



Feature Build No.6
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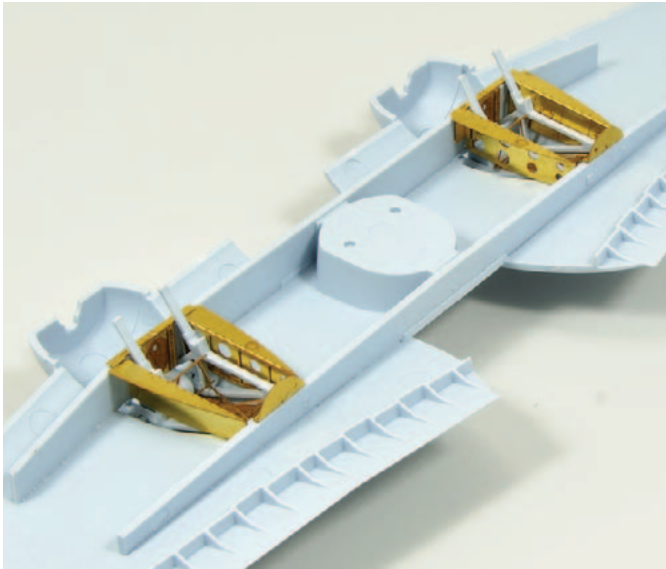
Bristol Blenheim Mk I



by Libor Jekl



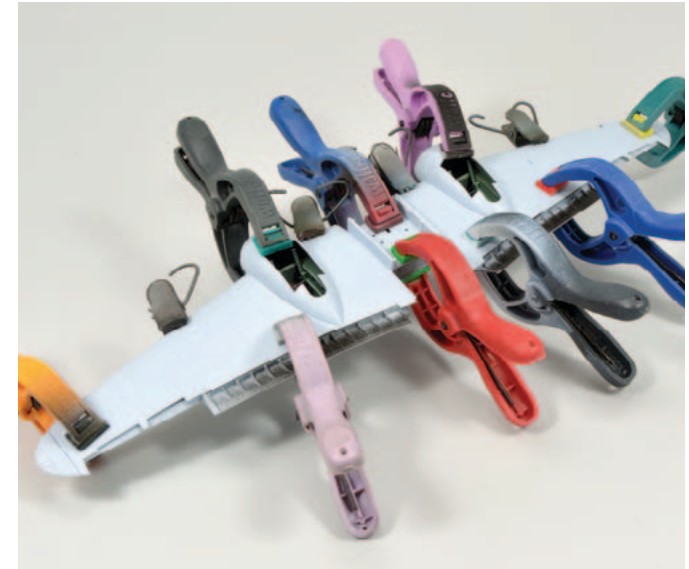
Technical Data
Spec: Bristol Blenheim Mk I
Scale: 1/72nd
Manufacturer: Airfix (www.airfix.com)
Kit No: A04016
Material: IM
Price: £14.99



Pic 01. The undercarriage bays were upgraded with photo-etched parts from the Eduard exterior detail set



All potentially visible areas inside the wings was primed with Mr Finishing Surface 1500 Black, with the Interior Grey/Green from Akan and details picked out in Vallejo acrylics. The AK Interior Streaking Effects was used to apply as wash to highlight the detail



