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January 2026  
Vol. 76 No. 902

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# WELCOME TO THE JANUARY 2026 ISSUE OF MODEL BOATS

**W**ith this issue going on sale just ahead of the Christmas/New Year holidays, it seems particularly appropriate to be wrapping up 2025 with highlights from two of the hobby's biggest calendar events of the year, both of which took place in November. Huge thanks, then, to our roving reporter Dave Wooley, and, of course, congratulations to the organisers, exhibitors, competition entrants and visitors who, once again, made these inspirational annual extravaganzas such resounding successes.

We're also able to bring you the backstory to one of the award-winning models at the Blackpool show: John Milesen's fabulously detailed 1:12 scale Fifie. John tells this tale in his usual inimitably humorous style but, despite clearly never taking himself too seriously, it's easy to see from the photos why his model caught the eye of the judges and landed him first place (sorry, can't resist stealing one of John's puns here!) in the Fishing Vessels competition category.

That said, I wouldn't have wanted to be in the judges' shoes as the sheer level of talent evident within this community is absolutely insane. There's never an issue that goes by when I'm not completely blown away by the submissions to our own little Your Models in print showcase – and this month's bumper crop has proved no exception.

Regardless of your own personal level of skill, though, the pages ahead feature some great project ideas, whether you're looking to tackle something small, simple and totally charming (like Glynn Guest's little rowboat or Stuart Deacon's delightful vintage pond yacht restoration) or something really big and impressive (like Dave Wooley's awesome *Absalon* build – now there's a model that will command respect out on the water if ever I saw one!).

Alternatively, you may already have come up with your own brilliant ideas for what you're going to be working on in 2026, and I, for one, can't wait to see what you manage to achieve. So, please, keep that input coming.

In the meantime, thanks to each and every one of you (readers, contributors and all those who work in the industry that supports this hobby alike) for your continued support over the past twelve months, and for making my job such an absolute joy.

Happy New Year!

**Lindsey**



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# Compass 360

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## NEW TOOLING

### Trumpeter's 1:700 scale HMS *Queen Elizabeth* R08

Trumpeter's newly tooled 1:700 scale plastic kit for the Royal Navy HMS *Queen Elizabeth* R08 Aircraft Carrier (Ref. 06751) is now due for imminent release (December 31, 2025).

The vessels within the Royal Navy's latest class of aircraft carrier, the *Queen Elizabeth* class, are the largest warships ever built in Britain. HMS *Queen Elizabeth* (R08), which is the lead ship within this class, was assembled at Rosyth Dockyard by Babcock Marine and commissioned in 2017. F-35B Lightning II joint strike fighters and Merlin and Wildcat helicopters can be operated from her distinctive ski-jump flight deck, and she also boasts integrated electric propulsion, advanced radar systems, and close-in defence weapons including Phalanx and 30 mm guns. She first saw active duty in 2021 as flagship of Carrier Strike Group 21 during Operation Fortis, a seven month combined (Royal Navy and RAF) task force show of strength deployment.

The kit, which builds to a model measuring 400mm in length, carries an RRP (Recommended Retail Price) of £79.99 and pre-orders are now being taken (see ads in this magazine, visit your local model shop or search Trumpeter stockists online).



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Royal Navy HMS *Queen Elizabeth* R08 Aircraft Carrier

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## New tech trials: Deans Marine 3D test kits

As explained by Nick Brown in his build review of the HMS *Lightning* TB-1 in the October 2025 issue of *Model Boats*, Deans Marine is currently upgrading some of its kits to include 3D-printed parts. The initial kits selected are being produced in limited test runs, with the newly 3D-printed extra parts supplied along with all the standard fittings at

no extra charge; the idea being that customers will supply the company with feedback, so that any suggestions made or tweaks necessary can be considered before each of the respective kits is put into full blow production.

The latest kits to be have been given this treatment are the 1:24 scale Picket Boat from HMS *Repulse* – a

prototype of which you can watch in action on YouTube (key <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t3HTW-ww4E> into your browser), Crash Tender and Seaplane Tender.

These test kits are not available to purchase via the company's website but orders for them can be placed by calling 01733 244166 or emailing [deansmarine@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:deansmarine@yahoo.co.uk)



*A prototype build of Deans Marine HMS Repulse Picket Boat incorporating newly designed 3D fittings.*



*Deans Marine is currently in the process of updating a number of its existing kits with 3D printed parts.*



## OUT AND ABOUT

### Fortitudo

Worth braving going out in the cold for before it closes on January 18, 2026, is this special exhibition at the Scottish Maritime Museum (The Linthouse Building, Harbour Road, Irvine KA12 8BT). The exhibition (the name for which derives from the Shackleton family motto: "Fortitudine Vincimus – By Endurance We Conquer") brings to life Sir Ernest Shackleton's legendary Antarctic expedition aboard the *Endurance* (1914-1917) through a highly detailed series of paintings by Italian artist **Paola Folicaldi Suh**.

The museum is open daily from 10am to 5pm (although please note is closed on Dec 25-26 and Jan 1-2), with day tickets charged at £10 for adults (with concessions). Free parking is available in both the Museum Courtyard on Harbour Road and the adjacent public car park. Alternatively, the museum can be reached within 5 minutes' walk (wrap up warm) from Irvine Railway Station.



### Turner: Always Contemporary

The culture vultures amongst you may be interested to learn that the 'Turner: Always Contemporary' exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EL, which opened on October 25, 2025, to mark 250 years since J.M.W. birth, will be run right through until February 22, 2026. Visitors will be able to explore both the artist's own work, including his incredible marine paintings (such as *The Wreck Buoy* shown here), and his enduring impact on later generations of artists, with tickets available to purchase online at <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/whatson/walker-art-gallery/exhibition/turner-always-contemporary#section--the-exhibition>.



## BUY THE BOOK

### 2026 Seaforth World Naval Review

Currently being offered at a 20% discount on its £40 RRP (Recommended Retail Price) when purchased via <https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk>, reducing the price down to £32 plus p&p, the latest edition of this highly regarded annual provides an authoritative summary of all developments in the world's navies and their ships over the past 12 months, with special focus on the Russian Navy and the Royal Navy.



### Royal Navy Monitors of World War II

#### Britain's battleship-calibre gunboats

Penned by naval historian Angus Konstam, this new title provides an in-depth study of not only the vessels themselves but of the roles they played and how naval gunfire support was conducted during World War II.

Illustrated throughout, by renowned digital artist Adam Tooby, with profiles, battle scenes, and a Roberts cutaway, this book will serve as a useful reference point for all scale monitor modellers.

This first edition, published in paperback format under ISBN 9781472868138, carries an RRP (Recommended Retail Price) of £12.99, and can either be ordered via your local bookstore or purchased directly from Osprey Publishing at <https://www.ospreypublishing.com/uk/royal-navy-monitors-of-world-war-ii-9781472868138/>.



### Japanese Aircraft Carriers

Ermanno Martino's new book provides a concise technical history of all Imperial Japanese Navy carriers, covering their political background, ship design and service careers. Illustrated with over 200 photos, plans, line drawings and colour camouflage schemes, this title contains a wealth of detail for the modeller to dip into.

Published in hardback format and carrying ISBN 9781036133528, its RRP (Recommended Retail Price) when ordered from bookstores is £29.99. Those ordering directly from <https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk>, however, can currently enjoy a 20% discount, reducing the cost to £23.99 (plus p&p).







*A grand view of just one of the expansive halls at the 2025 Scale Model World show.*

# SCALE ModelWorld

**Dave Wooley** reports back from the 2025 Scale Model World show, held at the International Centre in Telford, Shropshire, over the weekend of November 8/9...

**F**or those unfamiliar with this show, it's almost exclusively dedicated to the static modelling side of the hobby, and exhibits are, by and large, based on kit-built models, whether they be injection moulded, resin or 3D, and likewise whether they've been constructed to the manufacturer's specification or modified. That said, some of the

larger scale kit-built exhibits, are converted for R/C operation. What all the exhibits have in common, however, is the high standard of build quality, detail and finish.

