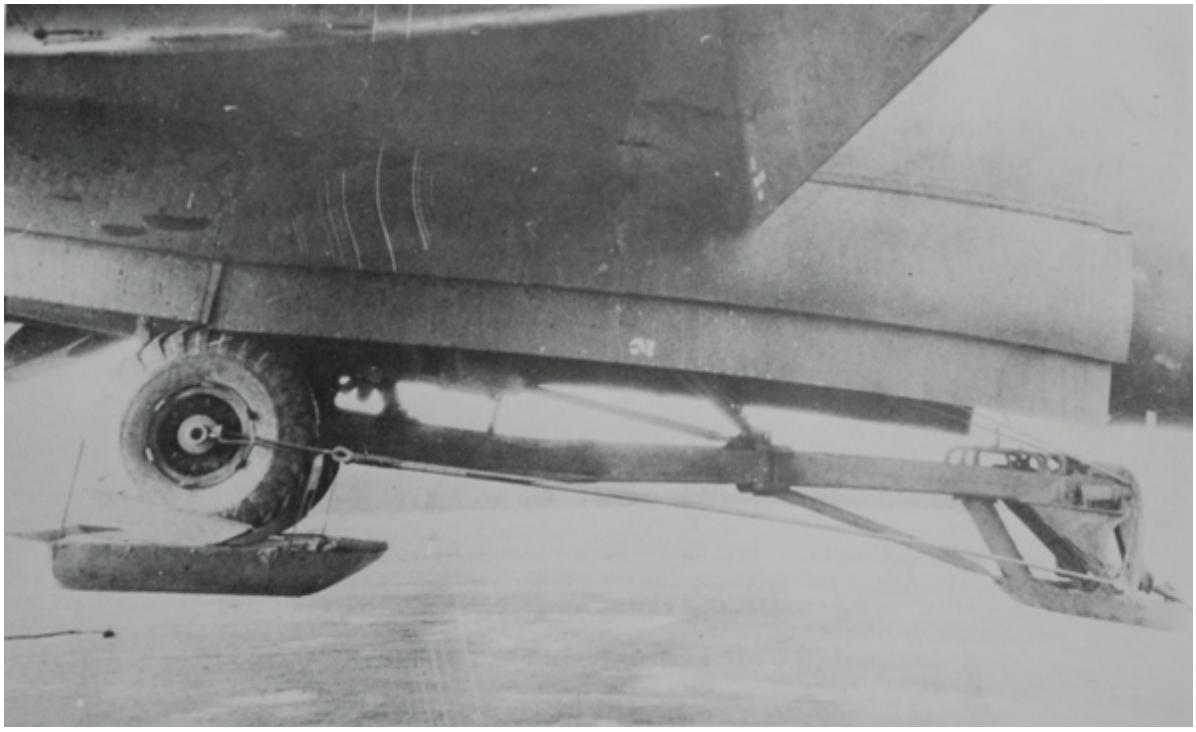


You can see here that I have brought together most of the sub assemblies completed so far and these are largely going to be set aside for spraying with the main components as appropriate.

More issues! The bomb bay doors...

As you can see I have gone on merrily assembling everything so far and to be honest this has been a very enjoyable project. Despite the 'issues' so far, there has been a pretty simple fix, mainly because I happened to have a Revell Lancaster kit to hand; had I not, the experience may well have been quite different.

You can see in the image of the sub assemblies near this text that the bomb bay doors are assembled and ready to be attached. Hold on... all is not what it may appear! I took a closer look at these images from the references quoted at the start....

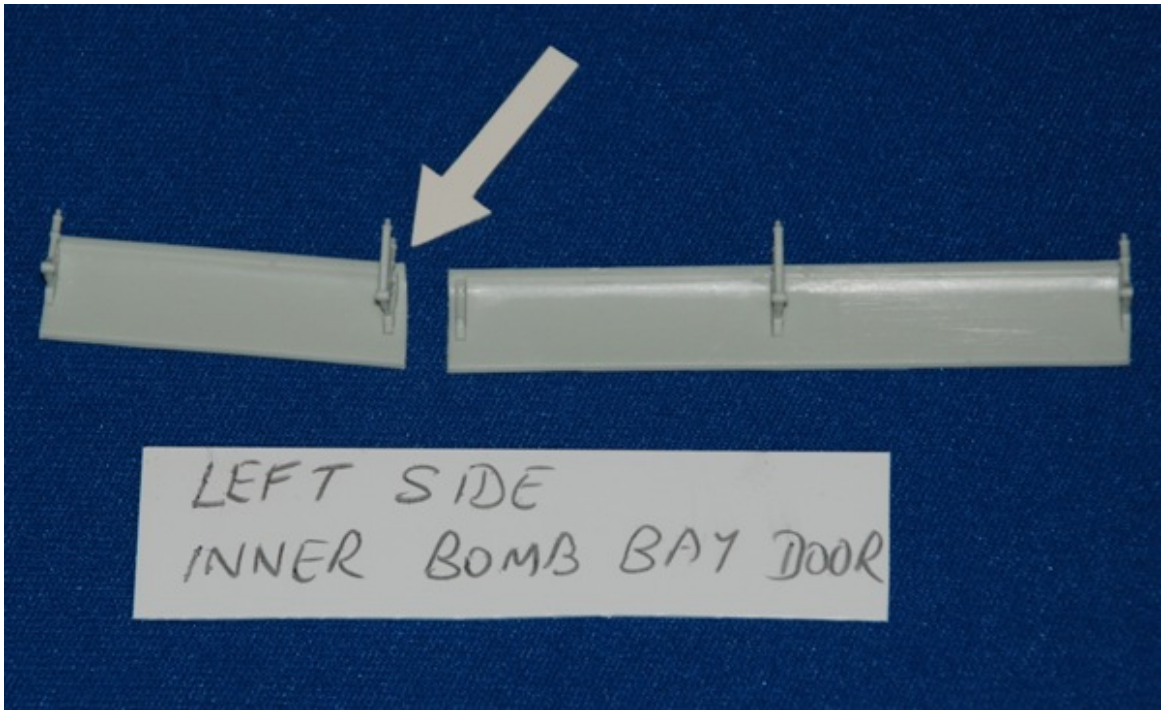


The bomb bay doors in fact comprise a double set of doors on each side; an inner set and an outer set. The inner doors appear to slide down and form the flat under belly of the aircraft while the outer doors set higher up the fuselage side are canted out when open and shut clam-like when closed. You can see the problem? Only the inner doors have been supplied, Revell by default leaving the builder to accept the outer pair of doors as moulded in with the side fuselage half and

marked only with a two-dimensional panel line. Sorry, this isn't acceptable (to me at least) and you are left to ponder a solution!

Inner bomb bay doors first...