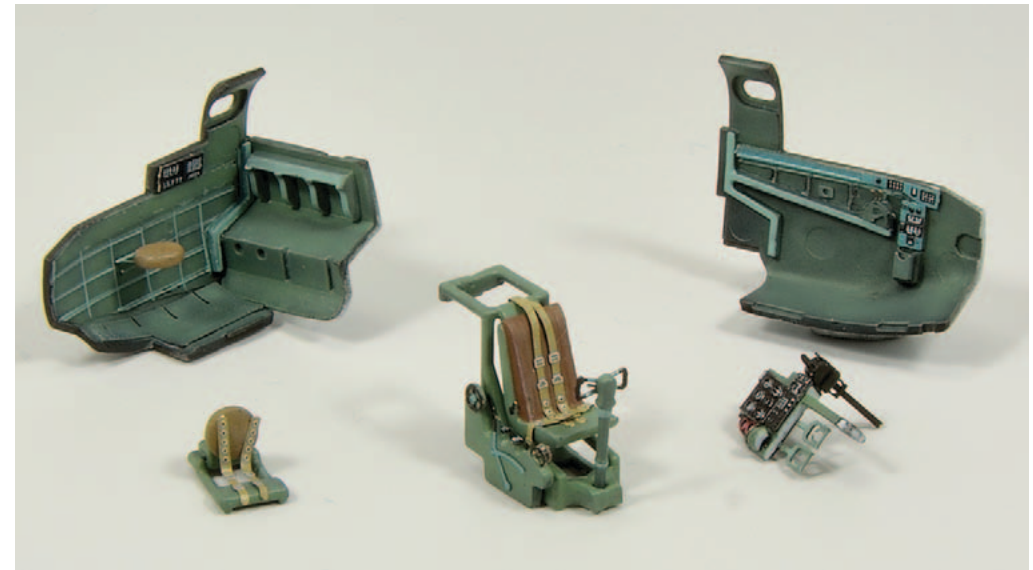
Clamps are the order of the day to get the wing together properly

The arrival of the Airfix's new kit fulfilled the secret wish of quite a few modellers, since a modern kit of this British bomber has been both needed and wanted for a long time. Moreover, the pleasure is doubled because Airfix this time have chosen a more practical approach to the tooling than we saw in the previous kits of the type in this scale, and they have already upgraded this Mk I to the Mk IV!

The Kit

On opening the box we should not be surprised that the fuselage has a separate front section, as this allows the short or long nose versions to be made from a common set of main fuselage parts. Besides this, the bomb bay and wings are also split into separate sub-assemblies, which means that in the end the airframe is divided into

three sections. Otherwise, the kit offers what we have come to expect from Airfix of late, decent surface treatment and a detailed cockpit, engines, bomb bay and undercarriage. On the other hand the other (not so good) typical features such as the thick sprue gates, soft plastic and over-thick wing trailing edge are unfortunately still there. On closer inspection I noticed a rather high number of ejector pin marks in the cockpit and bomb bay areas, but most of them won't be visible in the end. Despite the overall good quality I feel that it falls behind more recent releases from other manufacturers (not just from Japan either), especially as far as the surface finesse is concerned, for instance the raised control surface ribs looks too heavy, and the same applies to the smaller parts that lacks crispness and sharper 'feel' to their detail. Although I do not consider it as a fundamental flaw, I have to say that Airfix have



The cockpit was greatly enhanced with the pre-painted etched parts in the Eduard set



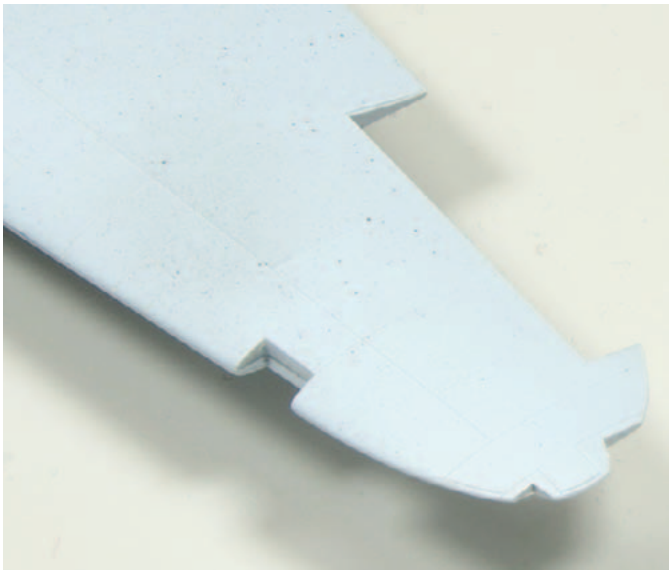
Once assembled the cockpit looks nice and busy



