

# Seattle Chapter News



Seattle Chapter IPMS/USA  
December 2012

## PREZNOTES



We have just celebrated Thanksgiving, and shortly my family will be celebrating Christmas and the New Year. It is at this time that I find myself reflecting on the year that has been, and looking forward to the New Year that will soon be. Overall, it has been a good year, interspersed with a few very sad notes. My wife remains in gainful employment, and we have all been in fairly good health. The former is very important, as she is the main source of our family's income, but without the latter, all the wealth in the world won't be much use to you. The main focus of our life (or so it seems some days!), the kids' soccer, has been a resounding success. My son William was promoted to the top team in his club, Seattle United, and that team in turn finished the year in first place in the top youth division in Washington State. My daughter Zoë's team also has done well, though this was somewhat interrupted when she (as their starting goal keeper) dislocated her finger in a freak training accident. Thankfully we are blessed with good health care coverage.

On the down side, there have been a number of deaths of late. My "Uncle Joe" in Glendale, CA died during the summer, after suffering a lingering illness. This was followed recently by the death of Francie Alcorn, wife of IPMS Seattle member John Alcorn. Less than a month ago, my cousin in New Zealand went in to see what was causing his sore back, and while at the doctor's he was diagnosed with late stage pancreatic cancer. He passed from this earth 16 days later, and was buried this past Wednesday, with over 400 close friends and relatives at the funeral.

As I was contemplating all this today, especially the "down" side of the past year, there was a sharp knock at the door that jarred me back to the here and now. Opening the door, I was greeted by my friendly mailman, who immediately upped my spirits by handing me two packages. These contained four new model kits. All four kits, two each from WingNutWings

and Dragon Models, are the current state of the art in the modeling world. The fidelity of the detail on the plastic parts is amazing, the number of parts mind blowing, the quality of the decals and instructions proving that we do indeed live "in a gold age of modeling". Trivial compared to the more serious matters in life, but one needs a little "fluff" to keep the spirits up when times appear tough.

As you celebrate the upcoming holiday season, I would hope that you would pause for a moment to reflect on the following: where there is life, so there will be death. Never miss an opportunity to spend some quality time with your good friends and close relatives, knowing that one day they might not be able to be with us anymore. Cherish the good times, for there will be hard times as well as we progress through life. Know that the good times can become sad at any moment, but realize when you are having a bad day, there are bound to be those having an even worse day. Never miss an opportunity to offer someone a big smile, a warm "Hello!". Raise a toast this holiday season to those no longer with us, and give a warm sincere hug to those who remain.

*continued on page 15*

### In This Issue

<b>RS Models A.V.I.A. FL.3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Tamiya Matilda</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Hurricane Bookshelf: Battle of Britain Revisited</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Fokker Eindecker Compendiums 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>MENG A39 Tortoise</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2013 IPMS Seattle Meeting Dates</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2013 IPMS Seattle Renewal Form</b>	<b>16</b>

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**Public Disclaimers, Information, and Appeals for Help**

This is the official publication of the Seattle Chapter, IPMS-USA. As such, it serves as the voice for our Chapter, and depends largely upon the generous contributions of our members for articles, comments, club news, and anything else involving plastic scale modeling and associated subjects. Our meetings are generally held on the second Saturday of each month, (see below for actual meeting dates), at the **North Bellevue Community/Senior Center, 4063-148th Ave NE**, in Bellevue. See the back page for a map. Our meetings begin at 10:00 AM, except as noted, and usually last for two to three hours. Our meetings are very informal, and are open to any interested modeler, regardless of interests. Modelers are encouraged to bring their models to the meetings. Subscriptions to the newsletter are included with the Chapter dues. Dues are \$25 a year for regular mail delivery of the newsletter, and \$15 for e-mail delivery, and may be paid to Spencer Tom, our Treasurer. (See address above). We also highly recommend our members join and support IPMS-USA, the national organization. See below for form. Any of the members listed above will gladly assist you with further information about the Chapter or Society.

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers, and do not constitute the official position of the Chapter or IPMS-USA. You are encouraged to submit any material for this newsletter to the editor. He will gladly work with you and see that your material is put into print and included in the newsletter, no matter your level of writing experience or computer expertise. The newsletter is currently being edited using a PC, and PageMaker 6.5. Any Word, WordPerfect, or text document for the PC would be suitable for publication. Articles can also be submitted via e-mail, to the editor's address above. Deadline for submission of articles is generally twelve days prior to the next meeting - earlier would be appreciated! Please call me at 425-823-4658 if you have any questions.

If you use or reprint the material contained in the newsletter, we would appreciate attribution both to the author and the source document. Our newsletter is prepared with one thing in mind; this is information for our members, and all fellow modelers, and is prepared and printed in the newsletter in order to expand the skills and knowledge of those fellow modelers.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

The IPMS Seattle 2012/13 meeting schedule is as follows. All meetings are from **10 AM to 1 PM**, except as indicated. To avoid conflicts with other groups using our meeting facility, we must **NOT** be in the building before our scheduled start times, and **MUST** be finished and have the room restored to its proper layout by our scheduled finish time. We suggest that you keep this information in a readily accessible place.

**December 8**  
**February 9**

**January 12**  
**March 9**

**IPMS/USA NEW MEMBER APPLICATION**

IPMS No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(leave blank) (FIRST M LAST)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (required by PO): \_\_\_\_\_

Adult: \$25       Junior (17 years old or younger): \$12

Family (Adult dues + \$5, one set magazines, # of membership cards required: \_\_\_\_\_)

If recommended by an IPMS member, list his/her name and member number \_\_\_\_\_ (name) (IPMS#)

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Check out our web page: [www.ipmsusa.org](http://www.ipmsusa.org)

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## RS Models 1/72nd Scale A.V.I.A. FL.3

by Andrew Bertschi

The former A.V.I.A. (Azionaria Vercellese Industrie Aeronautiche) company, based at Vercelli in northern Italy, was formed in 1938 by F. Lombardi, a well-known pilot of the day. Their first project was a small, two seat light touring-training aircraft known as the A.V.I.A. FL.3. The FL.3 was of mixed construction and intended to fill dual roles; an economical sport tourer and a tandem seat basic trainer, so both open and closed cockpit versions were developed. The fuselage was made from wired braced steel tubing covered by aluminum coated wooden panels with metal engine and fuel tank covers. The entire wing assembly was constructed of wood with fabric-covered control surfaces.