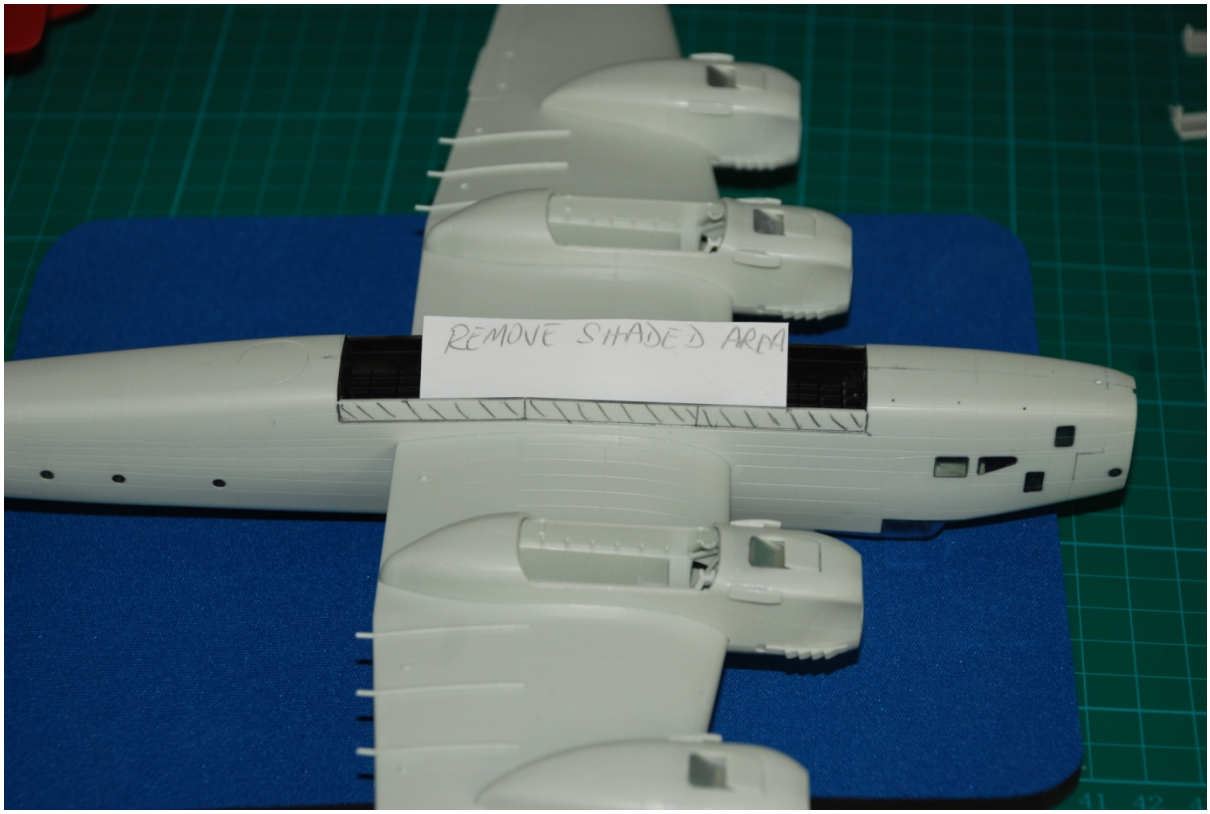
First the good news... you can use the doors as supplied to pretty much locate as suggested – the hinges are good and everything lines up well.



You do need to split each one at the 'break' line where the rear portion of each inner door changes angle slightly and deflects upwards. A scalpel will ensure a quick separation of the longer front section and shorter rear portion. Take a bit off the front edge of rear door where you see the arrow pointing and this will enable you to preserve the slight angle change in the door's profile when fitted.

Repeat for the opposite side.

New outer bomb bay doors...

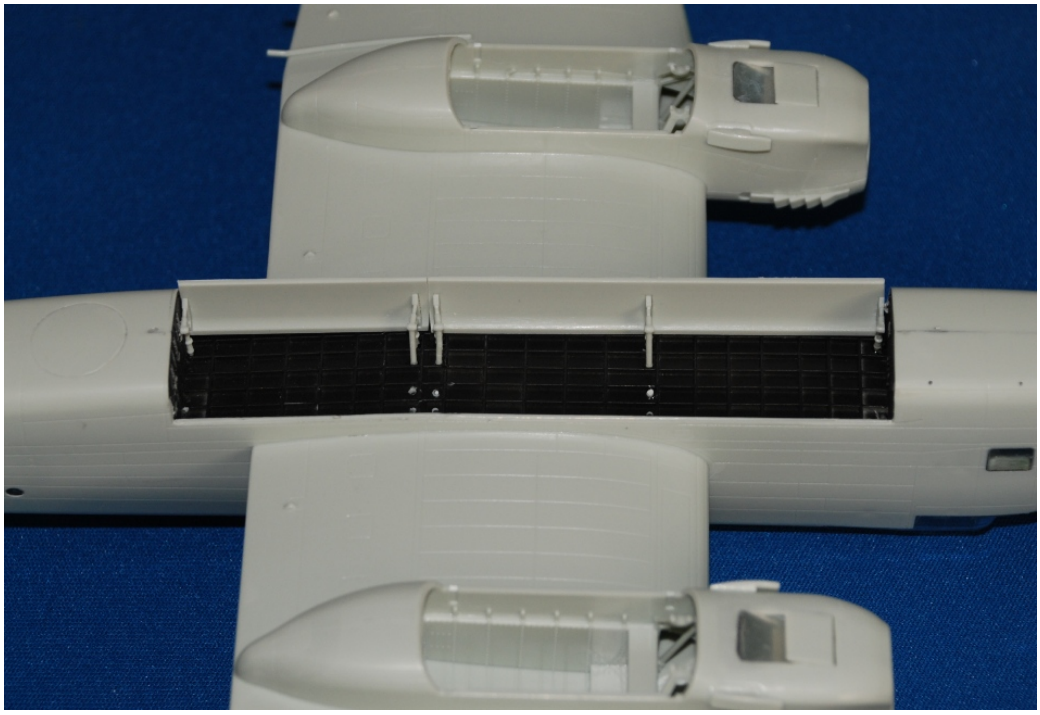


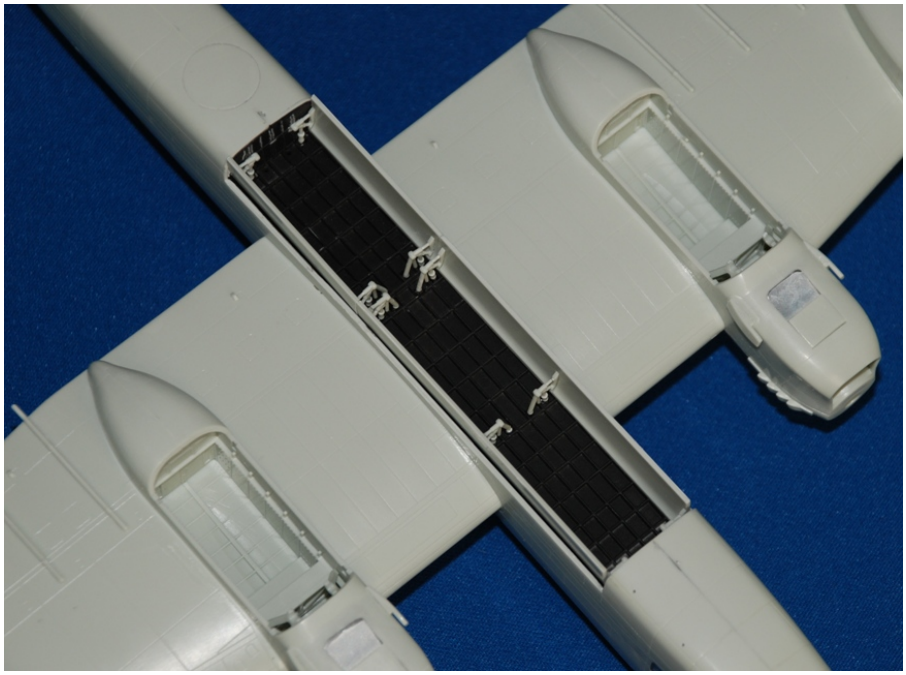
You can see in this image the area that needs to be removed from the side of the fuselage. Obviously had I looked at or noticed this problem at the start of the build I would have removed the shaded area while the fuselage halves were separate. Further good news is that the shaded area can be easily removed even at this late stage.

