



"STICKY FINGERS"

Magazine

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Issue 70 April 2010

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Peters Prattling

Next month – Work In Progress Night

Bring along the model or models you are currently working on.

Home Front

Finally now Expo for 2010 is “done and dusted” I was hoping to settle back into a “normal” rhythm, whatever that may be. It transpires that my work had other ideas; they’ve given me a project to test which is high profile but seems to break or have issues whenever I go near it, much to the frustration of the developer and the project manager. Still from my point of view it serves them right, after 7 months development it should have been much more robust that I’ve found, surely it must be better to find the issues before the application is implemented?

Modelling wise I’ve restarted work on those models which were in the pending pile before the Expo models jumped the queue. I’ve nearly finished an early FW 190 A-4 with suitably garish black/white checkerboard nose and an FW 190 D-9 with yellow under nose and tail to match. I’m planning on following these with an FW 190 G-3 in US Navy colours (yes it really did exist!) and an F6F Hellcat in FAA markings with a white chequer on the nose, I figured if I was painting with US Navy colours I might as well do a couple of planes at once. Perhaps if I can get the enthusiasm and most importantly time, I’ll finish up some of the other kits which have been on the “shelf of shame” for too long.

Southern Expo News and Decals

Another successful show, my thanks to all those who turned out on Friday through to Sunday and helped in some way or other, either on the club stand and/or shifting tables etc. At the end of the show we announced a donation of £5,000 to Saint Francis Hospice, that’s up £1,500 from last year. The decal sheets sold really well over the weekend of the show and have already broken even so any sales we make now are pure profit towards next year’s donation. Planning for next year’s show and probably decals too will begin soon but I’m sure I speak for Robin and myself when I say that we need a small break first.



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Judging For IPMS South East Essex (Southend) Competition

As is normal, we've had a request to supply some judges (or sacrificial lambs) for the IPMS South East Essex (Southend) end of year competition. The date for this is Wednesday 19th May @ the Civic Centre.

Free Harrier Decals from Model Alliance

At the end of Southern Expo I was handed a carrier bag full of 1/72nd scale decals for Harriers by Kevin Nunn, who is working for Model Alliance. The decals have a "slight" issue, as far as I can tell one of the serial numbers has a misprint on it but as this is a common letter (Z) and can be borrowed from one of the other aircraft this shouldn't be insurmountable. I had actually obtained this set of decals as an under table purchase at Brampton so I have the instruction sheets if anyone wants a copy.

Southdowns Show Lancing – Saturday 22nd May

I've accepted the invite from Southdowns Model Group to attend their show in Lancing. It's Saturday 22nd May, which for many might be a bit unfortunate as the Barnet show at Hendon is the next day on Sunday 23rd. As I've mentioned before it's a comparatively small show (compared to Southern Expo most are) but it's a really friendly one, we probably have more people stop and chat about our models at this show than any other. If the weather is kind then it can be a really nice day out for the rest of the family too as Lancing is just up the road from Brighton but has its own beach too.

Barnet Show @ RAF Museum Hendon – Sunday 23rd May

Below is the information I have received from the organisers of the Barnet show @ the RAF Museum Hendon. If you are planning to attend the show and are travelling there by car I **must** have your car registration number to send to them before **7th May**, this will give me time to send in the return. Also note their suggestion that we bring along a few of our own chairs too as they may be in short supply.

"Please note the Museum will be introducing a car-parking charge from 1st April.

This will be £2.50 per car / van for up to 3 hours and £3.50 per car/ van for 3 to 6 hours.

These charges will be waived only for those vehicles that have pre-registered their registration numbers for this event. We therefore need this information together with the name of the people coming in each car. On arrival, people will be allowed to park up, they must report immediately to Conference Reception where they will be provided with their parking pass for the day. This will only be handed out to them if we have their registration numbers. If people do not pre-register or pay on the day they will be issued with a fine. We have no lee-way in this matter.

So if people wish to place their cars on site free of charge for the duration of the show and not rush out a 2pm to feed the meters again, they must pre-register – for this event. For those individuals who will be hiring a vehicle, and therefore will not know the registration number of their vehicle, we will require the name of the driver, the type of hire vehicle that they will be looking to bring and their postcode in order to hand out a pass to them.

Should you have any concerns on any of these please do not hesitate to contact me although we need completed forms "a" and "b" returned prior to the 11th May 2010. Finally we may be short on chairs so suggest you bring some for your clubs needs."