To give you some idea of how vast this show has become, this year 108 IPMS (international Plastic Modellers Society) branches, 97 SIGs (Special Interest Groups), 18 other modelling

groups and 23 overseas clubs were displaying, plus there were 123 trade stands to browse! And those figures don't include the really well subscribed competition entries.

The following photo report is, therefore, offers just a little taste of why next year's show, scheduled for the weekend of November 7-8, 2026, is worth pencilling into your diary! ●





As part of the international input, this amazing 1:35 scale diorama by Magic Modelling featured a Kriegsmarine S-Boat undergoing repairs. With no attention to detail spared, even the welders' torches worked!



Built straight out the box, this 1:350 scale USN Flight 2a Arleigh Burke Destroyer USS Pinckney achieved competition Gold for Shaun Bowater.





The authentically presented 1:500 Silver Medal award winning HMS Hermes, built by Tony Horton from a 1982-part kit but further enhanced by swapping out some of the components with his own more highly detailed scratch-built replacements.



The wonderful world of Gerry Anderson was well represented again at this year's show, a good example of this being a nostalgic model of Stingray from the iconic 1960s' TV series.



Recently re-released by Airfix World War II RAF rescue launch builds.



Airbrush demonstrations are very much regular fare at SMW.



Not all the exhibits at SMW are static model builds: here John Lingwood of Stafford MBC shows off his superb RAF pinnacle, which is very much a working model, at the 2025 show.





All lit up, the captain's quarters on the Black Pearl



Team members from Airfix were promoting the brand's super little Shannon lifeboat.



This model of a United States Marine Corps' LCAC (Landing Craft Air Cushion) was supporting not just one but two modelling disciplines: armour and waterborne military transport.



Just one of the SIG (Special Interest Group) display stands at the 2025 event.



Bringing the drama: one of the many skilfully tackled seascape dioramas.





A prototype build of Agora's new kit for the Orca: can you believe it's been 50 years since the release of the movie Jaws?



It's said good things come in little packages, and that was certainly true of this tiny but incredibly detailed Dunkirk evacuation paddle steamer model.



Offered a special SMW show price, the just launched new 1:700 scale kit for HMS Queen Elizabeth from Trumpeter.



The UK Carrier Strike Group's display of its naval aviation models, which included a 3D-printed HMS Queen Elizabeth.



The bar was set very high for marine models, so congratulations to Kenneth Bartley, the modeller responsible for this Bronze Award winning timber kit build of an Imperial Russian Double Boat.





There were a number of 1:200 scale Trumpeter kit builds of the Imperial Japanese super battleship Yamato on display, all of which were remarkably detailed and finished.



The age of sail was well represented in the 2025 competitions, this magnificent 1:100 scale model of HMS Victory having been part Heller Kit and part scratch built by Peter Rollins.



This 1:700 scale model of a French sail/steam battleship, circa 1855, which took around 1500 hours to build, earned competition entrant Jim Baumann not just gold but Best Marine Model and Senior National Champion Runner Up awards.



This 1:400 kit build of the Russian nuclear powered ice breaker Lenin made for an interesting and unusual subject.

This 1:700 scale Torpedo Gunboat HMS Halcyon rewarded Jim Baumann another well-deserved gold award.







In his special photo report, **Dave Wooley** shares some of the highlights from this annual spectacular

Originally dedicated purely to model boats, the Blackpool Model Show has grown exponentially over recent years. And, having already expanded to embrace R/C trucks, AFVs, rock crawlers, etc, a major new attraction for 2025 was an amazing large-scale working fairground.

One of the advantages of the show's Norbreck Castle Hotel venue is that the exhibitors, traders and visitors travelling to Blackpool from further afield can book show ticket/accommodation packages.

Once again, for 2025, the venue was divided into themed zones. The main exhibition hall itself accommodated attending model boat clubs and individual model boat exhibitors, and a reasonably sized indoor sailing pool, with the many traders situated around the periphery and in the side link passageway.



Winners of the Best in Show Tower Trophy Award for 2025 were the Johnson Family for their large-scale working fairground.



When it comes to distances travelled by visiting clubs, Southend MBC would be hard to beat. Now that is dedication!





This year the Best Display Award went to Bury Metro Marine MBC.



The winners of each category are chosen by the clubs, and the winner in the Fishing Vessels category went to John Mileson and his Fifie model, as displayed on the Wicksteed MBC stand.





Model figures in various scales as seen on the Macs Mouldings stand.



Kevin Fleming was also announced the winner in the Best Naval Vessel category for this 1:128 scale scratch-built model of HMS Hood.



The 17th century Man-o-War Sovereign of The Seas, crafted by Rigged & Sail category award winner Michael Haslem.



The magic of pond yachts, a generic term to pre-vane model yachts, could be seen here on the Manx MBC stand, nearly all of the exhibits having been recovered and restored to former glory by Brian King.

Philip Kerr's remarkable and mesmerising eerie take on the Titanic beat off stiff competition, deservedly earning him Best Scratch Build Award at Blackpool 2025.







The Best Rescue & Life Saving Model award went to this highly detailed and fully functional 1:12 scale Arun class lifeboat by Kevin Brown.



This experimental GRP-hulled RNLB Ernest William Elizabeth Ellen Hinde was one of the more unusual lifeboats exhibited at the show.



This working model of SSP (Semi-Submersible Platform) 7600, built by Richard Husslebee, secured first place in the Workboats competition category.



Not all lifeboats are RNLB operated, of course, so it was interesting to see other national sea rescue services represented in model form, such as this French SAR boat at 1:20 scale.



A gorgeous example of the Graupner Premium Line 1:200 scale model of Cunard's oh, so stylish Queen Mary II.





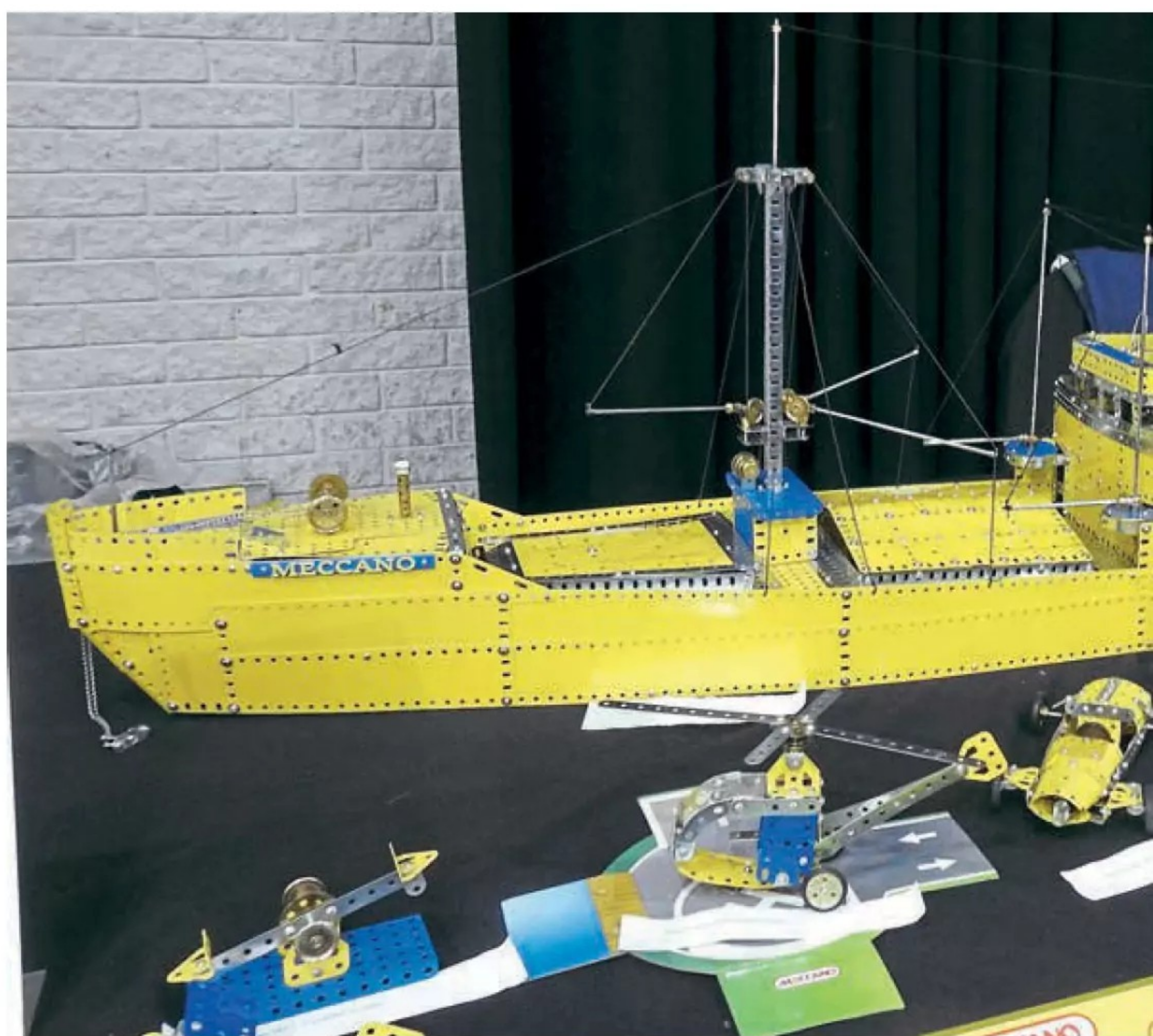
Final rigging of a 1:48 scale model of the Isle of Mann steamer Monas Queen on the Sefton Park MBC stand.