The recessed panel line along the edge of the shaded area acts as a great groove along which you can draw your Olfa P-Cutter and after about a dozen firm but not hard passes the shaded area begins to separate. I used my razor saw to make the fine vertical cuts at the front and aft ends of the bomb bay door. This was much easier and quicker than I thought to was going to be. Keep the sections you've just removed from each side as they will be useful for measuring the new outer bomb bay doors that we are going to make shortly.

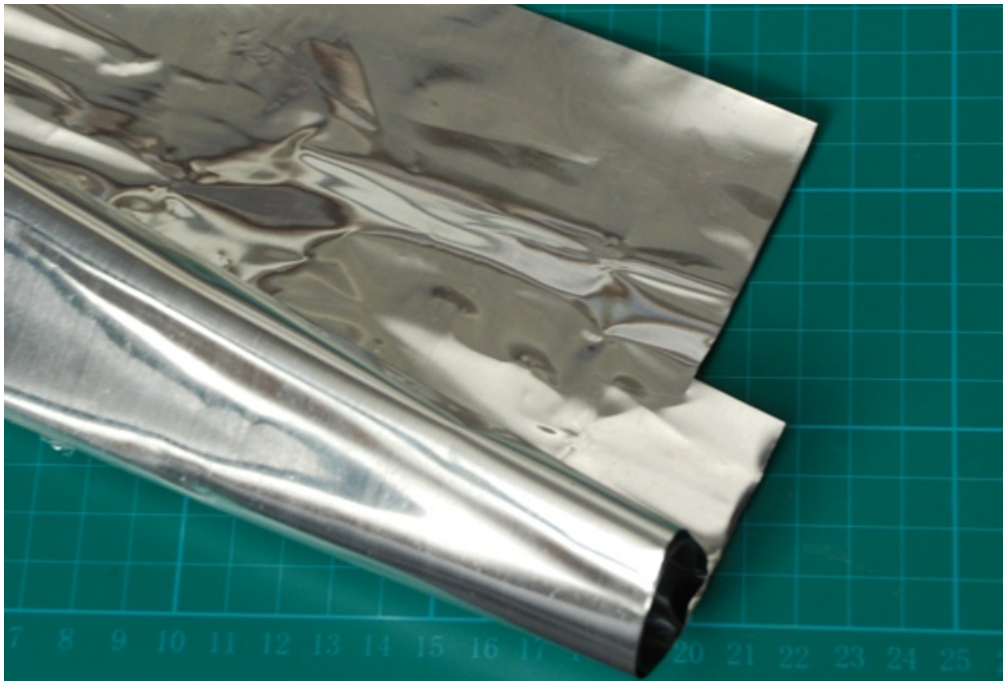
In go the inner bomb bay doors...

It is safe to now add the inner bomb bay doors, using the location holes provided. I did need to do a bit of jiggling to get the most acceptable fit, but everything did eventually line up ok. It's a good idea to use cyano glue here for added strength, as we are going to fabricate new outer bomb bay doors using metal foil.





New metal outer bomb bay doors...



I knew it would come in handy one day! What I'm on about is this sheet of metal foil I picked up from a stand at the Model Engineer Exhibition some years ago. It's not as soft as lead but not as firm as brass and not having any brass sheet (by preference) that is thin enough to use, it's out with the metal foil and let's get started.

...using a section of the fuselage removed earlier you can use this as a rough template for the new outer bomb bay doors. The section will need to be deeper (higher) though, extending down from the fuselage bomb bay door hinge line to

about 1.5mm from the edge of the inner bomb bay door edge. Look at the pics of the real bomb bay doors included here and you'll get the idea.

When you're happy that you have two sections of the correct length and height (depth) we come to the tricky part – creating the curved lower edge that is very distinctive on the outer Halifax bomb bay doors.

Rolling, rolling, rolling...

So the song goes and that's what we are going to do here. I am producing a short HD video as we speak (now ready in your Techniques bank) that demonstrates this technique as it has been applied here, so watch out for your TB for that and I will also provide a link to it here (video hopefully all done by the end of this week all being well).

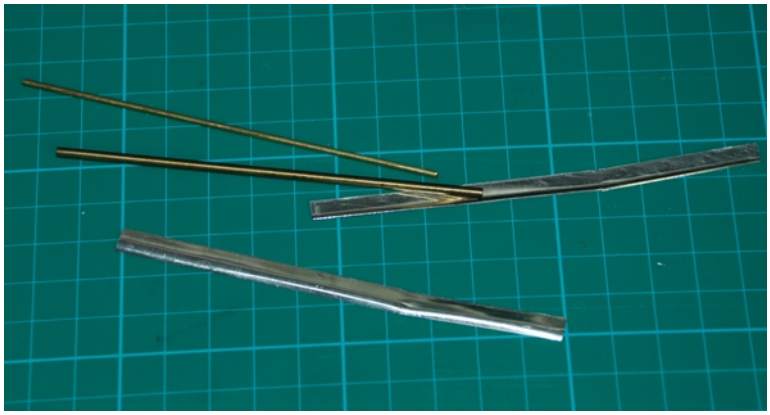
The key thing is to find two straight rods (wood or brass will do) that won't flex under firm pressure. For this task I took a thin brass rod that's about 1mm diameter and another about 3mm diameter.

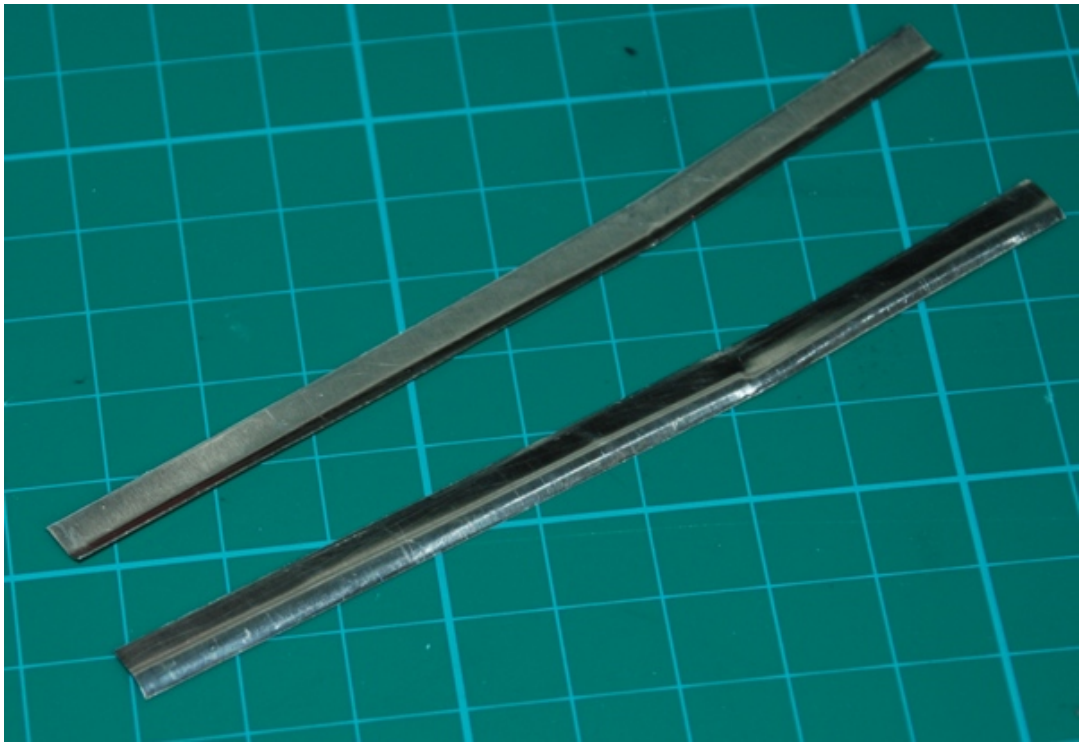
There are going to be two rolls for each outer bomb bay door – one for the front (longer) section of the door and one the rear.

