

MiniArt 1/35th Scale Valentine Mk.VI Canadian-Built Early Production

by Andrew Birkbeck

As I mentioned in my earlier "in-box" review of this kit, published in the November 2011 issue of *Seattle Chapter News*, the detail on the parts is most impressive. I also pointed out that based on initial test fitting trials, parts fit would have "tight tolerances". The full build proved my initial statements to be true.

Paring Down:

Since my kit would be built with all the hatches glued shut, I dispensed with the incorporation of any of the internal detail that MiniArt provides in the kit. Thus I skipped Sections 1 through 4 on the instruction sheet. Sections 5 through 17 cover the construction of the tank model's running gear: drive sprockets, road wheels, shocks, and tracks etc. In Section 8, I removed one of the hull mounting "slats" for the attachment of the idler mounts (parts C6/C7) for a better fit. The return rollers, part B26, in Section 9 had an annoying mold seam around the outer lip, which I felt needed removing. And part Jb4 in Section 10 had a mold flaw on the hub tip which needed sanding out.

Tracks:

The tracks are assembled following the instructions in Section 16 and 17. Being individual links, they need removing from the sprues, the attachment points carefully cleaned up, and then carefully glued together using a simple jig to



keep the runs straight. All very tedious, but the end result is very pleasing compared to what would have been achieved via the "rubber band" method of model track production. That said, I know many modelers who prefer the rubber band method. The problem I experience with rubber band tracks is two-fold: firstly, without a positionable idler arm for the idler wheel, if the tracks aren't perfectly sized, they often turn out too slack or too tight. The former look goofy, the latter usually has the idler wheel popping off under the stress caused by tight tracks. This can be overcome when too sloppy IF the tracks are glueable with ordinary modeling cement or even super glue. However, when using vinyl for the tracks, this doesn't work well. Vinyl is often too rigid as well, adding to any fit issues. The second issue is that often they lack the detail achievable with link by link tracks.

Annealing Photo-Etched Parts:

Section 18: the two headlamp parts, not named in the instructions, are in fact parts Je3 and Je4. PE parts? Yes, the kit comes with a nicely detailed fret of these, and I started by annealing them on one of my stove top elements. I simply turn up the heat to medium, and place the PE fret on the element. As it heats up it turns various shades other than brass, and when it stops with the color shifts, I remove it and let it cool down safely. Annealing makes the PE brass parts much easier to bend. The PE parts were utilized in three areas: internal radio fittings (not used, see earlier comments about internal detail), mudguard brackets, and the engine exhaust guards. The exhausts themselves are built up in Section 23, and took a bit of work to get them fit together nicely so that they mount to the hull and mud guards properly, 13 parts in total. The



PE guards are then carefully bent to shape, and installed over the exhausts.

Hull and Turret:

Construction of the upper hull, Sections 20 through 34, went along without incident, following the instructions, but always test-fitting the parts carefully before applying glue. Again, I mention the tight tolerance when it comes to the fit of the parts Sections 35 through 39 were mostly ignored, as they cover the installation of the main gun breech internal detail, and the construction of the turret radio. Not seen on my model, so not bothered with, though detail on both areas is quite nicely rendered. Finally, Sections 40 through 47 cover the construction of the turret. No problems were encountered here.

Painting:

My assumption regarding the painting of these lend lease vehicles is that it took place in

Canada, where they were assembled. So I followed the kit's instructions and simply painted them Tamiya XF-67 Green, thinned with my favorite thinner for Tamiya paint, Mr Color Self Leveling Thinner. Panel fade was achieved by taking the base color, and lightening it with Tamiya XF-55 Buff. A coat of Tamiya Clear Gloss was then applied, followed by the decal application. The decals cover two different vehicles, one listed as "Training Unit, Borden Camp,

Ontario 1942" while the other is listed as "5th Guard Tank Brigade, 20th Army, North Caucasus, Summer 1942".

I chose the latter. I experienced no issues applying the decals using Mr Mark Softer and Mr Mark Setter by Gunze Sangyo. Following another application of Tamiya Clear Gloss to seal the decals, I then applied some pin washes utilizing a couple of shades of oil paint to help pick out the kit's details, and to provide the model with a suitably "used" look.

Conclusion:

Overall, this kit assembled very well, and has outstanding detail incorporated into the various parts. The instructions were easy to follow, being clearly laid out and without any noticeable mistakes. I would highly recommend this kit to anyone interested in British lend-lease tanks, or Russian armor from WW2. Once again, many thanks to MRC for the opportunity to review and build this excellent model.