The prototype FL.3, powered by a 45hp Czech-built Persy II 4-cyl opposed air-cooled engine, first flew in late 1938. The design fulfilled specifications issued by the Italian Air Ministry for a low cost aircraft suitable for use with Italian Aero Clubs and the Regia Aeronautica selected the FL.3 as an initial trainer. Versions of the FL.3 produced up through 1944 were powered by an uprated 60hp C.N.A. D/IVS engine, derived from the Persy II.

Military flight instructors criticized the FL.3's unconventional (for the day) side-by-side seating as well as its lesser durability compared to standard military trainers, so in Italy most ended up being utilized by aero clubs. All together, 355 examples were built during the war. In 1941 Croatia ordered 20 examples that were used for training and anti-guerilla operations. Following the Italian armistice of 1943, German officials confiscated 250 examples from the RSI government to be used in French and Austrian-based Luftwaffe flight schools.

Production resumed again after the war and A.V.I.A. was taken over by Lombardi



during 1947. At that point the name was changed to the Lombardi FL.3. During postwar production, a limited number were also built using Continental, Lycoming, and Walter Mikron III 4-cyl engines. By the time production ended in 1948, A.V.I.A. and Lombardi had built around 700 aircraft in total. A fascinating side note is that during 1947 pilots training for the clandestine Israeli Air Force flew FL.3s at a flight school set up at Rome's Urbe airport.

This kit is one of a series of three limited-run injection FL.3s issued by RS Models several years ago. This is the only version to feature a closed canopy - the other two can only be built with open cockpits. The flimsy, open ended box contains a single sprue of pale brown plastic parts, a small photo-etched fret, a pair of finely detailed cast resin engine cylinders and a resin nose section, a single vac-u-form canopy and a nicely printed decal sheet with four options; two Italian ANR aircraft, one Luftwaffe, and one Croatian machine. The 38 injected parts are crisp and accurate with good detail throughout though some of the more fiddly parts such as the control columns are overscale and clunky. The plastic used is easy to work with and everything fit pretty well.

Typical of limited run kits, all joints are of the butt variety so pinning them during assembly is strongly suggested to enhance structural integrity - I did this on every major joint during my build. In addition, most of the landing gear parts are extremely fragile and as the plastic was so weak, I ended up reinforcing the main gear legs with hypodermic tubing and also replicated several of the landing gear braces with metal wire.

There isn't a lot of published material on the FL.3, at least in English, but I was able to find a number of useful reference photos and factory illustrations of the cockpit and engine areas for detailing. As the instruction sheet is quite basic, all of these helped a great deal.

Before going any further, I want to mention that I built this kit several years ago and have unfortunately forgotten some of the minute details. That being said, as with most of my builds, I start with the smaller sub-assemblies first.

In this case I cleaned up the wheels, propeller, resin engine cylinders, tail surfaces and wing sections, thinning the leading and trailing edges of the latter two items. The engine cylinders were cleaned

up, dry fitted and then pins were attached so they would seat in the resin nose section. At this point I also reinforced and pinned the tailskid, which is small and very fragile. Then I made and fitted a set of four tiny ejector exhaust pipes (the kit provided parts were for a different version of the FL.3) and I painted the cylinders Gunze Metal Black. After drying, the cylinders were cleared, given a wash and then set aside to dry. Later they were dull coated in advance of some light dry brushing to bring out more of their finely cast detail. Once the other parts were prepped, all were sprayed with a few light coats of primer and set aside to dry.

Now it was time to join the fuselage halves. As this is a limited-run kit, a lot of dry fitting and careful sanding of both halves and the nose section were required to make everything line up correctly. One thing I did not like was the kit seats; their shape and cushion detailing made them look like small chaise lounges. I replaced both with a pair of DC-3 passenger seats from the spares boxes that I ended up heavily altering to fit. After modification and thinning, they looked much better than the original parts. The new seats were then primered, painted a dark Tamiya

brown, sprayed with clear and then washed with artists' oils before being put aside to dry.

Next step was the wings, which are simple, one-piece items. I sanded and dry-fitted them where they attach to the fuselage but since it was a butt joint, two brass pins per side were required to strengthen the joint and a few small alignment shims were needed to maintain the correct dihedral. All in all a lot of careful sanding and trial-and-error dry fitting was required before everything looked right. Filler was also required to smoothen everything out, as the fit of the wings was the worst part of the kit. I also ended up having to rescribe the wing/fuselage joint line and redrill a few holes. Once that was done, I masked off the main fuselage and sprayed several light coats of primer on the wing joint area before moving to the next step, the cockpit.

The FL.3 was one of the first primary trainers to feature side-by-side cockpit seating. That and a broad canopy mean the entire cockpit area is open and many small details are clearly visible. In this area the kit falls down somewhat as the seats do not look right and the control columns

are thick and decidedly out of scale. As mentioned above, to rectify the former I replaced the seats. I also scratch-built replacement control columns, added a throttle control, revised the rudder pedals. Some careful painting and a few washes were also used to bring out more of the molded-in detail. After that was dry, the seats were installed and I added a pair of dry-transfer seat belts to them to provide a bit of extra detail and color. All these steps made a difference and cockpit came out quite nice. Once everything had dried for a while, I carefully sealed off and masked the cockpit area in advance of priming and sanding the fuselage exterior.

After laying down grey primer as the base coat, I used lightened Model Master WWII Italian Olive Green and WWII Italian Blue Gray as my primary colors. Both were altered to match ZNDH (Zrakoplovstvo Nezavisne Dr•ave Hrvatske – "Air Force of the Independent State of Croatia") color callouts I that came across. After allowing them to dry, I went over everything lightly with a Scotchbright pad and then applied a few coats of clear gloss to seal the paint to apply decals. The canopy was left off during this stage but shortly afterwards, I ran into a completion roadblock. Unfortunately, I damaged the single vac canopy that came in the kit to the point where it became unusable. This meant I had to make a wooden buck to thermoform a replacement piece. I had not worked much with basswood before, so it took time to master working with but after some helpful input from a fellow modeler, I was able to get the buck to the level needed for a suitable replacement. The new piece came out quite nice; thin and clear, with excellent fit that was actually tighter than the kit piece.