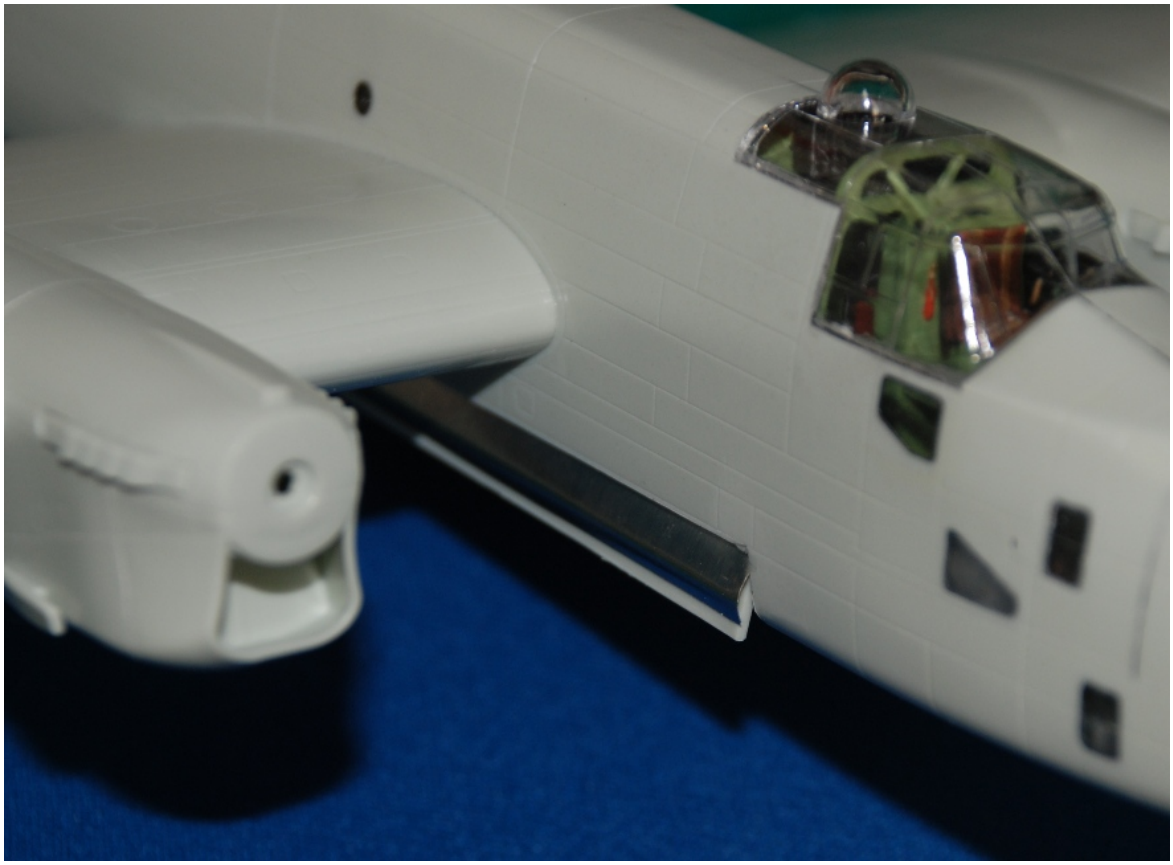
Taking the front section first I placed the smaller rod under and along the front lip/edge of the metal foil, the larger rod is placed on top of the foil all along the bottom edge. This can be tricky but after a couple of practice goes I managed to hold everything in place and all square.

Then... gently begin to slide (roll) the bottom rod along with the smaller rod beneath a few millimetres and you see the curve begin to develop. Just stop when it looks right. Any unwanted deformation of the flat areas of the foil can be removed by gently swiping a flat surface across the affected area(s). Then, just repeat this process for each of the remaining section of the outer doors.

In the short Gallery Grid below you'll see a small gouge on the left fuselage side just in front of the bomb bay doors where I slipped using the Olfa P-Cutter. This has been filled with cyano, sanded and smoothed back to restore the surface.





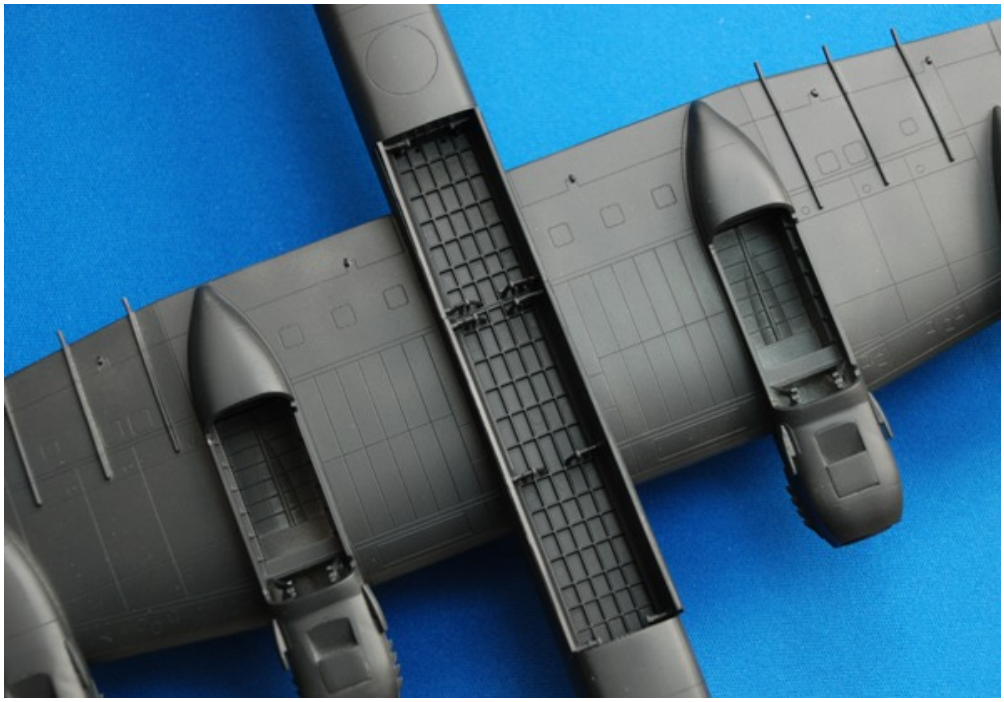


Phew! Well, that's if for this update – plenty to be getting on with here!

Paint! Paint! Paint! (sorry, just been watching Father Ted on TV and Father Jack gave his opinion...!)

Ok, Ok I'm getting there...

Night undersides...