ArmourFast Builds and Reports

How are your ArmourFast builds coming along? I've seen a few of the models appear on the tables at recent shows or club meets, but as yet I haven't been handed any reviews, although I'm just as guilty. I'll be bringing along my 2 which hadn't really progressed much for quite some time, I'm blaming the mega Expo build, that's my story and I'm sticking to it! However last night I managed to get coats of paint and decals on the Stug III and Sherman Firefly so who knows they may appear on the competition table, if not I'll be bringing them along anyway as the ArmourFast people are planning on calling in on us for the April meeting.



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Forthcoming Shows in 2010

Shows with highlight have been booked for us to attend. If you wish to attend any of the shows with the club stand please let me know so I can attempt to book space for the club.

2010	
24th & 25th April (Saturday & Sunday)	Scottish Nationals , Dewars Centre, Glover Street, Perth
16th May (Sunday)	IPMS Tyneside , Northern Scale Model Show, Temple Park Centre, John Reid Road, South Shields , Tyne & Wear NE34 8QN
22nd May (Saturday)	IPMS Devon (South) , South Devon Model Extravaganza, Newton Abbot Race Course TQ12 3AF Southdowns Model Club Show , Lancing – I've requested space for this show.
23rd May (Sunday)	IPMS Barnet, RAF Museum Hendon – I've requested 2 tables
5th June (Saturday)	IPMS Salisbury show
27th June (Sunday)	IPMS West Norfolk, Downham Market Town Hall
4th & 5th September (Saturday & Sunday)	Medway Model show. REME Museum, Gillingham, Kent
26th September (Sunday)	Brampton show - Burgess Hall, St Ives , Cambs, PE27 6WU
13th & 14th November	Scale Modelworld - Telford

Peter

Robins Ruminations

I would first like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the club that helped to set up, help out with and breakdown the show, without you the show would be a hell of a lot more difficult to put on, thank you very much. From what I saw from the organisers table the stand appeared to be well manned all weekend, well done to one and all.

Well that was another Southern Expo done and dusted, now for many a fading memory, other than the stash of kits, accessories and paints put away in their respective hiding places or on their workbenches if lucky. However for Peter and myself the show is still slowly ticking over with the winding up of the accounts, sorting and putting away all the paraphernalia of the show, that as well as the ongoing decal sales. I can say that the show was a success with numbers coming through the door being only very slightly down on the previous year. However the raffle sales were up and of course the decal sales pushed the funds up to such a level that we could donate £5000 to St. Francis Hospice this year. If I have remembered it, I will have the receipt that the hospice sent to me, take a look.

As I feared the weather is now taking a turn for the better, which of course means the garden and all things in it has gone to the top of my Wife's priorities. Running repairs on our small Growhouse has put that back into operation ready for the tender plants to see out the last of the late frosts. I have already spent a whole weekend trailing my Wife and the Mother in Law around various garden centres with trolley's watching them discuss the merit or otherwise of various bits of greenery. As the bank balance is going down, the Growhouse is filling up. I am now awaiting my instructions on where all the acquired items have got to be planted, after weeding and preparing the beds and borders of course, I just can't wait!

Armourfast Build

When Peter first told me about the offer from Armourfast I thought that it was very kind of the company to offer us some of their products to test build, but to be honest I was unimpressed with the idea behind the product. The idea of a simple build kit that would appeal to armour modellers, wargamers and children alike left me thinking that two out of the three groups were going to be disappointed. I just didn't know which two it would be. As most of you will all know, although I like armoured subjects, I almost never build any, so this kit could well have been aimed at me in particular.