The decals went on with no problems though I chose to trim the clear carrier film in a few places, since some clearances were tight. After applying decals, everything was sealed with flat clear and I lightly weathered the aircraft to give it a used but maintained look. I focused on the



wing leading edges and roots, the wheels/tires, fuselage underside and in areas where personal would typically stand while entering or servicing the aircraft. As far as markings go, I went with the Croatian option for several reasons; firstly, I like small air forces and did not have a ZNDH marked aircraft in my collection. Besides that, the castle nose art, colorful tail markings and the slightly odd, armor-like shade of green the ZNDH painted these aircraft all appealed to me.

Clear trim glue was used to attach the canopy to the fuselage and once it had dried, I attached and adjusted numerous small pieces of silver decal film that were used to represent the metal canopy framing. Though I felt it looked a little odd, several period color photos taken at a ZNDH flight training school during the war clearly showed the framing to be bright, unpainted metal. After this I attached the remaining external detail parts; the tailskid, exhaust stacks and metal fuel tank cap. The final addition before completion was building and attaching a pair of control horns and cables for the ailerons. While clearly visible in reference photos, they were not included in the kit.

Overall, I am quite happy with the outcome here. Despite a few minor limited-run related issues, I can highly recommend this kit, especially if you like obscure aircraft or small European touring/training aircraft, as I do. My sincere thanks also go out to master modeler and good friend Jim Schubert - his advice on the finer points of mold making and the use of his thermoforming machine were invaluable in the completion of this project!

*[Thanks to Chris Banyai-Riepl and [www.internetmodeler.com](http://www.internetmodeler.com) for permission to use Andrew Bertschi's and Jim's articles. - ED]*



## Tamiya 1/48th Scale British Infantry Tank Matilda Mk.III/IV

by Andrew Birkbeck

A few years ago, Tamiya released an all new 1/35th scale version of the Matilda Mk.III/IV, having produced an earlier kit of this venerable British tank back in the 1970s. Those who build in 1/48th scale hoped that eventually Tamiya would downsize their new 1/35th kit and allow the modeler to have an alternative to the 35-year old Bandai 1/48th scale Matilda, which was selling on the collectors circuit for upwards of \$100. Tamiya has kindly obliged!



The kit comes molded in Tamiya's standard tan colored plastic, and the quality of the parts is night vs. day compared with the old Bandai kit. In all areas, the detailing on the Tamiya kit is crisper and more refined than the old Bandai version. Of particular note are Tamiya's now standard "link and length" tracks, a true godsend compared to the miserable Bandai "rubber band" style of track, which was poorly detailed, hard to install, and which paint simply wouldn't stick to. Contrast this to Tamiya's tracks, which are highly detailed for the scale, glue together easily with standard hobby cement, fit perfectly, and accept paint like all the other parts in the kit!

Construction of this model is simplicity itself. The instructions, unlike those of certain competitors, are easy to follow and basically foolproof. The parts are well



detailed, crisply molded, and I only found a couple of ejection pin marks that need taking care of – parts C4, in instruction Section 19. For those wanting to build the model out of the box, the kit can be assembled in ten hours or less.

The "problem" with this kit comes if the modeler wishes to produce a historically accurate version of the Matilda. The 1/48th scale kit, like its 1/35th scale predecessor, is an amalgam of Mark III and Mark IV characteristics. Decal option "A" in both scales is for a vehicle named "Phantom" from the 42nd Royal Tank Regiment during "Operation Crusader", North Africa, 1941. This particular vehicle was an earlier version of the Matilda than is depicted in the Tamiya kit. The earlier version of the Matilda had a different casting around the driver's visor, part C5, Section 14 in the kit. Using photos, the modeler will need to alter this area for complete accuracy.

Other areas of inaccuracy concern the turret, instructions Section 19. Parts P1 are Bren gun ammunition bins and should be deleted from "Phantom". The kit also comes with the later style of rear hull auxiliary fuel tank, Section 10, parts A6/C25/C39. Also, Section 13, parts A21, and Section 15. Photo references indicate this was not in common use during "Operation Crusader." In its place on the rear hull

would most likely have been a "POW" rack which was used to carry "flimsy" cans of petrol, oil and water. Such a rack can be fairly easily fashioned by finding some good reference shots off the internet, and some Evergreen strip plastic. The Czech firm Hauler produces the flimsy cans themselves in 1/48th scale.

The second scheme offered by Tamiya in their color and marking guide is option "B," which is for a vehicle named "Defiance." Research indicates this was from 4th Royal Tank Regiment in North Africa, 1941. So this, too, would be an earlier vehicle than that depicted in the Tamiya kit, and so the modeler would need to incorporate the changes listed above for "Phantom" to have a more accurate model. Additionally, Tamiya got the wrong War Department number for "Defiance", listing it as T6949, but it should be T6849.

Then, one comes to the paint schemes in option A and B. This is the so called Caunter three color scheme (Light Stone BS61 or Portland Stone BS64, together with Slate and Silver-Grey). However, research indicates that there wasn't simply one such scheme, as Tamiya's painting instructions suggest, but THREE such Caunter schemes. This from research done by renowned color and marking expert Mike Starmer. Mr. Starmer produces an



To conclude: Tamiya's new 1/48th scale Matilda is a wonderfully easy kit to build. It is, however, a mixture of variants, and thus the modeler can't build color and marking options "A" or "B" out of the box. However, with a little research together with a little scratchbuilding work, those interested in more accurate models shouldn't find it too difficult to "upgrade" the kit. My sincere thanks to TamiyaUSA and IPMS USA for allowing me to review this kit.

excellent series of WW2 British Color and Markings reference books, one of which is devoted solely to the various Caunter schemes. Thus the modeler needs to find photos of the relevant vehicle and carefully examine them to determine which of the three Caunter schemes was utilized for the specific vehicle being modeled!