HMS Tyne at 1:96 scale sporting its new camouflage scheme.



A fully operational hovercraft displayed on the Kirklees MBC stand.



Chris Harris's marvellous Meccano built ship took pride of place on the stand dedicated to this iconic brand.

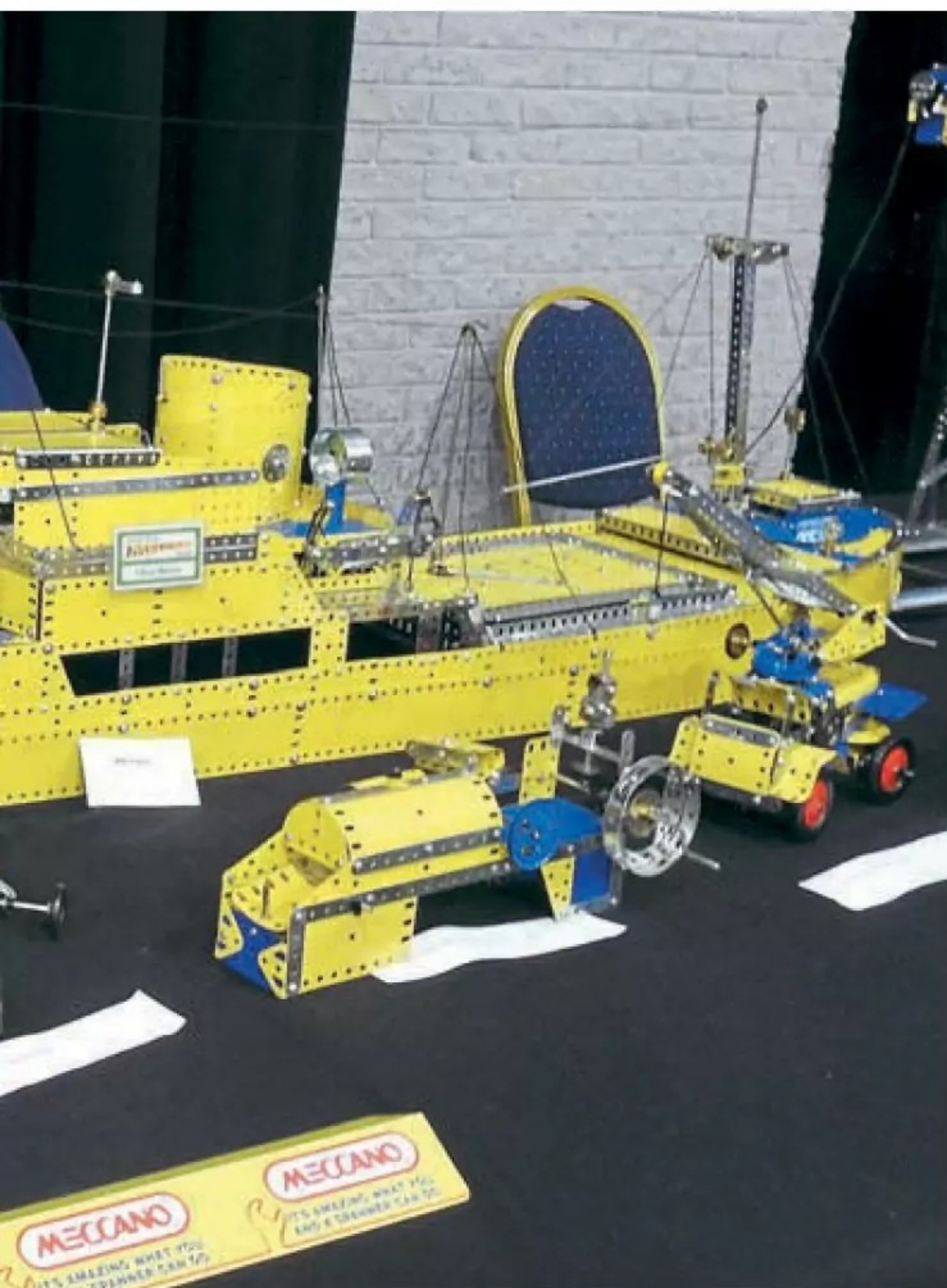


Also showing off a beautifully applied camouflage scheme was this Finnish World War II fast mine layer, displayed on fab diorama.



Another impressive model spotted on the Kirklees MBC stand was the stern wheeler Mathew V Spress.





The Kingsbury Water Park MBC stand was showcasing some of the IC and fast electric boats it's become well-known for.



The impressive anchor handling tug and supply vessel modelled by Roland Bellwood.



A Huntress with a difference, built and finished by Dave Howard.



Close-up on an extraordinary model of Bushnell's Turtle, circa 1776.



Enthusiast Chis Behan discussing the differences between his Type 21 and Type 23 late World War II Kriegsmarine submarines.





Mountfleet Models giving visitors a first look at the prototype builds of two new kits currently in development.



Constructional demos by Vanguard Models, which when it comes to period ship kits is in a league of its own, with no attention to detail spared.





50 years on since the first screening of the classic film *Jaws*, it was pleasing to see a number of models of the Orca, both on and off the pond.



Throughout the two days of the show the pond was in constant use, with informative commentary accompanying all demonstrations.



Thanks to the show's magnificent collective fund raising effort, the organisers were able to present the RNLI with a cheque for £2,109.

The ballroom was given over to various R/C displays, as well as the aforementioned fairground diorama. The always well supported bring and buy stand was doing brisk business, enabling it to make a generous contribution to the funds raised for the RNLI at the show.

And, of course, there were all the wonderful entries in the numerous competition categories to marvel at.

### Conclusion

The Blackpool Show seems to have truly mastered the art of survival in challenging times and that is very definitely down to its organiser, The Component Shop, and the robust support of the Blackpool based Fairhaven Lake Model Boat Club. I must also salute David Gale, volunteer floor manager for the 2025 event, who seemed to be every where all at once!

The one thing missing for me on this occasion was a show guide, something which in past years has always proved most helpful both in terms of navigating the venue and providing extra information on the exhibits/exhibitors. Hopefully, this is something that will be reinstated at next year's show.