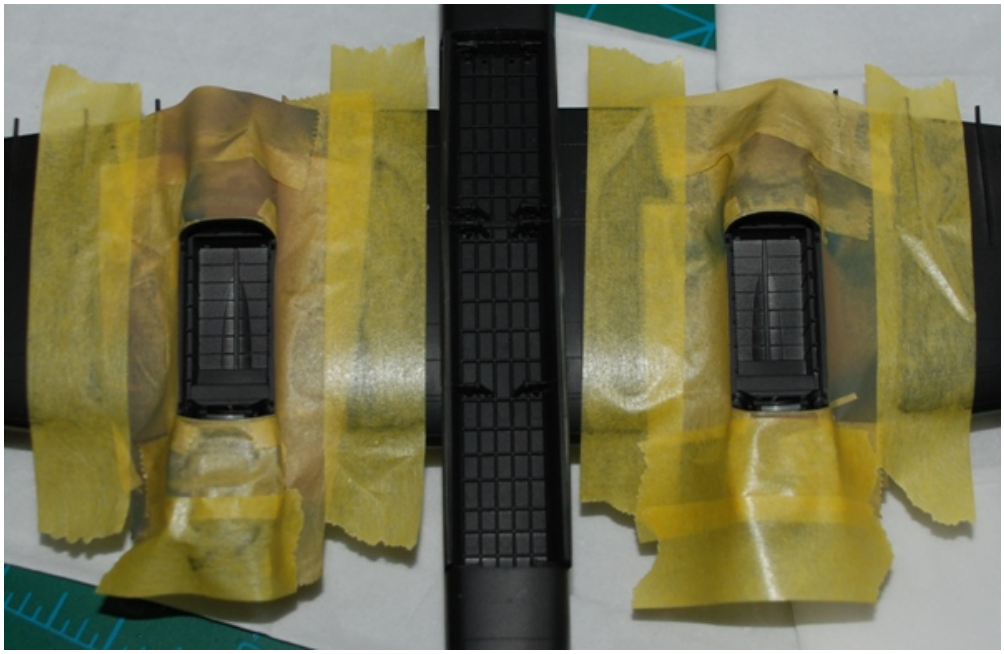


True it's been a little while coming but there now and this update completes this project from Revell.

Lifecolor has recently released a great set in their themed ranges, this time one containing six different shades of 'black'. My original plan was to use these on this model but having just laid down the base colour for the Night undersides using Polyscale S NATO Tri-Black I felt the Lifecolor blacks were a bit too light. If you start with these and want a weathered, light black look then they will be ideal; so I'll find another opportunity to use them soon.

As you can probably see in this image, the black went on really well, giving a great smooth finish onto which a slightly lightened tone of the base colour was sprayed – it's hardly perceptible in this pic but the underside I felt wasn't going to fade too much under the wings, even in the hot climate my subject operated in. More lightening using grey pastels for the fuselage sides (see the Techniques Bank for an HD video on doing this).

Wheel wells...

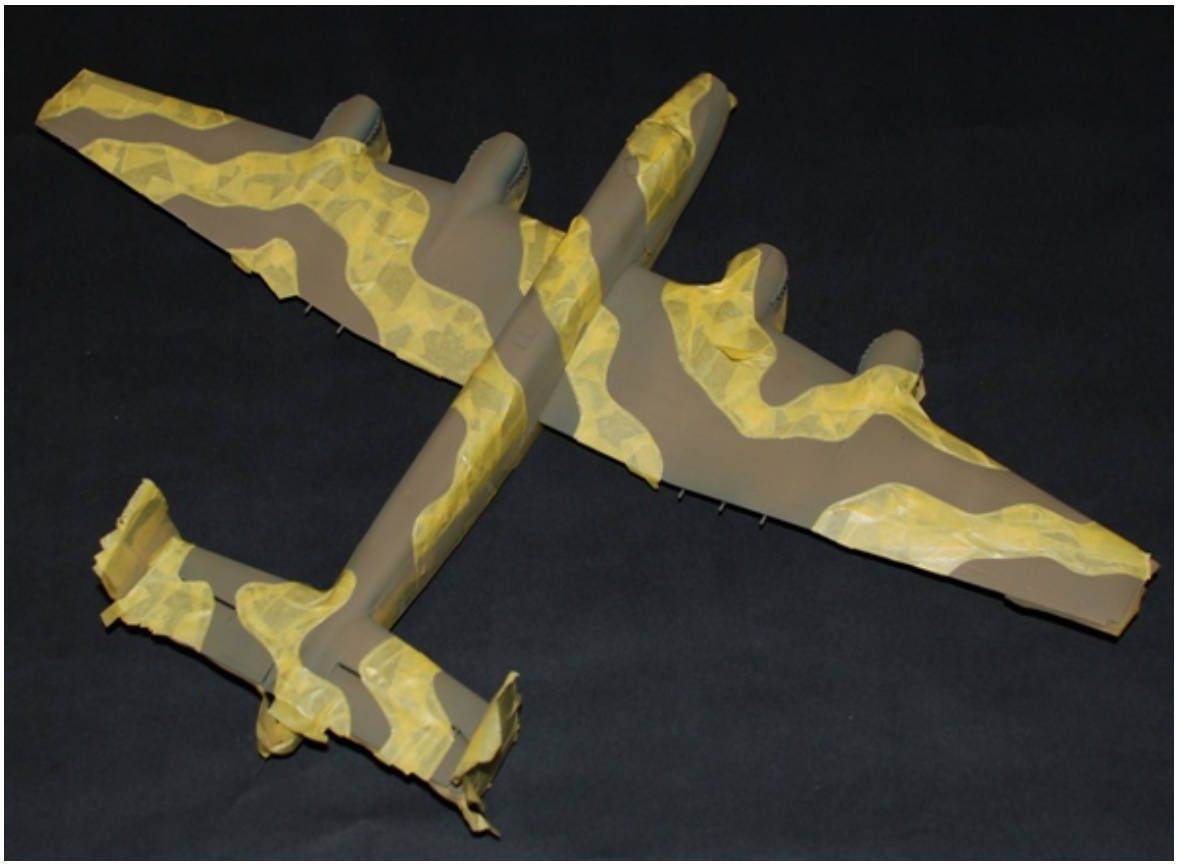


While your Halifax is inverted, it's a good idea to mask off and spray the wheel well interior. Most aircraft seemed to have black on the bay door interiors and so they are left alone for now, picking up some brown, grey and yellow pastel dust later on.

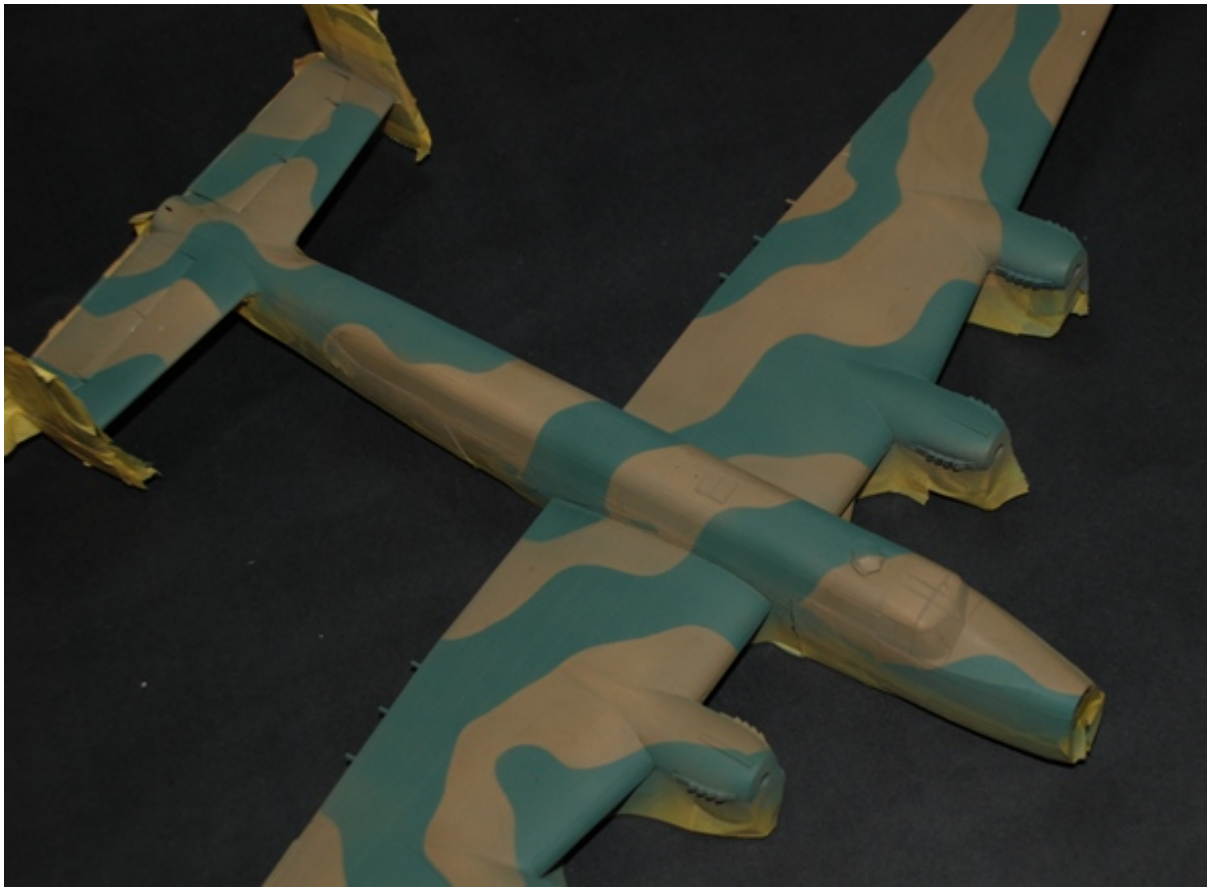
Upper camouflage...