Tamiya then offers the modeler a third color and marking scheme in their kit, Option "C". This is for a vehicle listed as being from the 49th Royal Tank Regiment, "England 1942," and which shows it painted in a two-tone brown scheme. Given the later date, this perhaps is a vehicle that can be built accurately straight from the box, but unfortunately I am unable to confirm this as my research isn't wide ranging enough.

The model as built by me for this review takes some of the information above into account, but ignores other bits! I built the model out of the box, except for deleting the Bren gun ammo bins and the auxiliary fuel tank. This allowed for a "reasonably accurate" profile. However, the thought of a three-tone Caunter scheme was a tad daunting for me, while at the same time I loved the bright markings of "Phantom." So I painted my model in Light Stone BS61 (White Ensign enamel range of paint), the color of North African Matildas prior to the introduction of the 3 tone Caunter scheme! So sue me...



## Hurricane Bookshelf & Accessories: Battle of Britain Revisited - Show, Book, and Kit

by Scott Kruize

It never ceases to amaze me that even after all these years, there's yet more to learn about the Second World War. I don't just mean that I'm encountering things that I hadn't happened upon before. There actually is new information still coming out. Just as one example, the late Jeffrey Ethell set himself a personal quest to gather certain Kodachrome slides that had moldered, almost forgotten in attics and closets, for decades. They were taken by American amateur photographers, called up by Uncle Sam and scattered around the globe during the conflict, with their 'new' miniature 35mm cameras. His collections into books like *War Eagles in Original Color* have gotten me over the notion I've had since childhood that the Second World War was fought in black and white.

Roughly once a month, I go south to University Place to visit Ken Murphy. We raid Discount Models, do lunch at his favorite hamburger joint, go back to examine our loot from Discount, then fire up his super-huge, wall-covering Sony TV. Ken has a cable subscription that gets him all those jillions of channels, including the History Channel and the Military Channel. Last Saturday he introduced me to a program in a new series I hadn't seen before, *Secrets of WW2*. He recorded one about the Battle of Britain, a subject - you may have gathered - of perpetual interest to me, so we watched it.

The 'found' evidence in this case was reconnaissance archives from the German war effort. The pictures were sharp and clear, covering essential military installations in southern England. Clearly, those reconnaissance pilots and observers did their job. What the newly revealed evidence also contained: horrendously bad errors in interpretation. Two examples:

Eastchurch is an airfield in southern England, between the German bases and London, and it was bombed over and over again. Many of its work force were injured or killed but their distress and suffering had next-to-nothing to do with the Luftwaffe's winning the battle. Eastchurch was not a Fighter Command base.

Much worse, there were excellent clear photographs of some Chain Home radar sites, along with photo-interpretation notes. Some clueless staff officer decided they had something to do with a civilian aircraft landing system and were of no military significance. Program interviewees emphasized what a war-losing mistake this was. If not for the radar stations with their affiliated plotting and control system, linked together by the best telecommunications system that could be devised at the time, the thinly-spread British fighter defense could not have been brought to engage the enemy raids accurately, as and when they occurred.

The program contained the usual description of the flow of the Battle of Britain, but a particular phrase caught my attention: 'the hardest day'. I'm nearly through a recently acquired book by that title.

*The Hardest Day - The Battle of Britain, 18 August 1940*, copyright 1979 and 1988; Castle Military Paperbacks edition published 1998; printed in Great Britain by Mackays of Chatham Place by the Orion Publishing Group.

Alfred Price is an English aviation historian that I've read before, including one of his several books on the wartime exploits of that other fighter, the Supermarine Spitfire. Of course the cover has that plane...three, in fact, looking glamorous and gorgeous as always, but the main picture between the title and his name shows a Hurricane at readiness, with its squadron's pilots all in flight suits and Mae Wests, trying to relax before the next scramble.

It's a known as the hardest day because at the time, during three major assaults and

several smaller actions, it represented the largest number of warplanes engaged, ferocious fighting on a scale to match, and the most casualties on both sides. The scholarship that went into this book is impressive, to make a major understatement. Price has to have gone through not just reams of military material, but a lot of background information, and many stories from English civilians under the air fighting that day.



There were quite a few stories for the civilians to tell. Some attacks came in at low level. Other fights between opposing aircraft went lower and lower until tree tops were being skimmed. In some cases, civilians were right by aircraft appearing over the hedge and crash-landing in a nearby field.

None of the people in this book would have said to themselves, at the time, "this is a great day...they'll call it 'the hardest day'...it's a turning point in world history, and here I'm a part of it."

Reading the book has inspired me to start one of the Hasegawa Hurricane kits I have. I've built Hurricanes from several other



manufacturers, but the only Hasegawa build I ever did was part of my series "They weren't all Zeros." Now I've finished assembly of the P-47 in the 'American Aces' boxing. (There are two specific ace schemes contained in the kit, and the one shown on the cover art can be seen in that Ethell book cited above.)

It all went so well I had to assemble the Hasegawa Hurricane. It's acknowledged to be the very best of the available kits in 1/48th scale. The Battle of Britain may be long over, but it will be studied - and modeled - well into the future. If you share my interest, you couldn't do better than to watch that Military Channel program, read Dr. Price's book, and build that kit.

This will tide me over until our Club members finish getting me that real Hurricane Mk. IIA from the upcoming Bonham's auction.

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## *Fokker Eindecker Compendium 1 and Compendium 2, by Josef Scott*

**reviewed by Jim Schubert**

With the publication in June 2012 of these compendia we now have the equivalent of four Windsock DataFiles on the Fokker Eindecker. The first, DataFile No. 15, on the E.III, of 32 pages was published in 1989; the second, No. 91, on the E.I and E.II of 36 pages was published in 2002; these earlier volumes were written by P. M. Grosz. Do these two new volumes add anything of substance to the contents of those earlier DataFiles? Well, yes: they have more and better photos for your reference. They also offer more color and they are better printed on better paper stock than their predecessors. They are available from the Publisher at £23 each (\$37) plus postage.

*Fokker Eindecker Compendium 1* covers, in excellent detail, the Fokker monoplanes leading up to the M.5K/L; the "K" indicating a short (Kurz) wing and the "L" indicating a long (Lang) wing. When a machine gun was added the designation became M.5K/MG also known as the E.I; this variation had a seven-cylinder, 80 hp Oberursel rotary engine. *Compendium 1* also covers in good detail the types, from the A.I, which led up to the E.I.