Dates for 2026 have already been announced, and it's worth noting that the event has been scheduled for an earlier in the year weekend than usual, September 12-13. ●



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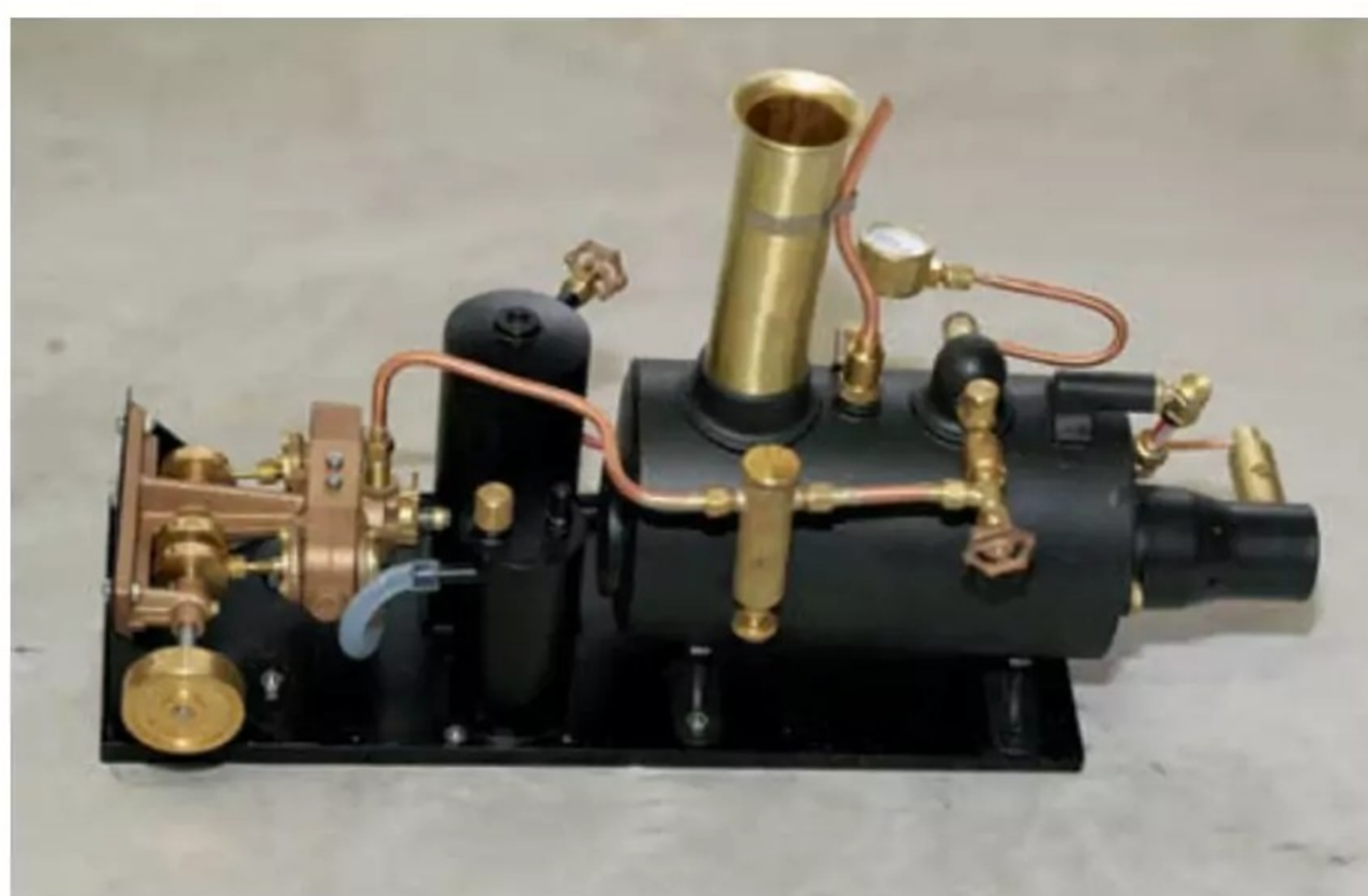
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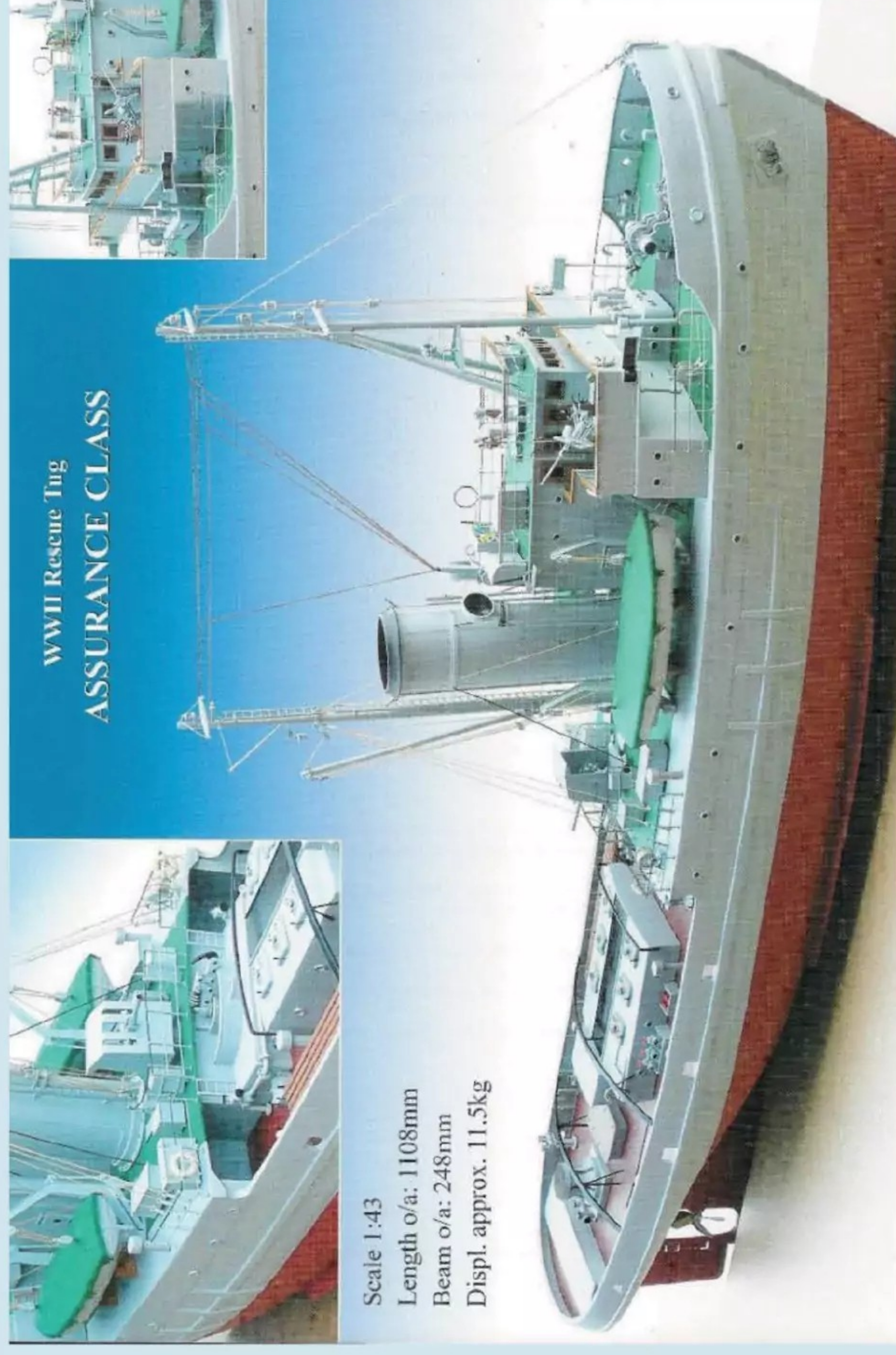
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# Two Drifters

There's nothing like a bit of 'healthy?' competition! **John Miles** tells the tale behind his fabulous, award-winning (see this month's 2025 Blackpool Show report) Fife

*The hulls as delivered from Orion Mouldings. They were considerably larger than either Mark or John had anticipated.*