This is standard RAF Dark Earth and Dark Green and again, Lifecolor water-based acrylics are used. I really like this paint, mixing well, spraying evenly and cleaning easily in water, any residue in the airbrush after water washing being removed with Foaming Airbrush Cleaner (available from The Airbrush Company – see Get it Now Links).

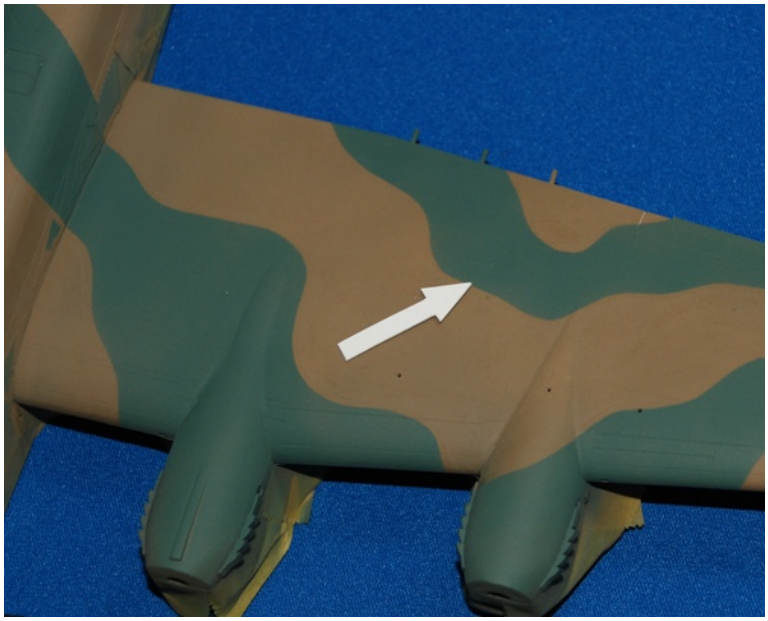
The Dark Earth went on all over the upper sides after masking the fuselage sides and undersides with Tamiya tape. This is mainly so that later, when the green is buffed back with Micromesh, you may get some slight show-through in some areas and the dark earth helps to create a weathered finish – blended and not too stark a demarcation between the colours, but more of this in a moment.



Thin strips of Tamiya masking tape are bent to create the shape of the camouflage pattern, larger, old pieces saved from earlier projects being used to fill in the larger areas. This will take a long time, but it's a tried and tested method of mine that always works. The Dark Green is sprayed directly overhead the edges of the mask to avoid unnecessary and excessive build up of paint against the inner edge of the tape and as we are using water-based acrylics, the paint is soon touch-dry in about 10 minutes and the tape carefully removed.



Removing the camouflage demarcation ‘line’. However hard you try, even with well-thinned paint there always seems to be what is often a thin raised line between the camo pattern and this had to be buffed back to get a perfectly smooth transition across the surface between the colours. If you don’t remove it, any decal laying over the top will have an unsightly raised line running through it (not good...). I have dropped an HD video into your TB to show how easy (but important) it is to remove...



See Techniques Bank for HD Video: **Micromesh to get rid of paint demarcation lines**

Once this is done you end up with a nice, slightly weathered finish that's getting closer to the final effect I am after for this model – not all models, just this one... an aircraft in sandy, dusty climes. You should be able to see that in this short video..

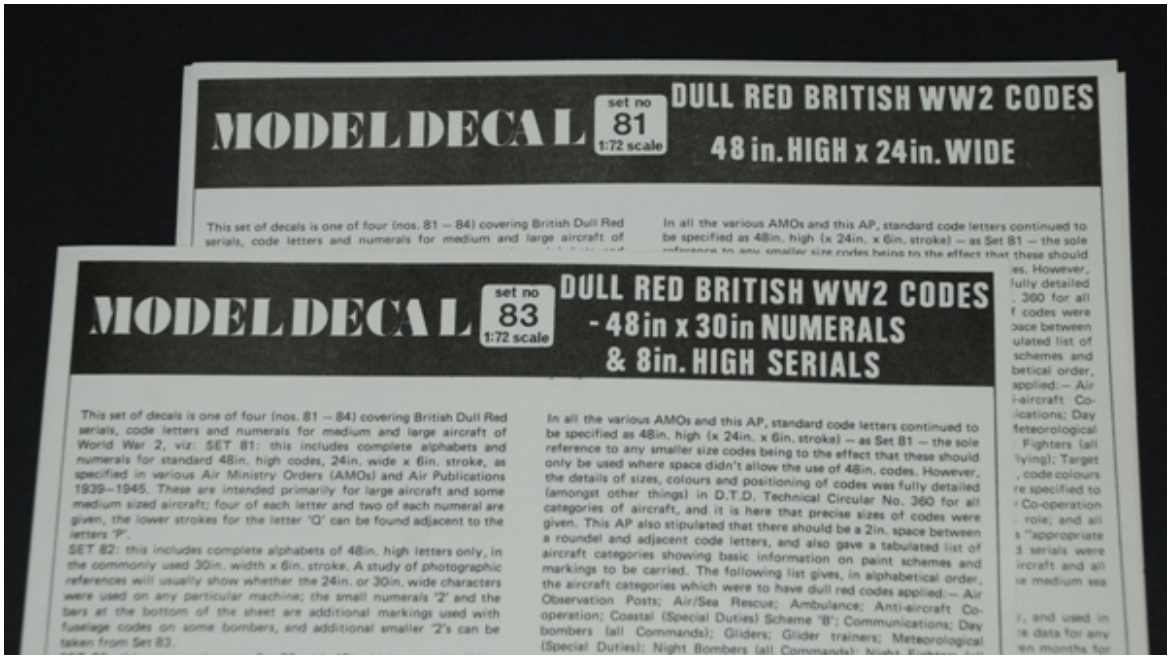
Johnson's Future (Klear) gloss varnish...

This is sprayed on to provide a good smooth, shiny surface for the decals. Be careful not to put it on too heavily, layer it on in thinner coats over each area as you work and you can see the effect you need building up. It dries to a hard, smooth finish and is cheap – great stuff if you can still get hold of it.

Decals conundrum?