The E.I with a longer wing and a nine-cylinder, 100 hp, Oberursel, rotary engine became the M.5L/MG or E.II with which *Compendium 2* starts it then takes us up through the E.III to the two, sometimes three, gunned E.IV. I know of only five model kits, at this writing, of the Eindecker; they are all of the E.II/E.III. The E.III was the most produced with a total of about 300 being built for all customers. The kits are: Revell and Eduard's kits in 1/72nd; the ancient Aurora 1/48th kit and the 1994 and 2009 Eduard 1/48th issues. The list of references in my review of the two Eduard 1/48th Fokker Eindecker kits is quite good, to which must now be added these two compendia.

Surprisingly, considering how iconic of WWI aviation the Eindecker is, Wingnut

Wings have not yet produced a kit in 1/32nd; I suspect it's coming.

Albatros Productions have given us two beautiful new references to replace their earlier DataFiles No. 15 and 91 covering the same material. Both DataFiles are now out of print but remain available in the used-book market.

The one big thing that, I think, is missing in all four of these Windsock volumes is a clear tabulation of the sequence and equivalents of the various M, A, and E designations for these monoplanes from the earliest unarmed two-seater scouts to the two/three gunned single-seaters.



These are two great, but dear, reference volumes.

My thanks to Albatros Productions for providing the review copies. Visit their website for ordering details.

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Pages: 60 each

## MENG 1/35th Scale A39 Tortoise

by Eric Christianson

The relatively new Chinese company, MENG, has recently released the first-ever rendition of the British A39 'Tortoise', a behemoth ostensibly created to join battle with the German super-heavy tanks being designed at the close of World War II. The mind boggles at the specter of a platoon of (Tortai?) engaging a gaggle of MAUS monsters on the plains of Europe. Of the six vehicles completed, however, only one was sent across the channel for field testing, but never entered combat.



My first thought upon opening the box was: This is a big tank. Not a lot of parts but what there is significant. Much has been said about the delicate nature of some of the parts that represent electric lines and cables. Well, they weren't kidding. The first thing I did when I opened the box was to carefully snip out the frame surrounding these parts (they are all together) and place this sprue section in an envelope to protect it. I have no doubt that the weight of a single un-bagged sprue lying up against these parts would have broken the delicate pieces.

At the other end of the spectrum, the individual track links look absolutely HUGE. The Tortoise links proved to be a breeze to clean and assemble. There is a single length of white nylon string that almost gets lost between the bagged sprues (it is not included in a bag) – this is supposed to be used for the tow cables

but ended up in the trash can – more on that later. Many of the remaining pieces look very similar to each other but are not. I can't begin to say how many times I attached something upside down and/or backwards because I overlooked the smallest of differences. Go slow.

The contents of the box include:

- 1 Upper and Lower hull packaged together in a bag
- 6 sprues in dark green plastic packaged separately.
- 3 sprues in dark brown plastic for the 144 individual links packaged in a single bag
- 1 25-inch piece of thin, white string
- 1 14-page instruction booklet sheet with 23 steps and a four-view color diagram

This is the second MENG kit I've had the pleasure to build, the first being the VsKfz 617 Minenraumer. While the soft, green plastic used in this kit is different, the high-quality of the instruction booklet is the same. MENG really puts the extra effort into presentation and accuracy, which can make the build a real joy, and keeps me coming back for more.

### Things to consider before starting:

Should you clean and assemble what you can't see? More than half the parts in the kit make up the bogies and individual track links, yet most of this detail is hidden by the side skirts. If you decide (like I did) that you just want to build what you can see on the finished model, then ignore the differences in the 'Suspension Systems A and B' – they are both the same. More on this later. Don't bother cleaning any of the return rollers and related detail, and you will use only about 76 links (out of 144).

Possible bad fit of the main super structure. Before you begin, take out the main upper and lower hulls and try to fit them together along the curving line of plastic molded into the lower hull made for this purpose. If it fits, ignore the remainder of this paragraph and the images showing the ugly gaps below. In my review copy, the main upper hull would not fit over the guide, but I did not realize this until I was

well into the project. I made the mistake of trying to force it with glue and clamps, only to find out that by doing so I had 'bowed' the lower chassis in such a way as to prevent the rear hull plate from fitting later on. This of course caused all sorts of other problems. If you find that the upper hull in your kit does not fit perfectly, I suggest you complete Steps Eight and Nine and (part D35 in Step Eleven) first. Then, carefully scrape and sand off the molded-on guide on the lower hull, and glue the upper and lower hulls together. After that, you can go back to Step One and start the kit proper.