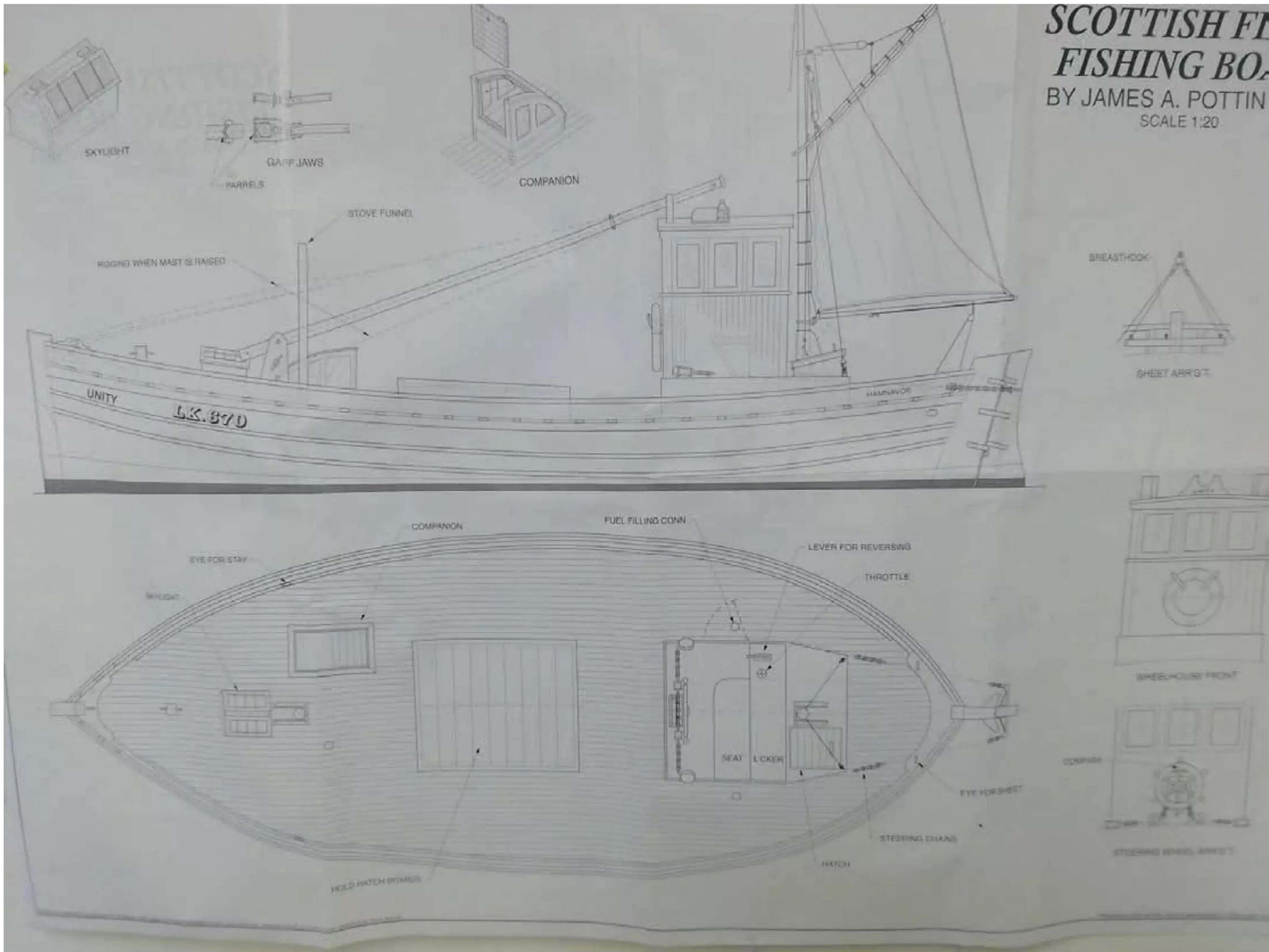




The article by Jim Pottinger published by Model Boats back in 2009 inspired the construction of John's Fifie fishing boat.



This rather poor reproduction from the article illustrates the very simple deck layout. Notice the fairly 'dumpy' appearance, very typical of Fifies.



Jim's article was accompanied by a fairly basic free plan for the Fifie. John decided to follow this plan, but his friend, and in tandem modeller, Mark, decided to build a later version of the Fifie.

Earlier this year I received an email from Mark Parker, one of my chums from Wicksteed Park MBC, asking if fancied a Fifie. I honestly didn't know what he was on about. A form of musical instrument, perhaps? A 'take-

away' meal of some description? A variety of banana, maybe? Not wanting to sound ignorant or unsociable though, I simply responding with a "Thanks, that would be great". Some days later another email arrived, informing me:

"OK, I've ordered two hulls from Orion Mouldings". I'm a great fan of Orion Mouldings' hulls, so while the mystery wasn't completely solved, at least I knew that whatever turned up would be of very high quality.





Being quite difficult to handle, John built two smart but robust cradles for the Fifies from plywood.



The robust nature of the Orion hull meant only two bulkheads, with a platform between them, were necessary. This 'platform' would accommodate the two large lead acid batteries. Only one of these batteries would be used at any one time, the second being used for ballast. Even with the batteries located, however, more ballast would be required.

When I next met Mark at one of our club meetings, I learnt a 'Fifie' was a type of Scottish fishing boat. I'm not sure why he'd thought I'd be interested in such a project. Quite frankly, another model boat build could just be the catalyst for divorce proceedings!

He then ushered me to one side, and cautiously looked around before whispering, "We'll keep this a secret from each other". I might have

understood if he'd suggested keeping it a secret from my wife, but from each other? So, I had to ask, "What do you mean? I know you're getting a Fifie hull, and you know I'm getting one". "Yes" he concurred in hushed tones, "We both know that. But I won't tell you what I'm going to do with mine, and you won't tell me what you're going to do with yours". I'm sure people have been incarcerated for lesser statements than that!

*"We agreed to share information regarding the acquisition of the 'mechanical' components but keep the final design and finish of our individual builds a secret from each other"*

It was all so bizarre I decided just to humour him, simply tapping my nose to quietly indicate conspiratorial assent. After all, I already had enough to worry about. Somehow, I would have to try and explain all this to my wife when the enormous bathtub size (50 inches long, with a beam of 15 inches) hull turned up. This, then, was how we parted company. No, not my wife and I, Mark and me!

On the drive home though, the strange scenario that had just played out began to feel as if I'd been reeled, hook, line and sinker, into a 'net' of international spies. The whole thing smelt a bit 'fishy'. I was obviously 'small fry', simply being trawled by a much 'bigger fish' into deep, murky waters and battered into submission. Oh, the perils of finding yourself in the wrong 'placé' at the wrong time. Sorry, must consider getting myself a new script writer!

Anyway, a week or so later Mark announced the arrival of the hulls with another message that noted: "They're absolutely huge. I think we've bought kayaks!". "Brilliant", I thought, "Thanks, Mark!".

They were indeed large, but, in fairness, the potential for building two unusual craft from them was equally as great.

We agreed to share information regarding the acquisition of the 'mechanical' components but keep the final design and finish of our individual builds a secret from each other.

Our first joint task, however, was to obtain the electric motors, and we opted for the Como Drills 850 motor with reduction gearbox (ratio 2.1:1) from The Component Shop.

We also purchased a variety of plywoods and Obeche were purchased from SLEC.

We decided I would construct the hull supports to aid the building, plus some bulkheads and the sub deck. So that's what I did.

Following that, we implemented 'high security' in our respective sheds. Mark went a little overboard here, with blackout blinds, security cameras, and, to cap it all, a guard dog patrolling the grounds!

When we met up at the pond it was difficult to avoid broaching the subject, so our conversations were somewhat





To establish a reasonable fit for the sub deck, a card template was made, loosely fitted and 'fingers' of card glued on to identify the final shape of the deck. The template was then placed onto the 3mm plywood sub deck and the final shape outlined in pencil prior to cutting out with a craft knife.

stilted, neither party wishing to divulge any useful information that may help the other.

Knowing little about fishing boats, and indeed nothing about this specific type, the Fifie, led me to investigate further. A free plan for a 1:20 scale Fifie and an accompanying article penned by James Pottinger had featured in the June 2009 issue of Model Boats.

I found the back history to these boats provided by Jim absolutely fascinating, though. To quote: "With the introduction of internal combustion engines to fishing boats, many of the older former sailing boats, both Fifies and Zulus of the large and smaller types, were converted, allowing greater versatility of fishing methods

***"The Orion Mouldings fibreglass hulls did not disappoint. They were beautifully detailed clinker-built mouldings. Even repair patches were incorporated!"***

and guaranteeing regularity of landings that were not dependent on the vagaries of the wind. In design these owed their success to the instinctive skills and intuition of the boat builder, honed by gradual development over the years in conjunction with the needs and preferences of skippers".