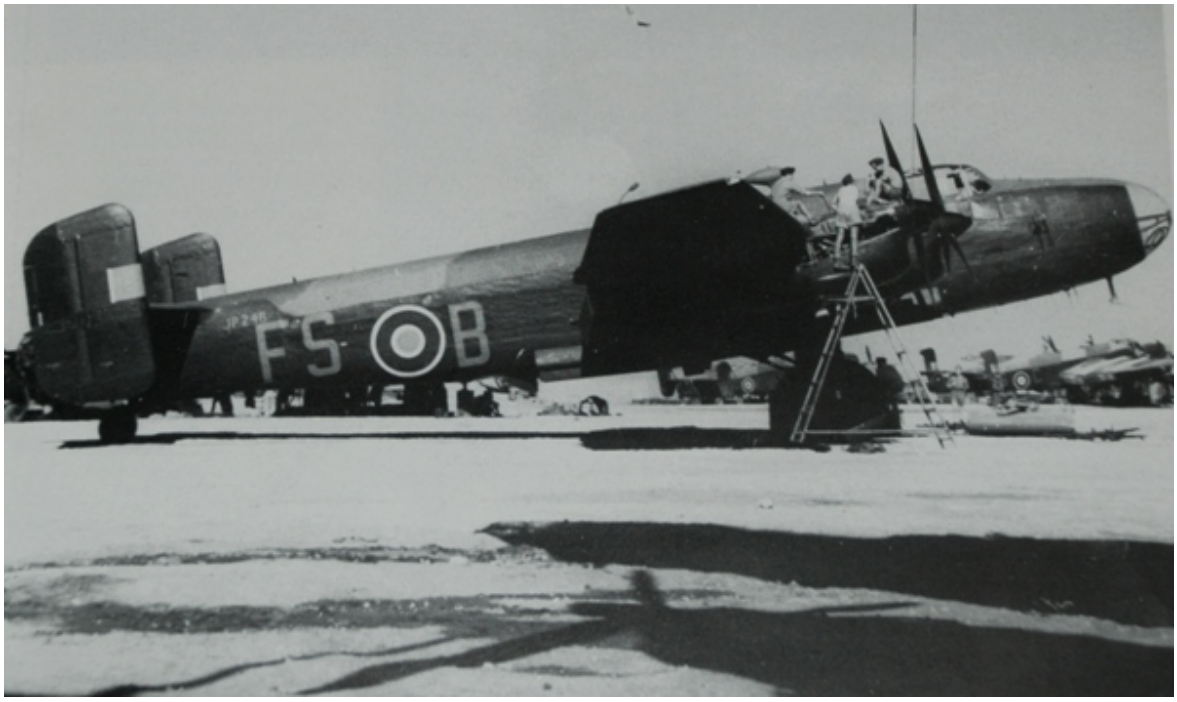

FF
AAAABBBBCCCCDDDDE
EEEFF GGGGHHHHIIII
JJJJKKKKLLLLMMMMN
NNNOOOOPPPPOOOORR
RRSSSSTTTTUUUUVVV
VWWWWXXXXYYYYZZZZ
2233445566778899OO
48in. CODE LETTERS & NUMBERS (24in. WIDTH)


FF
AAAABBBBCCCCDDDDE
EEEFF GGGGHHHHIIII
JJJJKKKKLLLLMMMMN
NNNOOOOPPPPOOOORR
SSTTTTUUUUVVV
WXXXXYYYYZZZZ
4455667788990O
48in. CODE LETTERS & NUMBERS (24in. WIDTH)



Having chosen the aircraft I wanted to build it was time to make sure I had everything I needed! I was pretty sure in my decal stash I had the red codes and serials I needed, but of course I hadn't realised that these come from an old Model Decal sheet that is over 30 years old!!! How relieved was I to discover that the decals worked very well indeed, just that the glue went a bit milky and this is easily removed and I moved the wet decal about in the residue from the other kit decals to give it enough 'stick'. Using Micro Set and Sol decal wetting solutions all the decals used went on really well.

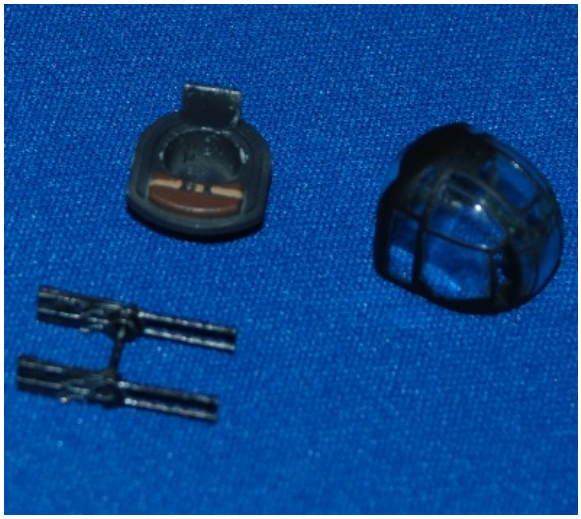
My subject aircraft is Halifax B.Mk.II, JP246, FS-B No.148 Squadron RAF, operating on long-haul bombing and supply missions like Brindisi, Italy where, sadly this aircraft crashed on 8 October 1944.



Before the final coat of flat varnish, more Johnson's Klear is sprayed over the decals once they are completely dry – this has the effect of sealing them in and hiding any traces of decal carrier film.

The model is given a good coat of the excellent Alclad Klear Kote Flat varnish, a good basis on which to later apply pastels that will form the remainder of the dusty weathering process.

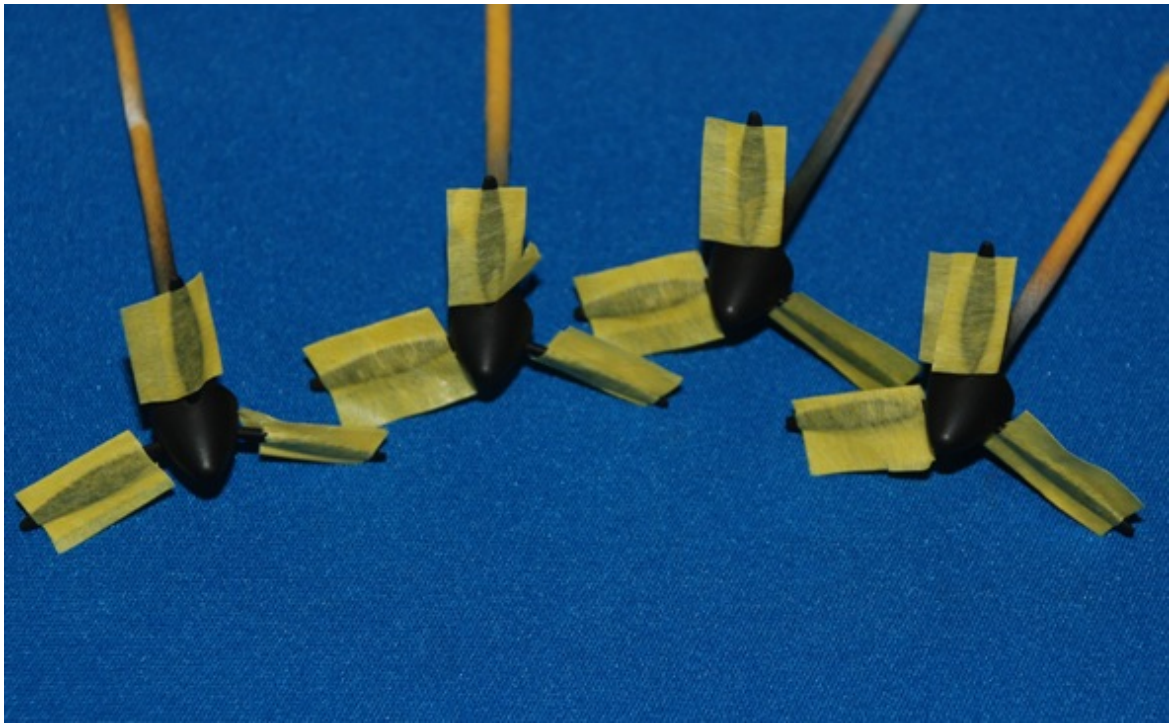
Rear turret assembly...