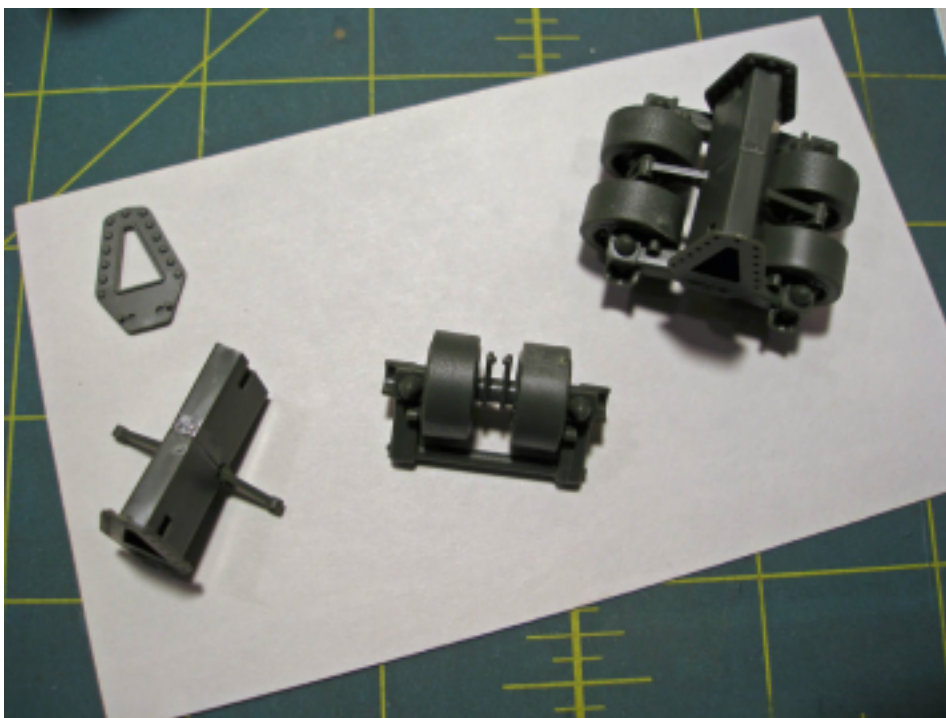
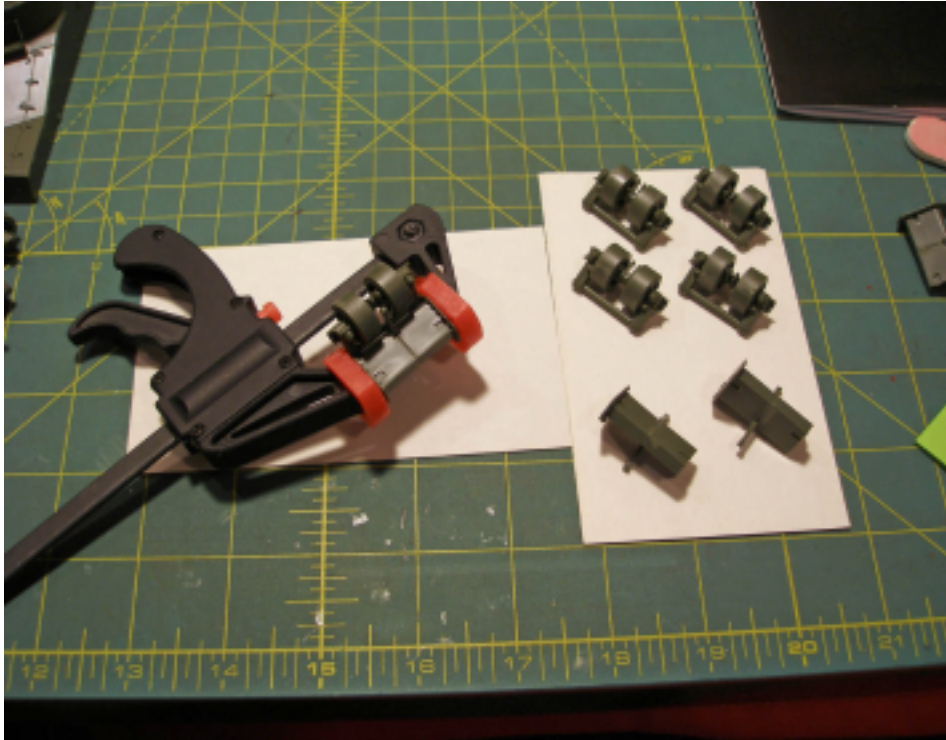
Leave that barrel off! I had to handle this model a lot over the course of the build so I am glad I left the long barrel off the vehicle until the very end. It really gets out there!

### Assembling the Bogies and Wheels

Looking across the Internet it appears that there is a variety of ways to assemble the bogies for the MENG Tortoise, none of which are per the instructions included with the kit.

Perhaps this is due the fiddly nature of the design – there are many built-in ‘features’ of the kit that allow parts to be movable and such. Or perhaps it is due to the fact that most of the undercarriage is not visible on the final product, and therefore can be bypassed if desired.

Whatever the case, the design here is a little finicky, but I commend MENG for making the best of a complex engineering problem to begin with. I ended up using a little from each of the several approaches I found. By the time I got to the third bogie I had come up with what I feel is the best way to get from here to there:



1. Review the two ‘Bogie Assembly’ images opposite and follow along in the instructions...
2. Glue part A10 to parts A12 and let this dry thoroughly. There are sixteen of these assemblies.
3. Glue part A2 to parts A7 and A5, fitting these three parts around the above assembly, leaving the above assembly free-turning. You will need to pay careful attention to the alignment here as there are no detents or other design features to guarantee the parts line up. These assemblies must dry thoroughly before continuing.
4. Glue parts B28 together trapping the two swing arms (Parts A3) between them. The swing arms must be able to swing freely. Since there is no difference between Suspension System A and B if you are not including the (hidden) return rollers, do the same with parts B29 and B30, again trapping parts A3 between.
5. Glue (one) part A1 to one end of the assemblies you created in Step 3, above. Let everything cure. From here on you will be working with one bogie at a time until all eight are finished.
6. Glue the second part A1 to the other end of the assemblies you created in Step 3, above. Before this dries too much...
7. Hold the assembly firmly between your index finger and thumb, and, paying attention to the angle that the swing arms need to be in when you are done, slip the wheel assemblies you made in Step 2 into place. The ‘bumper nubs’ need to be pointed upwards when in place. A quote from a scene in the movie ‘Finding Nemo’ comes to mind here. “Think about what you have to do, and do it.”
8. When all looks right, rotate the axles around so that the swing arms are lined up with where they need to be attached, and, using your thumb, simply click them into place. Nice.
9. Add a drop or two of Tamiya liquid cement to the bottoms of each side plates to hold everything in place. This is essential because...
10. The wheels actually have a little travel in them, even after attaching the swing arms. To prevent the bogies from being uneven along the track you need to

decide if you want the Tortoise to 'stand tall' or 'hunker down' when completed. Note that I say that with tongue firmly in cheek here; we're talking perhaps an eighth of an inch. But it will make a difference. I chose the former, so before everything firmed up; I pulled the wheels down as far as they would go so they would all line up once the glue dried.

I have included a picture below (from the manufacturer) that shows a fully-detailed bogie assembly. If you decide to go that route, attach the return rollers and their accompanying detail now, after everything else has dried.



Once all eight bogies are dry, attach them to the main lower hull. If you have left off the return rollers, attach the bogies in any order you wish – without them there is no difference between the two 'Suspension Systems' called out in the instructions. Otherwise, study the diagram at the bottom of page five to see which bogies go where.