So, each of these 'tailor-made' boats differed considerably from its siblings. The earlier smaller boats were



The Orion hull was supplied beautifully finished, but to his model a well-used look John wiped this over with Isopropanol to remove the sheen. The centre section was then painted with a thin coat of dull white enamel, allowing the underlying brown to show through, thus creating the 'distressed' effect desired. John admits this was achieved more by luck than judgement!



A similar effect was achieved with the application of just one coat of red oxide to the lower portion of the hull.

generally clinker-built, constructed in small boatyards located in Fife (hence, I presume, the name), the Forth and at Eyemouth. They operated around the coasts of mainland Scotland, the islands, and north-east England.

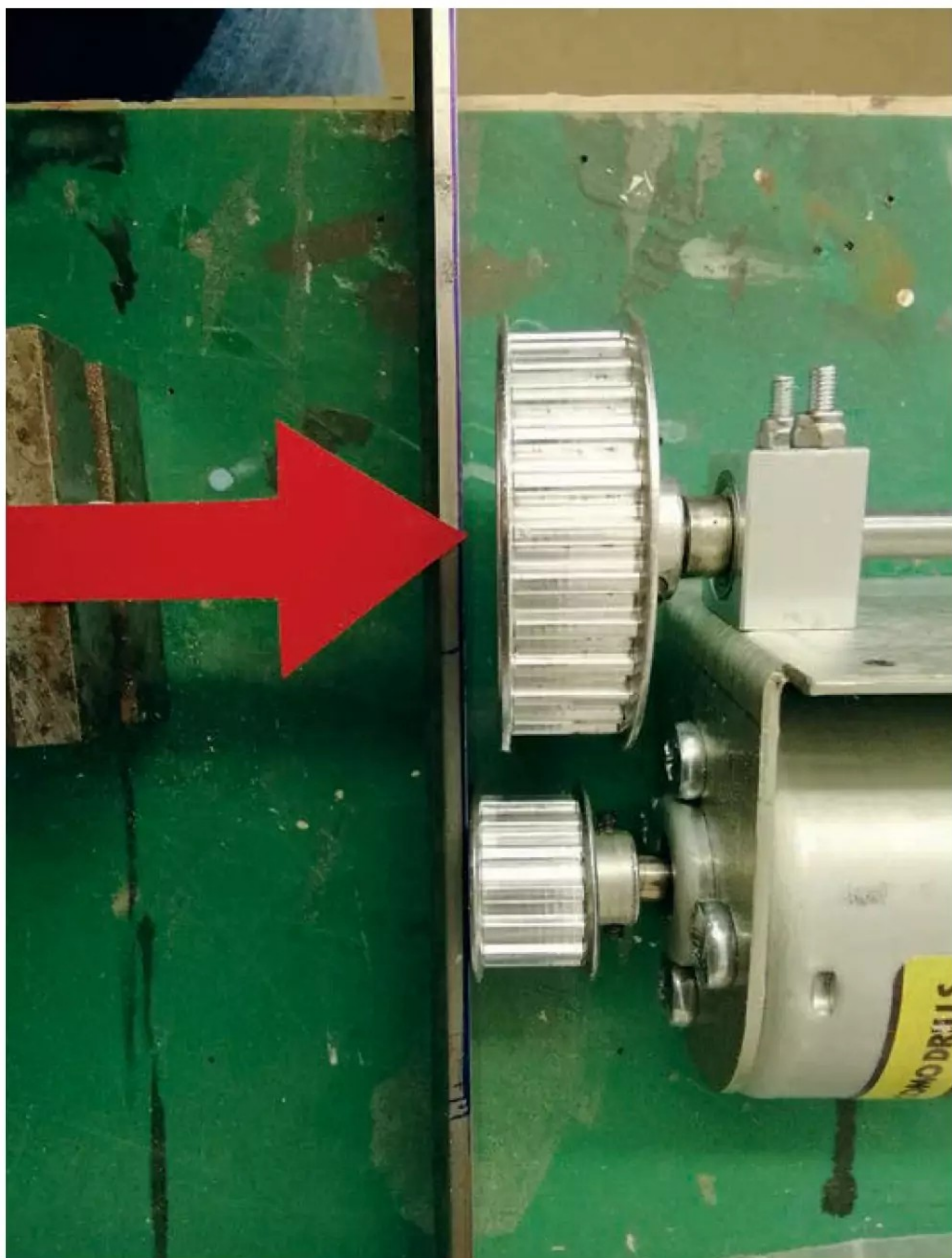
We were building to 1:12 scale, as dictated by our moulded hulls, but a lot of the basic information on the plan for the smaller scale model did prove helpful. Frustratingly, though, the photographs showing various individual craft in the accompanying article were too small for me to discern much from in terms of the additional detail I was looking for.

## Getting stuck in

The Orion Mouldings fibreglass hulls did not disappoint. They were beautifully detailed clinker-built mouldings. Even repair patches were incorporated!

This, then, was our starting point, at which we each went our separate





John hit a major problem when attempting to fit the powerful 850 motor and reduction toothed belt pulley assembly (see text). While the size of the propellor had been matched to the slower geared motor, both he, and Mark, had to resort to a direct drive.



With the motor and shaft installed, the large rudder was fashioned from teak offcuts. With this in place, the propellor was fitted in readiness for testing.



Mark's paddling pool, in which he and John established the amount of ballast that would be required by their boats (this shot taken in more clement weather). To lower the hull to an acceptable waterline, it was necessary to use both lead acid batteries plus an estimated 7lbs of additional ballast.



Quite by chance, while was poking about behind the garden shed John noticed that the back of the shed had been 'accidentally' missed when he last painted it. This gave him an excellent example of weathering on a real wooden structure to draw inspiration from.

ways. Not knowing what Mark was doing makes it difficult to report on his progress, and therefore this article tends to be biased around the construction of my boat.

Being «semi» scratch built, problems always present themselves. However, much planning takes place, there are always unforeseen issues that arise. The moulding of the hull, due to its inherent quality, was structurally pretty strong and needed little additional strengthening in the way of bulkheads; I added two, midships, bonding them to the hull





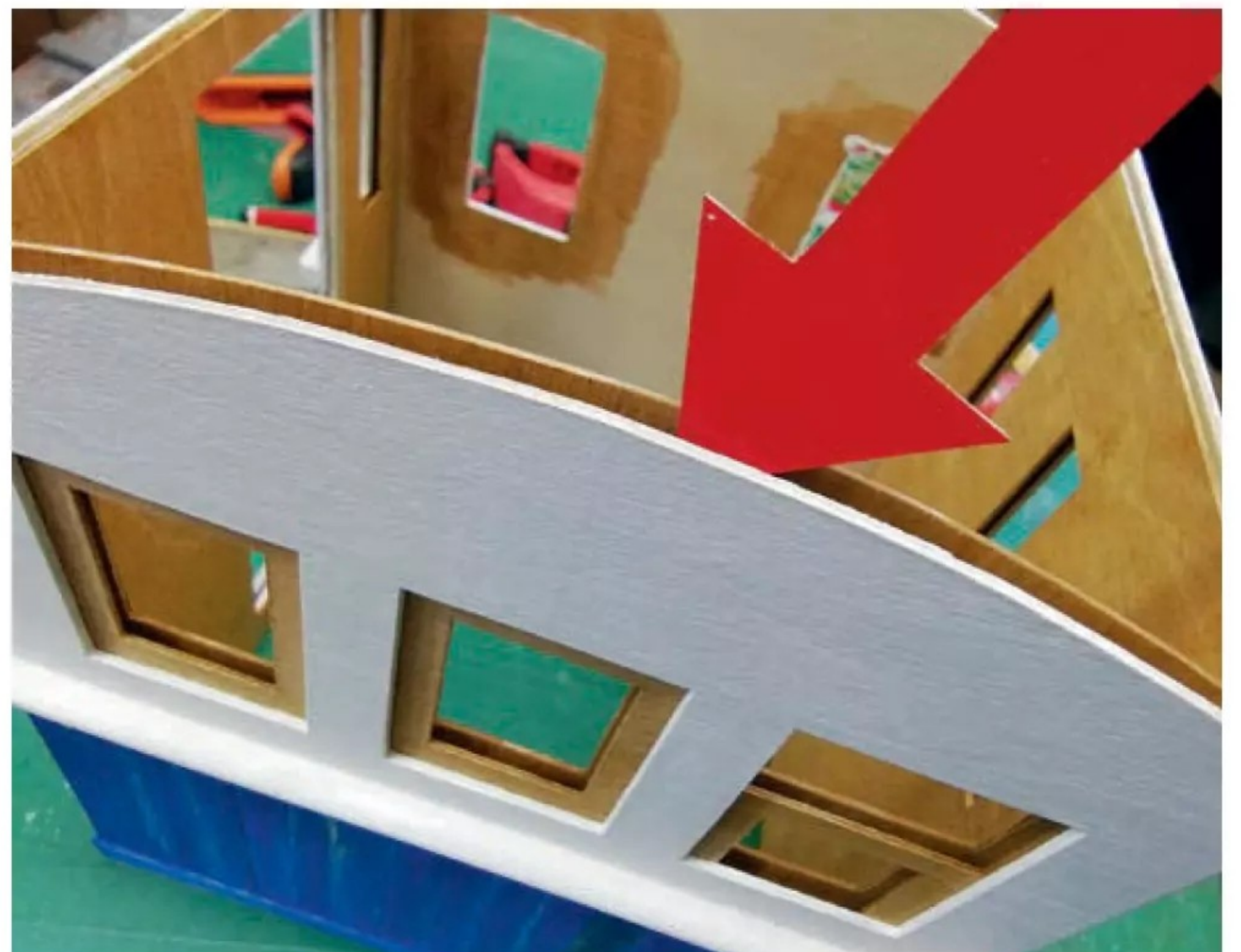
John's first planks to be weathered. Made from plywood, these were initially painted white, then blue, rubbed down with very coarse sandpaper and then painted with wood stain which was immediately wiped off.