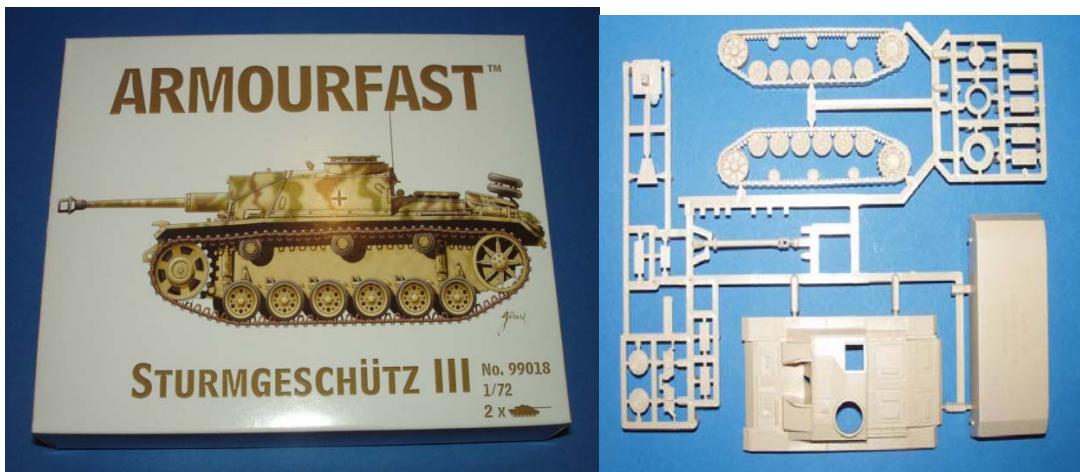


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So time to open the box of my chosen kit, a Sturmgeschutz III, expecting something akin to the old OO/HO Airfix greasy polythene push along model in kit form to drop out. However I was pleasantly surprised to see a single sprue with all the parts for the model moulded in a "light Panzer yellow" coloured plastic. The 23 parts are well moulded with only the slightest sink marks on the drive wheels and front hatches. I liked the way the tracks were moulded in one piece around all the running gear; I can see that this would appeal to wargamers, youngsters and lazy modellers like me! I decided at this point to build the kit from the perspective of one of the above, that is to say that I would build the kit with only a craft knife, side cutters, a few small files, bit of wet and dry and a bottle of super glue. The idea of going back so far in my distant modelling past appealed to my warped sense of humour, so with thoughts of Woolworth's 2/6 plastic bagged Airfix kits on a Saturday afternoon in mind I attacked the kit.



Well after about twenty minutes of snipping, trimming and filing I had all the parts separated and laying on the cutting mat ready for assembly. In about another twenty minutes I had the Stug completely built, the fit of all parts being of a very high order. The only slight criticism I have with the instructions printed on the back of the box was that it showed the exhaust on the rear plate to be fitted upside down. A minor niggle as if I hadn't a plans book handy I would have happily stuck the part upside down and probably not even realised it. All that remains is to give the model a quick lick of camouflage paint and paint on a few crosses on it as no decals come with the kit. However in such a small scale and given the target market the kit is aimed at, I don't think that this is too much of a shortcoming. I think that I'll have another attempt at painting with acrylics again, just to see if I can get the hang of the damn stuff.



In conclusion I think that the boxed package with its two kits in a box is a good idea and represents good value for money. No you're not getting a state of the art Dragon kit, but then again you're not paying that sort of money for it. The finished model looked like a Stug III and I was pleased to see that the wheels and tracks being moulded as



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one item didn't look too toy-like at all. I enjoyed building this little model and will enjoy building the Sherman Firefly that I also have on my workbench. I must admit it was nice to complete a model from start to finish in just a couple of hours, building the base for the model to sit on will probably take me longer. I think that these kits will appeal to all modellers as they seem easy enough for a first AFV for youngsters, simple enough for wargamers and are a good, reasonably priced basis for detailing by more experienced modellers. My thanks to Armourfast for the review kits and I wish them every success in the future with their range of kits.

My Official hat is now on.....

Well tonight is the first round of this seasons competitions. I want a good clean fight with lots of gouging in the clinches, kicking of shins and hitting below the belt! Well, maybe not, the normal civilised event as ever with hopefully lots of models on the tables. Good luck to one and all and may the best model win.

I am still struggling to finish off the Spitfire's and Messerschmitt's that I had hoped to have finished for Expo, but such is life. I really don't like modelling on a production line basis and I am finding it hard to now concentrate on them and get them finished. However, who knows, I might even have one ready for tonight; miracles do sometimes happen you know!

Robin



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Wrighty's References - The Royal Navy's Lost Cover Up

The Story - Problems for the Admiralty

In early August 1943 the Admiralty had been instructed to provide carriers for the Seafire force that had been working up for the invasion of Italy. This meant that the new carriers that had virtually just come into service were going to be lost for convoy work in the North Atlantic. 4 carriers, HMS Attacker (879 & 886 Squadrons), HMS Battler (807 & 808 Squadrons), HMS Hunter (834 & 899 Squadrons) and HMS Stalker (880 & 833 Squadrons) were dispatched to the Mediterranean and the landings at Salerno Italy (Operation Avalanche) took place in early September.

By the end of August 1943 the 9 carriers that had arrived were all needed either in dockyard "Anglisation" or were on the Salerno mission. This left just one, the Canadian HMS Basher in dock in Liverpool. Who would cover the convoys?