### The Track

My last build was a German Maultier with ridiculously small individual Magic-Track links. By comparison, the individual links for the Tortoise are embarrassingly HUGE. But they are beautifully detailed inside and out and fit together very well. The only bad thing I have to say about the track is: they are so big that if one slips out of your fingers while lining up a run, the sheer weight of the thing will scatter anything it hits – but this is certainly no fault of MENG's.

You are provided with 144 links total, which gives you 72 per side if you assemble full runs. I assembled only the visible track, using 38 links per side and

still had a few extra. There is some debate on the Internet about which way the track is laid on the bogies. I simply used the box-top illustration as my guide and moved on.

### Attaching the Side Skirts

Once the track was dry, I looked at attaching the side skirts and ran into the first real design issue with the kit. There are no less than seven connection points of different shapes and sizes, all out of sight, that have to line up perfectly in order to attach each side skirt. The thin edge along the top also requires a close fit to produce the fine seam line there. Since the clearances are so close, and the plastic is so soft, I decided to simply shave off all of the connection points with a scalpel, using a new blade. This resulted in a perfect fit. With the undercarriage, track and side skirts attached, the hefty bulk of this model started to become apparent. I hope it never gets dropped!

### Smoke Dischargers and Machine Guns

The three smoke dischargers look beautiful when finished, but will take a little care getting there. Each of the 18 tubes is molded separately and wobbles in all directions, so I glued two at a time to each discharger and waited for each set to dry before doing the next two.



There are three BESA Mk 3 machine guns on the Tortoise; two in a small, revolving turret up on top, and one on the left-hand side of the upper hull. I used the kit part for the latter, but chose to purchase the brass replacements from LionMarc for the turret, which is really a little model in itself.

With the smoke discharger added on the side, the completed machine gun turret looks like something more suited for a Mech or Gundam Warrior figure model. Very cool.

### Towing Hooks

There are five robust looking tow hooks, three on the front and two in back. If there was ever an opportunity for me to get something upside down and/or backwards, it was here. This is because no matter which way you assemble the half-dozen parts for each hook, they all fit – ergo, they can (and will) all fit wrong. I strongly suggest you assemble the hooks using the following steps:

#### Towing Hook 'A'

1. Clip and clean parts B37 and B38.
2. Hold them up next to each other to make sure one isn't flipped upside down.
3. Glue them to the lower hull where they should go according to the directions, making note of the specific side(s) showing detail vs. no detail.
4. After they are dry, push part B11 through the holes and through part B39. Make sure the detail for part B39 is facing outward.
5. Push part B10 into the hole in front and secure the whole assembly with some liquid glue.

Repeat for the (three) Towing Hook 'B's, using the appropriate parts for those hooks.

### Tow Cables

The very last step I tackled was the tow-cable assembly, stored on the starboard side of the lower hull. It's funny; I worried about the bogies, the super-thin electric lines, the intricate smoke discharges... but what I ended up spending the most time with, and having the most frustration with, were the tow cables. I build German armor, and I've had my share of tow cable problems, but none came close to what I encountered with the Tortoise. I think MENG really blew it here.



First – MENG should have molded these cables in plastic. There are so many delicate and beautifully-molded plastic parts in this kit, many of which might have been done in photo etch by other companies. Why MENG chose to use a thread-and-plastic cable-end approach here is a mystery.

Second – the nylon thread provided is both grossly out of scale and easily frays when manipulated.

Third – the plastic cable ends are in scale, but are far too small to accept any kind of material, much less string, and that's assuming the modeler can successfully hollow out the tiny ends in the first place. Fourth – the placement of the cable bundle requires that the cable itself be drawn relatively tight between the two attachment points. This requires that the four cable sections be cut exactly right – which is very difficult, all things considered.

I started by replacing the nylon string included in the kit with a tighter, twisted cotton string. I then carefully carved out the underside of each plastic double-cable-end so that it resembled an upside-down 'U' shape when done. I then stuffed the two string cables into the cavity and used

CA glue to fasten them. Carefully measuring four pieces of string, I repeated the step above three more times. Unfortunately, when fitted with the fiddly hardware that fixes the tow cables to and around the hull, two of the four cables proved just a bit too long.

Consequently, I applied white glue to the cables to stiffen them and then cut the entire cable assembly into three pieces and glued these to the hull separately, attempting to hide the gaps behind the two cable supports. Not perfect, but good enough.

I attached the smoke dischargers (which went on like a charm) and carried the beast over to the paint booth.

### Painting and Finish

The A39 can be painted any color, as long as it is green, so that's what I chose. Post-war British armor is a shade or two darker than American armor so I settled on a black-green that I could lighten-up with post-shading and weathering.

I started by airbrushing a primer coat of Gunze Mr. Surfacer 1200 over the entire

surface to cover the oils and glue spots and to prepare it for the subsequent finish.

I then airbrushed the entire vehicle Tamiya NATO Black to provide the dark shadow that I wanted in all the nooks and crannies.

I then gave the entire model a coat of Humbrol 75 leaving the black to show through along the edges and recesses. I followed this with a post-shading coat of Humbrol 75 cut with a little Humbrol 103, which is a pale yellow, working from the center of the panels outward, to lighten up the dark green color underneath.

To add some character to an otherwise dull finish, I hand-brushed Future in all the appropriate places and applied some spare decals from my stash (the kit does not come with markings). Looking at reference photos of late/post-war British armor I hand-painted the red triangle stamp on the front upper hull Tamiya X7 Red, the fire extinguishers Vallejo Model Color Buff, and the braided air-cleaner hose Tamiya XF-16 Flat Aluminum. I followed this by adding a filter to the exhaust manifold using several applications of Mig Abt060 Light Rust Brown, and used Paynes Gray for the smoke dischargers and extra track. Both of these colors were heavily thinned with Mona Lisa White Spirit.

Once dry, I shot the whole vehicle with Future to seal the decals and prepare the surface for a wash and a little streaking.