The bulwark extensions were weathered first, while the planks on the deck were individually weathered before gluing down. These were stained with Dark Oak or Antique Pine water-based wood stain, which while still wet was over painted with white enamel paint that was immediately wiped off. This would be further enhanced with weathering powder.



The first of the deck fittings to be made was the hold. The whole assembly lifts out to gain access to the hold in which the two batteries are located. The cover is made up from plywood boards, with the cloth tarpaulin glued on covering about 2/3rds of the opening. The removed boards have been 'thrown' on.



Fitting real picture glass to the windows of the wheelhouse meant creating a 'pocket' for each pane of glass. The red arrow indicates the pocket between the outer plywood skin and the inner.



The wheelhouse almost finished, with the internal fittings in place.

with P38. In between these a flat 6mm plywood floor was added. This was to accommodate the two main 12-volt lead acid batteries, which are very heavy. The reason we opted for these was partly for ballast weight for and partly to drive the large 850 motor. The unforeseen problem was that the hull alone, even at this 'bare bones' stage, was already heavy and the batteries added considerable additional weight. These had to be removable for transportation purposes and therefore access to the hold be quite large, which obviously affected the design of the deck area.

These are not complex boats to build, and even the superstructure is very basic.

## The mechanical side

The propellor shaft and propellor went in easily. But then we both hit a snag regarding the electric motor and

the associated reduction pulleys and toothed belts. Reduction was 2.21:1.

The larger of the toothed pulleys fitted comfortably on the output shaft, but the small pulley, which had been bored out to imperial dimensions, would not fit the metric motor shaft. A word in Gareth's ear at Component Shop and replacement pulleys were despatched to us.

The next difficulty galloped towards us! When assembled, the pulleys, belt and motor were very tight. So tight, in fact, the massive 850 motors just stalled! The problem we deduced was that the output shaft bearing blocks were dimensionally too large, thus increasing the centre distance between motor and output shafts. Are you still with me? This meant the drive belt was too heavily tensioned.

I don't have any basic engineering machines, so Mark offered to skim





*With the wheelhouse and fish hold, both of which are removable for access to batteries and electronic equipment, it was time to start adding details. Note, too, the main mast and boom now in place.*



*The view across the stern showing the mizzen mast, sail and some of the 'clutter' associated with fishing boats.*



*The arrival of the Seine net ordered from Neil Newby at Model Trawl Netloft was a turning point in establishing this model's fishing boat credentials.*

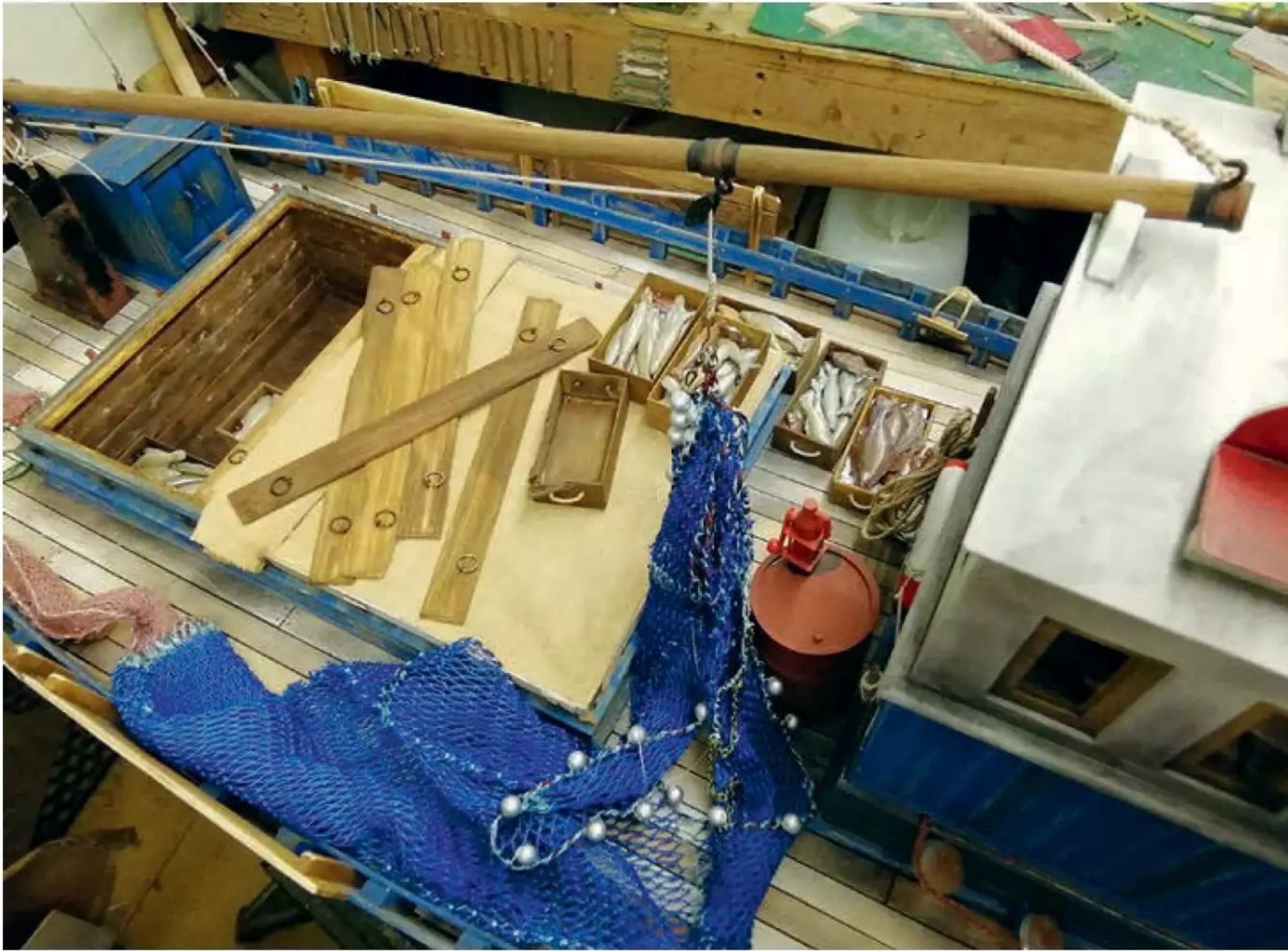
about half a millimetre from the blocks. Not much, but it made all the difference, allowing the assembly to operate freely.