It was now that the plan to match Dicer and 844 Squadron was brought into being, for use on the next convoy, the success of the "Sparrowhawk", could be tested, aboard a new carrier (albeit not nearly ready for operations) by escorting the convoy back to New York.

It was deemed that if the carrier had made it with a limited and inexperienced crew it could return and if posted in dead centre of the convoy they could "get away" with radar search problems and the like (this work could be covered by escort frigates and destroyers). The convoy would have cover by new modern aircraft. The risky plan was put to the highest authority and received approval. What happened next is partly fact, but also some informed guesswork to meet the known facts.

Dicers Demise

Only a few extra crew members were drafted aboard HMS Dicer, she was to join the slow convoy SC137 to New York, which sailed from Liverpool in the last days of August 1943. No. 844 Sq flew down from Grimsetter to Speke (Liverpool) and some temporary RAF ground staff, armourers, mechanics etc were sent by rail to service the aircraft. Also Fernaux-Latham and several Fairey Aviation engineers were sent to join the carrier to observe the aircraft's performance during the voyage. (All of this of course "Top Secret").

Orders were received to raise steam for departure, as the ships gradually left docks it was realised that Dicer had a problem. The ship had a problem with leaky boiler tubes, and would not make the sailing date. Engineers 24 hour working to action repairs was initiated to complete the repairs, 2 days later after SC137 had sailed, Dicer was ready to go.

From now on no firm facts are known, so I have put together a hypothesis (a la Sherlock Holmes) as to what may have happened.

The convoy left Liverpool and formed up, passing to the East of the Isle of Man, travelling at a speed of 6/8 knots, passing through the North Channel of the Irish Sea the next day, between Northern Ireland and Scotland into the Atlantic Ocean. They were heading for a point 10° Long x 56° Lat (known here after as point X), which they passed in the morning watch of the next day (approx 5:30am). Then by taking a compass bearing of 250° this would put them on course for New York (Point X was 90 miles North West of Tory Island just off the coast of Northern Ireland)

HMS Dicer was now ready to go, steam raised, she left Liverpool using speed of 12-15 knots, she followed the course of the convoy, passing through the North Channel in the evening. Air cover was supplied during daylight hours, 9 airfields in Northern Ireland and 8 in England and Scotland were available for this, but a darkened ship and speed were considered enough through the night as they steamed towards point X. They would expect to be some 50 miles astern the convoy when point X was reached.

During the previous afternoon the 6 Sparrowhawks left Speke and flew on to the Dicer in the Irish Sea near to the Isle of Man, with air cover available the aircraft were put down into the forward hanger, later in the afternoon 3



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Swordfish from Northern Ireland were taken onboard as "Stand By" in case problems arose with the new aircraft. By the next morning they were approaching point X, no doubt getting 2 Sparrowhawks ready to fly off and locate the convoy ahead. So that Dicer could move up, join and take her place in the centre of the convoy to cover the inexperience and undermanned crew. Hopefully they would take up their position during the forenoon.

Luck Plays Its Part

However in the area of the convoy a U-Boat was making its way to a designated patrol line in the Atlantic. Nearing point X the previous afternoon, engine noises and black smoke were picked up and sighted to the south of the starboard side of the boat. The boat changed course and withdrew to a position where they could observe the passing convoy, a great opportunity to observe and pass accurate information to U-Boat HQ. The boat shadowed the convoy during the night to keep in touch with its course. By 6 o'clock next morning it had all it needed and dropped back to get clear of the convoy. They then surfaced and began recharging batteries. Suddenly a radar contact located a fast moving vessel, at first it was thought to be a straggler from the convoy. Diving to periscope depth, they could hardly believe it, or contain their excitement, that an unescorted aircraft carrier was on course to cross the "T" in naval terminology.

This means that the enemy ships crosses your bow at right angles from left to right, thus offering her full broadside length vulnerable to a bow shot. An absolute gift for the sub, because the aircraft carrier travelling at 15 knots could not have been manoeuvred into such a position by a slow moving sub. All that was needed was for the sub to get about 3,000 yards from the carrier and fire when she was level with the subs bow.

Around 0700 hours two torpedoes smashed into HMS Dicer, one hit the forward hanger and the other hit the motor room aft almost simultaneously, the hanger lift was blown out and the aviation gas burst into flames along with the aircraft. The engine room exploded as the shaft and gear ruptured, all power was lost as burst into flames and flooded. In less than 2 minutes a third torpedo hit amidships breaking the ships back, in 3 minutes the blazing vessel slipped below the surface and sank, leaving no survivors or wreckage, just a small area of smoke from burning fuel or AV Gas and in the choppy sea this would be soon lost from view. The sinking was so quick, no time was available to send a distress or mayday or "sub attack" message. The U-Boat immediately took escape action retiring north to get as far away from the area as quick as possible, not knowing how quick search aircraft would be on the scene.