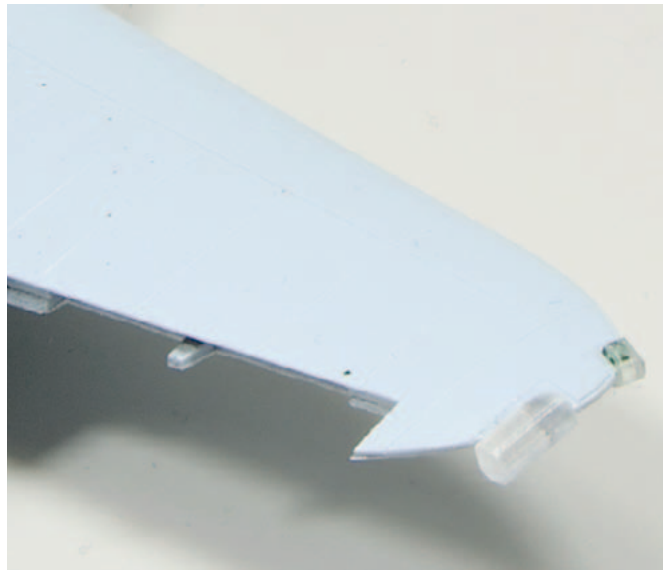
The kit is engineered to break at the forward transit joint on the real aircraft, so the whole nose is separate and thus all marks can share a common main fuselage/wing assembly as seen here



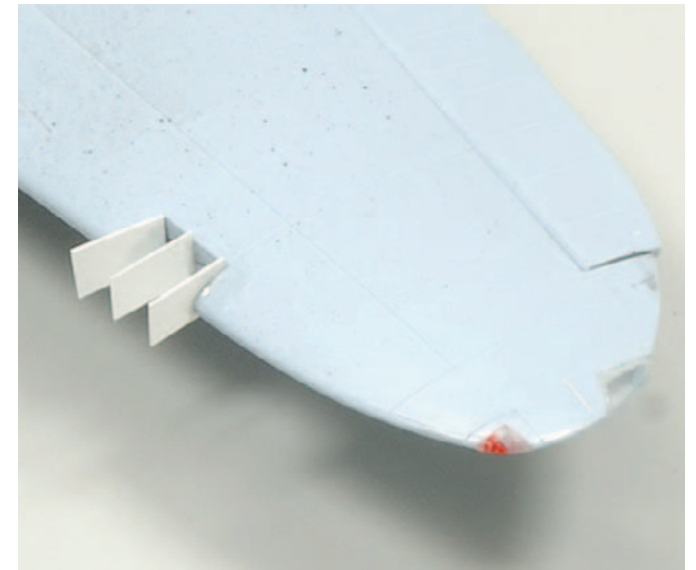
Assembly of the nose to the main airframe is via some sturdy tabs



The kit lacks any wing tip lights, they are moulded solid, so these have to be cut out, plus the landing light housing needs to be boxed in with plasticard



Clear plastic stock is glued to the tip, later it will be carved to shape then sanded and finally polished



The landing light is actually split into two sections, so the sides and the middle divider was added from plasticard, which will later be trimmed to shape



The landing flaps are separate with rib detail moulded into the wings, but it is too heavy...