I let the Future dry for two days and then gave the vehicle a pin wash using Mig Shadow Brown 015 oils (aka Raw Umber). To give the flat upper surfaces and the side skirts more depth, I added dots of Mig Wash Brown, Mig Light Rust Brown and Mig Light Mud here and there and rubbed those down with an old cotton sock damp with Mona Lisa. I swirled the same colors in a circular motion on the top of the vehicle and rubbed them out as well to lighten that area up a little. I then added some oil stains using Tensocrom Oil. While the oil paints were drying, I brought out the detail by carefully dry-brushing all the protruding bits with Model Master

Afrika DunkelGrau RAL 7027 1942, an enamel. I usually use oils for dry-brushing, but I like using this Model Master color after looking at some of James Wechsler's great green-armor weathering examples.

I followed this with a 'road-dusting' coat of Vallejo Model Air Light Brown and then shot the whole vehicle with Vallejo Flat Varnish to kill any remaining shine.

I finished the vehicle with a light dusting of various Mig pigments, light earth tones for the body and wheels, dark rust and black for the track, and gun metal to the edges (applied with my finger) to give everything a look of heavy steel.

I finished by attaching the barrel and adding a jerry can from my spare-parts box to the empty tray at the back of the upper hull, securing it using a small piece of lead foil.

Building the big A39 was both a pleasure and a challenge. On the plus side; MENG's superb engineering provides a better (plastic) alternative to the copious photo-etch you find in kits from some other manufacturers. Some of their assemblies are as fun (and challenging) as it gets. The small gun turret up on top; the smoke dischargers, the bogies and wheels, the five devilish towing hooks – all are a lot of fun to figure out and finish.

Truth be told, I have clumsy modeling sessions and I have 'on' sessions – it seemed like during this build I had far more of the former for some reason. Nearly every problem I encountered proved to be self-inflicted however. MENG's instructions are superb and the assembly sequence is generally on target. I guess you just have to be 'on' to build this kit right.

On the negative side; I had some fit problems (that might have been due my sample copy) and a frustrating experience with the tow cables. Those issues aside however, I think this was a great kit to build. The Tortoise helped me become a better modeler and there's nothing wrong with that.

I recommend this kit for average to experienced modelers. Go slow, pay attention to the instructions, and use the suggestions included above. You will be rewarded with a real eye-catcher.

I would like to thank MENG and Steven's International for providing this kit for review, and to IPMS USA for giving me the opportunity to build it.





## 2013 Meeting Dates

Here are the 2013 meeting dates for IPMS Seattle. All meetings, except for the Spring Show at Renton on April 27, will be held on the second Saturday of each month at North Bellevue Community Center.

- January 12
- February 9
- March 9
- April 13
- April 27 (Spring Show at Renton)
- May 11
- June 8
- July 13
- August 10
- September 14
- October 12
- November 9
- December 14

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## Bring Food and Drinks to December Meeting!

Remember to bring food (cookies, cakes, baked goods and other snacks) and non-alcoholic beverages to the IPMS Seattle meeting on December 8.

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## PrezNotes

*from page 1*

And don't forget to spend a little "me time" building some of those amazing models stashed on the hobby room shelves!

*Andrew*

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### IPMS Seattle Renewal Form

Your 2013 IPMS Seattle renewal form is included below. If you have not renewed by the release of the February newsletter you will get a final reminder with that issue. If you do not renew then, you will not get any more newsletters. Dues will be \$15 for those who wish to receive e-mail delivery of the newsletter, and \$25 for those who wish to receive regular mail delivery of the newsletter. Please note that the club's annual dues have been reduced from the base level of \$25 for members receiving the IPMS-Seattle newsletter via e-mail. We will review this on an annual basis. You can renew by writing a check to IPMS-Seattle and mailing it to the address below. Or you can bring the form and payment to the December meeting. Please be very careful when filling out the form. Many of our returned newsletters are the result of poor interpretation of handwritten address information. Our e-mail distribution of the newsletter has been working very well. You get the newsletter the day it goes to the printer, and it is in full color. It also saves us a considerable amount of printing and postage costs and we would really like to encourage you to consider this method of distribution.

#### IPMS Seattle 2013 Dues Form

**Remit to:  
IPMS Seattle  
ATTN: Spencer Tom  
318 N.E. 81st Street  
Seattle, WA 98115**

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Area Code) ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

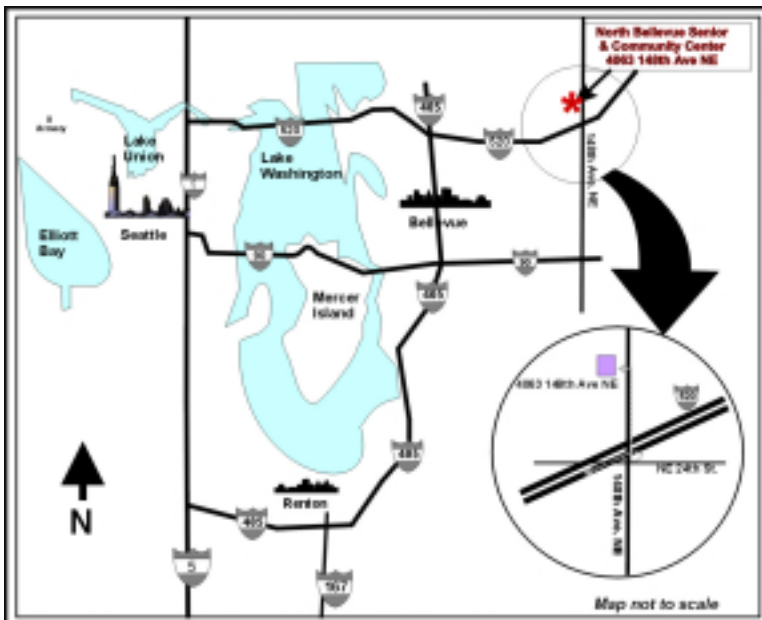
E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail delivery of the newsletter (\$15).       Regular mail delivery of the newsletter (\$25).

Please do NOT release my e-mail and phone information for distributed club rosters.

## Meeting Reminder

## December 8



**North Bellevue Community/Senior Center  
4063-148th Ave NE, Bellevue**

**Directions:** From Seattle or from I-405, take 520 East to the 148th Ave NE exit. Take the 148th Ave North exit (the second of the two 148th Ave. exits) and continue north on 148th until you reach the Senior Center. The Senior Center will be on your left. The Center itself is not easily visible from the road, but there is a signpost in the median.