Fruitless Search

Dicer's last message was "Clear of North Channel, joining convoy tomorrow forenoon". Aboard the Commodores ship in the convoy, well into the forenoon, no further contact had been received. Orders were passed to HMS Biter, the other carrier in the convoy, to fly off 2 Swordfish to search astern for Dicer. During the afternoon messages were sent to Coastal Command and FAA bases to carry out searches between the North Channel and Point X, all proved non-productive. The Admiralty had to accept that the carrier was missing, probably sunk, as no transmissions had been received.

Who Sunk The Dicer?

The fact that no claim was made by the Germans, who would not miss announcing they had sunk a carrier, leads to only one conclusion, they didn't know. Which in turn says the sub that did, had not reported it. After a lengthy check of the U-Boat operations in W.W.II, the official record, I believe that sub was U.669.

This story fits the action, U.669 was based at St Nazaire in France, left for her 2nd war patrol on the 29th August to take up position off Northern Ireland. A lot of U-Boat action was taking place setting up patrol lines off Scotland and also beyond Northern Ireland looking to intercept convoys. Actually U.669 was a somewhat new boy and as such was being used like a football substitute, to fill any gaps in the patrol lines if other boats were sunk. It seems they got lucky and happened across the convoy SC.137 before it reached Point X.

About the same time they received orders, proceed to Ontario Province in Canada to pick up escaping POWs. However they were caught up in the previously related events and these being priority the new orders were put on hold by the captain.



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After the events they needed to retrace their course back past the west of Ireland and much of the time submerged as they needed to avoid the air and sea search. They had to get back either to their own base (if maybe they had a problem with the boat) or in any case cross the Atlantic to Canada. No radio transmissions were made as it could betray their position to the enemy ships or planes.

By the 7th September they had cleared Ireland and were heading for Biscay, reaching a position 45° N Long 10° Lat, then travelling on the surface at night. When a "Leigh Light" Wellington from St Eval (Cornwall) was patrolling over Biscay, this picked up a radar contact, following it, they illuminated U.669 on the surface. The exposed and surprised boat attempted to dive but too late and had 5 depth charges for company as it submerged, there was no escape, the boat sank with all hands, 53 killed. As a final twist of irony, the Wellington was from 407 RCAF Sq, a Canadian unit had avenged their fellow countrymen and ship.

The Final Outcome

So a mechanical breakdown and an unlucky break cost the Admiralty and HMS Dicer very dearly, in their risky gamble to send a 2nd carrier with SC.137. Not only the loss of the carrier, a squadron of new aircraft and the chance to prove that the aircraft was superior to anything they already had. No trace was ever found of Dicer, in fact it could be anywhere within a 100 square mile box from Point X eastwards. It had to have been sunk very quickly for no SOS to be put out, and for all hands to be lost. No German claim for the ships destruction was ever made and no "Enigma" intercepts were reported. The events left the door wide open for a cover-up. Crew members of Dicer would be posted as missing in action and the boat lost some time in August 1943 in the Atlantic, suggesting it never arrived at Liverpool.

We then come to the loss of No. 844 Squadron, the loss of the Sparrowhawks was not really missed, as in the last quarter of 1943, lend Lease Avengers were now arriving in numbers. After "Operation Avalanche" the return of the carriers plus the "Anglicised" ones were ready to come into the Battle of the Atlantic, therefore there was no longer a requirement for the Sparrowhawk. The Firefly came into service in October 1943 with 1770 Squadron and more soon followed, it was like the Dicer and the Sparrowhawk never existed, and that is just what the Admiralty wants us to think.

20 Years Later

Why when the secret was lifted was the story no picked up in 1964 (?) In those days many of these items about the war were brought into the open by journalists, there were many secrets to come out, lots of books were written by authors who gained access to material that made good books. On this occasion Mr Irving's book "PQ 17" shocked us all in 1965, he was a man of controversy, you may recall he brought the Wrath of Zion upon himself by denying the "Holocaust" hadn't happened, but the "PQ 17" book is a very good account and maybe it was enough in 1965, without bringing up more problems for the "Senior Service". On the other hand it could be that some top brass at the Admiralty were still alive? Enough said!

Alan