...so the flaps were glued in the closed position



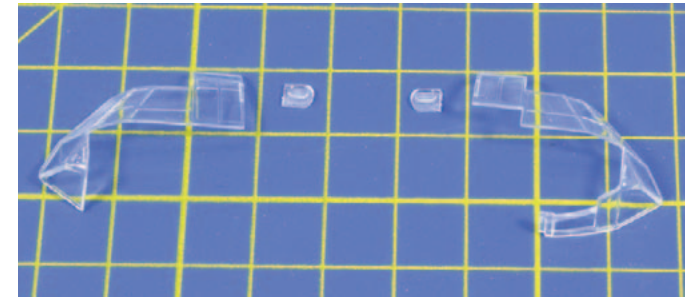
The engines and cowls are multi-part assembled, and very effective



Once painted and with a wash applied to highlight the detail, the engines look very nice indeed



It's all pretty dark once the engines are in the cowls



The glazings are nicely moulded, although the small windows in the fuselage sides have some huge locating tabs around their edges

omitted some of the panel lines, especially on the wing where the rear spar line with their reinforcing strips, the machine gun bay access panel, camera access panel behind bomb bay and others are all missing. The wing tip formation lights are moulded as solid plastic, when even some limited run kits nowadays have these, and the landing lights look simplified. Amongst the alternative parts are open landing flaps (but the rib detail is again on the heavy side), open and closed engine cowl gills, gun turret cupola in up and down position and also open bomb bay, plus some parts specific to the Mark IV. The ordnance consists of two 500lb general-purpose (probably) bomb in

the bomb bay and externally-moulded 28lb bombs on the aft fuselage rack; these look too simplified though as does their racks (I suggest to replace them with Marabu Design excellent etched example), whilst the machine gun is exquisite. The clear parts are cleanly moulded, however they show some distortion on the spherical portions and the framing looks little heavy, additionally, they feature rather massive attachment pins and lugs for easier mounting to the fuselage. The instructions have 48 building steps that are well illustrated with great graphics, but for faster orientation I miss an overall sprue layout diagram. The camouflage scheme covers FX•X (L1134) from No.62 Squadron

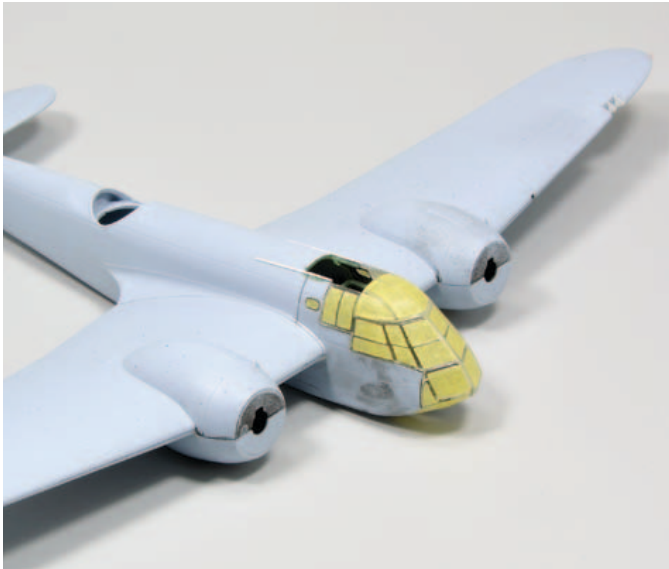
in Malaya in 1941, and a Rumanian example in 1939. However, for the latter scheme I doubt if it wore the yellow theatre marking at that time because these were not introduced until after June 1941? The decal sheet is printed with flawless register and it includes a couple of stencils and wing walkways.

Construction

I kicked off with the wheel bay assembly where I added the missing ribs, bulkheads and braces from the Eduard etched set (#72-589 Blenheim Mk I Exterior) which substantially improved the look of this area. After a base coat of Mr Surfacer Black 1500

I sprayed all the parts with Akan Aircraft Grey/Green acrylic (70007), brushed the oil tank in a red-brown colour mixed with Vallejo paints and gently weathered with AK Interactive Interior Streaking Effects enamel. The wing halves needed to be carefully aligned, especially at the bombs bay joints to avoid further fit issues, so I used a great number of clamps to ensure a firm joint.