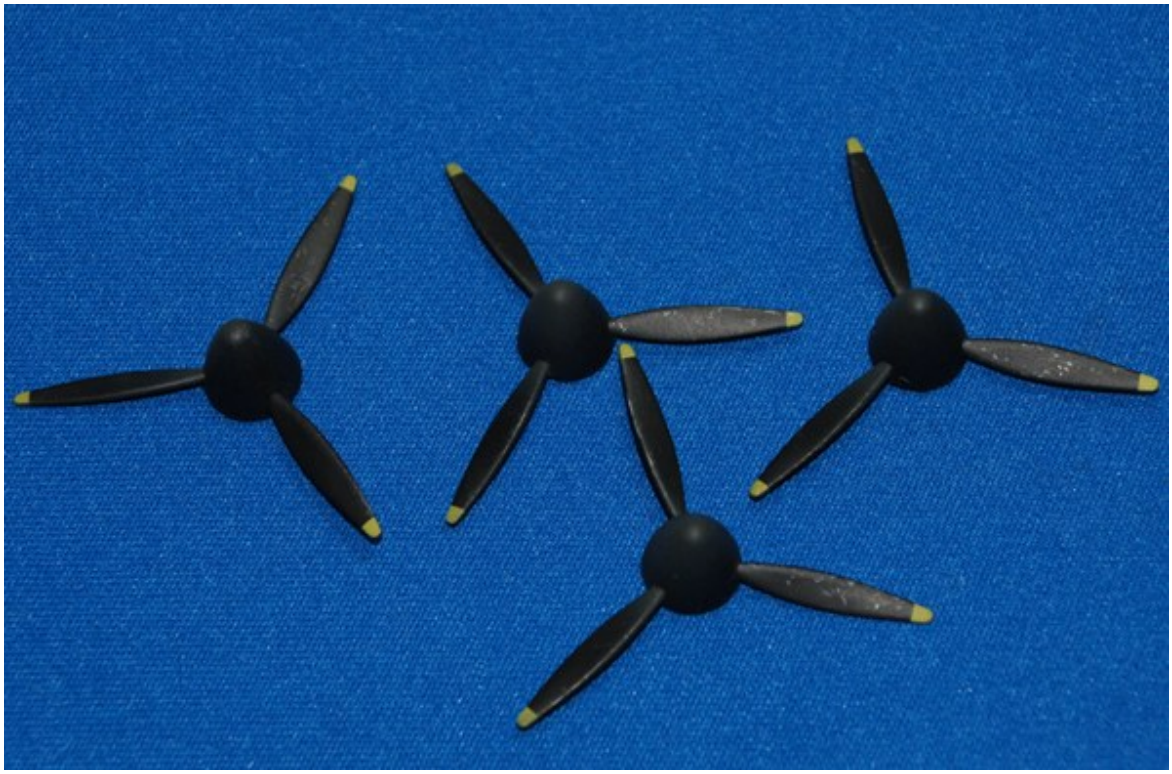


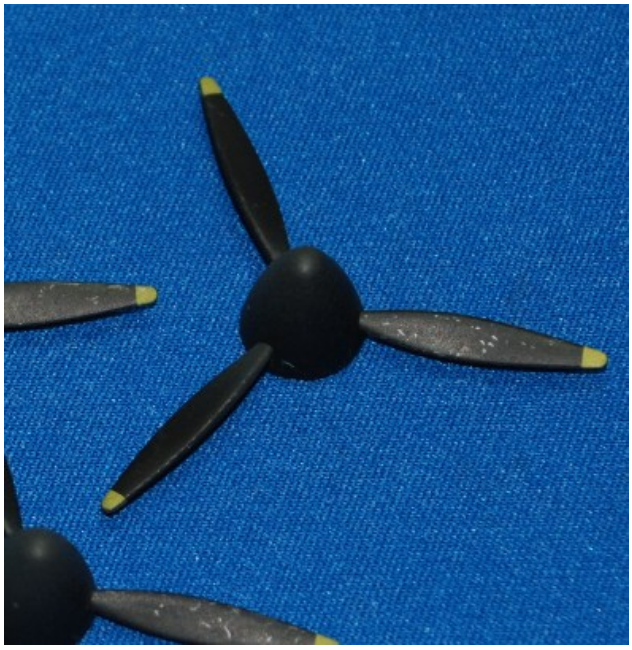
The main clear front and rear sections are secured using Gator Glue and left overnight to dry and a very strong join results without frosting the clear parts. The internal seat/armour plating, belt and guns were all finished and added after the

turret had been masked and painted. Boy did that masking take ages, cutting carefully with a new scalpel blade.

Props...







A different tone of black is used for the props and spinners, with the ‘yellow’ tips being sprayed Zinc Chromate Yellow which adds a faded, yellow look and effective in this scale. They were weathered in a similar way to the bombs using the graphite pencil chipping method featured in the HD Video section of your Techniques Bank.

Final weathering...

Various tones of brown and grey are used in conjunction with low-tack Post-It notes to act as masks to help create subtle shaded tones and areas across the model, using various images of Halifax aircraft as a guide. Extra pastel dust is applied to the rear lower underside of the aircraft given the area of ops I am trying to represent.

Exhaust staining was sprayed with well-thinned grey – a darker tone first, then a lighter shade for the inner area. Some of this is run out across the underside of the real tailplanes and above to further suggest a bit of a workhorse in Theatre. You can also see the bombs are installed in this set of images, along with the main undercarriage units.

Main gear units...

These are well detailed and fit easily into their respective locations. One feature missing from the huge Messier units is the metal ‘band’ that extends outward around the rear of the main tyres. This is another of those odd omissions by the manufacturer and one for each side is fabricated using fuse wire and attached with cyano. You can see it clearly on the pic of my finished model.

There are many variations in aerial fit across the Halifax aircraft of the period and I used the image above of the real aircraft as the basis to decide what to fit and what to leave off.

And that, as they say, is that!

SMN Quick summary	Star rating out of 5
Quality of moulding	****
Accuracy	***
Instructions	****
Decals	*****
Subject choice	*****
Build enjoyment	****
Overall	***

You will find detailed comment in the text above, but I have to say, for all the negative aspects of the tooling, I really enjoyed this build.

Watch out for:

- Ailerons (gap on upper surfaces)
- prop blade shape (no pointed blades) If you have the Revell Lanc, you can use the pointy blades from that kit for your Halifax and use the paddle blades for your Lancaster build
- bomb-bay doors (only single-doors supplied, not double as they should be)
- undercarriage detail omission ('guard' around rear of the tyre)
- possibly those engine nacelles, although having built the kit and studied dozens of images, sorry I'm not convinced the vitriolic (mostly forum) criticism is justified at all

The positive aspects are many:

- fit of all parts is excellent across the board
- training edges of control surfaces thin and in scale
- options for different engine cowls and exhausts
- positionable control surfaces
- options for nose, H2S radar and turrets
- main gear options for different marks

- open bomb bay with bombs
- clear parts are incredibly clear and fit perfectly
- decals

Geoff C.


FS B


FS B


FS B