In the meantime I continued with the cockpit assembly, however I proceeded in a different manner to that shown in the instructions. First, I cleaned up all the parts and some were enhanced or fully replaced with Eduard etched parts from their interior detail set and after painting I glued the



With the glazings in place, the top hatch removed and the rails added, the whole lot could be masked



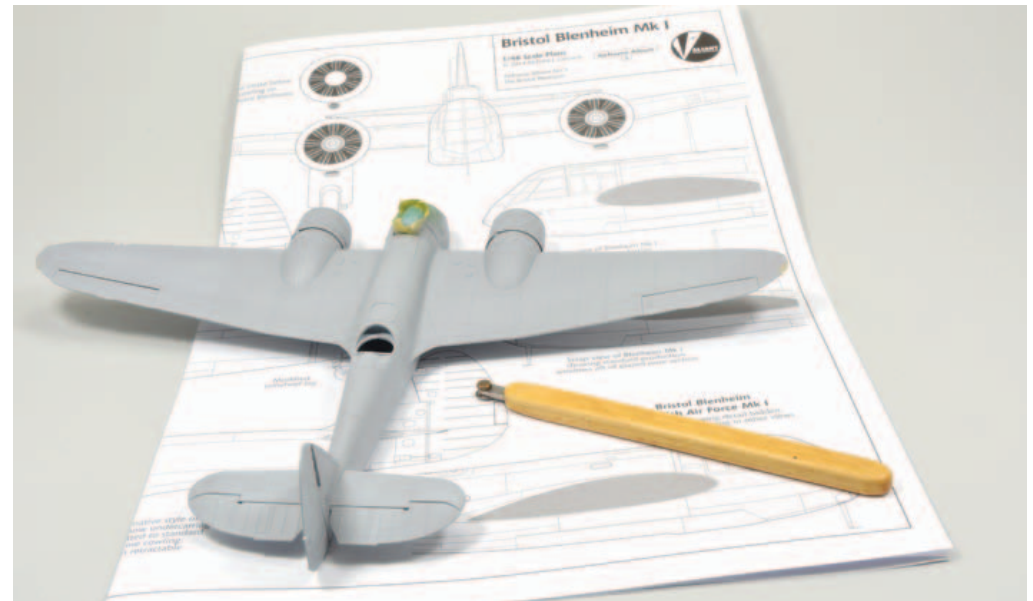
Various panels from the Eduard exterior set were added, as these parts are omitted from the kit



There are also various panels to add to the undersides

halves together but did not install the clear parts for now (I just checked their fit without cement. I always fit the clear parts at a later building stage to avoid unnecessary damage and dust particles getting inside the interior. Anyway, now I removed the side oval-shaped windows and new items were cut from 0.4mm thin clear plasticard that was glued in place using Gator glue. While the rear fuselage assembly went smoothly, the trial fit with the assembled wing showed a couple of places with poor fit; underneath at the bomb bay there appeared ugly gaps and the edge of the bomb bay does not match. Additionally, the joint goes across the bomb bay and the resulting rather thick gap would be difficult to remedy without destroying the bay's inner details, I'm afraid. The fit of the separate nose was obviously better, but I still needed to remove some material at the wing roots. A careful approach was also

needed when assembling the cockpit's rear bulkhead (part no. A12), which should not protrude from the outline, otherwise the wing won't sit properly. The fit of the bomb bay cover looked a bit poor as well, but after some trimming it was set in situ with thicker cyanoacrylate. Now I completed the tailplanes and ailerons, but these did not fit them properly (I admit it could be my fault) and the resulting gaps were therefore filled with Mr White Putty. The solid formation lights in the wing tips were cut off and replaced with clear plastic blocks with bulbs drilled into them that were then coloured with 'clear' green and red; these were subsequently sanded to shape, polished and brushed with Future varnish. The landing lights aperture was first bordered with thin plasticard and I added the missing central rib typical of the Mk I that I then sanded to shape. From the Marabu Design etched fret I assembled two lights, cemented them



Once primed, all the rivets were added using the plans from the Airframe Album title as reference



The fuselage band and undersides of the wing tips were painted yellow, then once dry were masked. You can see the other panels, made from plasticard, that were added on the underside



The underside was painted blue, then post-shaded



The upper surface is the classic Dark Earth and Dark Green

in place and then the aperture was glazed with a piece of self-adhesive clear tape that was trimmed with about 0.5mm overlap around it.

Onto the engines assembly now, these are well detailed with separate intake pipes, braces and individual exhaust pipes moulded inside the collector ring, but the cowlings are cut into several parts that means some careful dry fitting was required. From the front collector ring I removed the air intakes (these are solely a feature of the Bolingbroke and relate to the cabin heating system) and the assembled engines were sprayed with black Mr Surfacer from a can. The valves were airbrushed with Alclad II Duraluminium and the crankcases brushed gloss black as were the push rod covers; the cylinders then received a dark wash to accentuate the fins. The bottom cowling part caused poor fit due to its thickness, so I removed about 1mm of plastic from

its inside and then the surrounding cowling panels finally matched the front ring. The full air intakes were opened with a fine drill bit and needle file, as were the trumpet-style oil cooler air intakes; personally I believe these parts could be moulded hollowed as are the exhaust pipes, but were probably not due to tooling costs. The assembled units could be joined to the wing after painting and this makes painting and masking on the cowling inner/rear sections much easier as a result.

Now I focused my attention on the surface detail, which together with other details like the wing tip lights and engines are real 'eye catchers' that help to improve the scale impression of the finished model. Again I utilised parts from the Eduard exterior set in the form of various caps and hatches on the wing and gunner's entry panel edge, while from thin plastic strips I cut the rails of the cockpit upper hatch and



The collecting rings need to be painted in a combination of a metallic base with filters of black and brown to create the colour changes brought about by heat

from 0.13mm Evergreen sheet I added the missing gun bay panel and ventral camera access hatch. The clear parts were cemented together using extra thin Cement S and secured in the fuselage without trouble. The Eduard masks helped with canopy masking and they fitted nicely; in my opinion these are great value considering the time

they saved me. The kit was primed with Mr Surfacer 1000 and riveted according to the scale drawings from this book.

Colour Options

From the very beginning I decided to build the Rumanian machine, but eventually I opted for Xtradecal sheet #72-202, which



After a gloss coat the decals could go on, including the grey anti-slip panel on the wing root



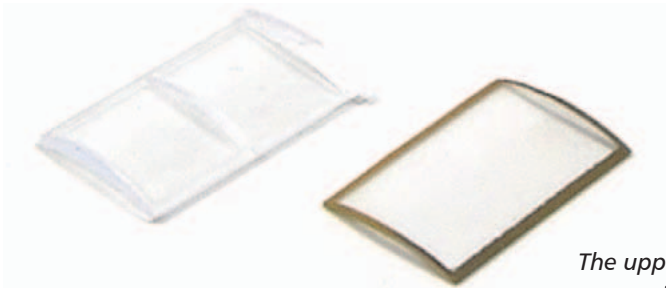
Both upper and lower surfaces receive decals followed by a dark wash to accentuate the engraved detail



The undercarriage is all black, even the wheel hubs, with the tyres a suitable 'rubber' shade



The undercarriage and doors can now be installed



The upper access panel was replaced with once cut from clear sheet



The gun turret was enhanced with details from the Eduard set



Weathering included streaks created with the Fuel Stains enamel wash from AK Interactive

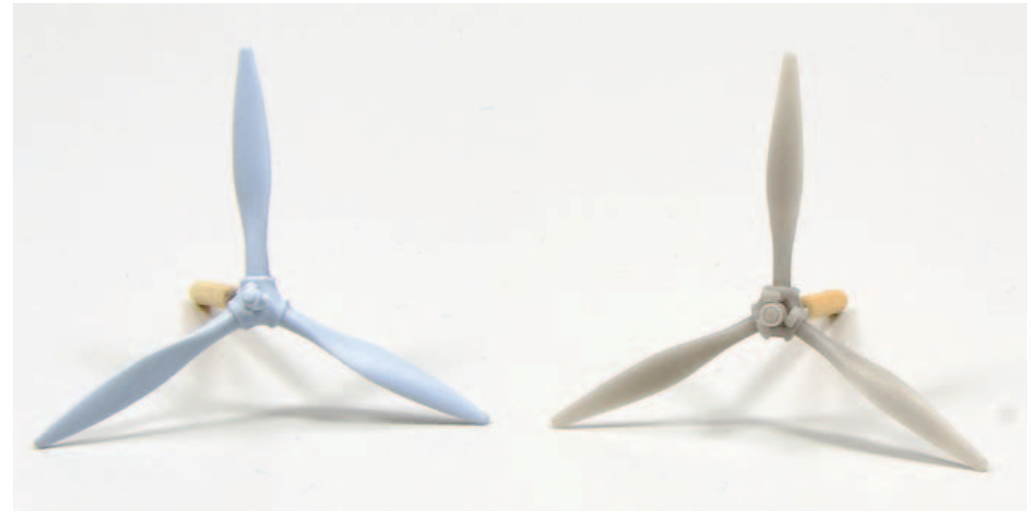
included a 2nd Long Range Reconnaissance Squadron machine from 1941. Rumanian Blenheims were, like Finnish examples, in service for an unbelievable long time and they even took part in the battle of Stalingrad. This aircraft originally had British camouflage on upper surfaces with light blue underneath; alternatively this could have been the original (Sky) or all the colours could have been of Rumanian origin if the machine went through a major overhaul. The light blue was mixed from German RLM 65 (GSI Creos Hobby Aqueous H67) with light blue (H45) in a 1:1 ratio. On the upper surfaces I used Dark Green (H73) and Dark Earth (H72) post-shaded on fabric control surfaces with lighter shades of each. The exhaust collector rings were painted Duraluminium first and then the burnt iron colour was airbrushed with a mixture of black (H77) and brown (H84).

After sealing the surface with gloss

varnish (GX100 Super Clear III) I applied the decals, which worked nicely and needed only a minute amount of Mr Mark Setter decal solution.

Final Details

Enhancing the landing gear was again a matter of additional etched parts and various fittings, braces and hydraulic lines that were secured to the main legs. Setting the undercarriage with all its struts in the bays may look a little complex at first glance, but with a little care it went smoothly and the complete units are kept firmly inside at the correct geometry. On the tailwheel I added a strip of silver foil to simulate the hydraulic ram and then I could finish the remaining bits. The gunner's seat received seat belts and the gun got etched sights, and the complete turret was inserted in the fuselage - I haven't used any glue as the turret was just snapped in place and then turned



The kit propellers on the left are no match for the resin replacements from SBS on the right, the detail in the latter being vastly superior

a little. With a fine drill bit I improved the look of the Venturi, attached the aerial mast and cut the aerial from Uschi van den Rossten fine rigging thread. The kit's propellers lacked the hub balances and overall they look odd, so I replaced them with lovely SBS Model resin items. Finally I brushed on some fuel stains using AK Interactive Fuel Stains solution and with a silver watercolour pencil created some paint scratches around various access hatches.

Verdict

This new kit from Airfix finally gives us a state of the art kit in 1/72nd scale that should satisfy the requirements of the majority modellers. Part of the issues I faced during the build was caused by the multi-version nature of the tooling design, which is fully justifiable and acceptable, considering the other versions that this allows. However, to my taste there were other fit

issues that could have been avoided along with the rather demanding nature of the clear nose assembly that may cause problems to less experienced builders. Therefore, I would recommend this kit to more skilled modellers, who should be able to cope with all hurdles they will face. The Eduard etched parts are great value as they substantially improve kit's focus points as the cockpit or wheel wells and the SBS propellers are a real 'must' to replace the inaccurate kit parts. The Maruba Design landing lights and their light stores carrier, are also something you should seriously consider.





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