With the gear and reduction pulley system installed in my boat I had

high hopes of success. The system was connected to the 12-volt battery power to the motor applied and... All my expectations of a smooth running were dashed. The whole assembly and the boat shook violently. So

much so, the grub screws used in the drive train pulleys shook themselves loose. This caused the top pulley to move out of line with its larger counterpart, thus causing the horrendous vibration.





John's fish boxes were made up from 1mm thick plywood. Some have been filled with fish, others left empty. The excellent resin fish were supplied by Macsmouldings. These were sprayed in silver/black/brown by John. The fish hold to the left of the photo is also loaded with filled boxes of fish.

***“Nothing else for it; I had to contact Mark to establish if he’d experienced the same problem...”***

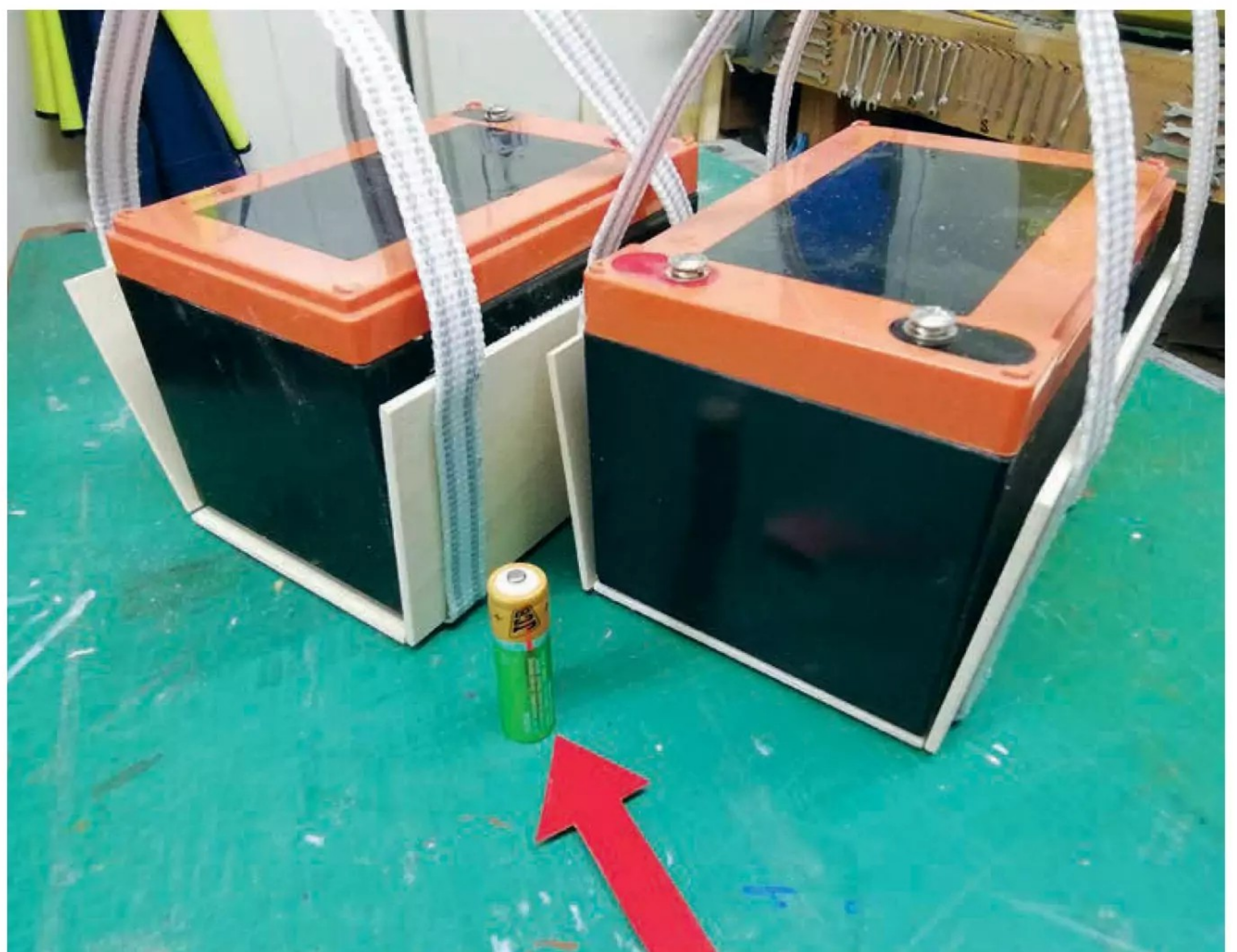
Nothing else for it; I had to contact Mark to establish if he’d experienced the same problem. He, however, had yet not reached this point in the build. Even so, I suggested we dispense with the reduction gearing and revert to direct drive from the motor, and this is what we opted to do.

## The electronics

Mark specialises, in the world of work, in electronics, and started to baffle me with Ohms law, current output, etc. I have difficulty turning on a table lamp and so didn’t have a scooby. But we agreed I should visit his workshop the following day, when he would connect a load of meters up to the motor and check the loadings(?). Aha, I thought, this would my chance to see what he was up to. Well, no such luck. On the evening of my visit the rain was torrential, and the two of us of stood alongside Mark’s paddling pool endeavouring to establish the loading on the motor when under load, i.e., moving through the water. Apparently, under load the motor drew 3 amps. Mark became quite excited that the load was so small. Had I known what he was banging on about I might have joined in this show of elation. Instead, I left for home, soaked to the skin and none the wiser.



Fish awaiting boxing. These were individually glued down to give a random look to the pile. No fishing boat would be complete without gulls coming in for their share of the catch, and these were again supplied by Macsmouldings.



With John's Fifie virtually complete, it was time to prepare the boat for sea trials. One of the problems of building a model to 1:12 scale is not only the size and weight of the finished boat, but the amount of ballast required. In this case it took the two lead acid batteries plus 7lbs of additional ballast. For comparison purposes, this photo shows a typical 'AA' battery to fore of the two huge batteries used.

## Weathering

The next dilemma for me, and I suspect for Mark, was whether to weather, or whether not to weather! Mark is particularly talented (I can't believe I'm saying this) at weathering models, and I therefore assumed he would go ahead and weather his boat. Under normal circumstances, I would have

consulted him regarding this operation but was forced to go ahead without help. We live about as far from the sea as is possible in this country, so I hardly ever get to see fishing vessels first hand. From memory, most sea-going boats are subject to enormous amounts of rust, but our boats were being made from wood, so the



## Fishing boat challenge



*Loading the fish hold*



*All hands on deck.*



*John's finished Fifie.*

opportunity to use lashings of 'rust paint' did not present itself.

However, unbeknown to my wife, the back of our garden shed had not received a coat of preserving paint the last time I'd been conscripted to the task of repainting it. Just as well really, for here on my doorstep was the inspiration I needed. As can be seen from the photo, this is natural weathering at its best!

For the main decking on the boat I'd used 1mm plywood cut into 12mm strips, which I had stained, before fitting, with Liberon water-based Antique Pine and Dark Oak. I dipped the brush into one colour, then the other, thus giving an uneven finish to the individual planks. Every plank was then treated with a diluted white enamel paint, giving each a slightly different colour. The plywood sub deck

onto which these planks would be glued was painted with the dark oak stain. A gap of about 1mm was left between each plank as it was glued onto the subdeck using superglue, thus giving a reasonably credible caulking effect (when viewed from a distance).

A different approach was adopted for the gunnel extension planks and the frame extensions. For some obscure reason, I painted each wooden (Obeche) component with white enamel primer. Once dry, these were then painted with blue enamel paint, which was 'wiped off' before dry, this leaving the white primer ghosting through the blue in parts. The following morning, I inspected my handywork only to be disappointed with what I'd 'achieved'. The weathered effect was just too uniform. I therefore took the drastic

decision to go to work with some very coarse sandpaper, rubbing through the blue and white paints in places and exposing the original obeche below. Nope! This still didn't look quite right. The blue was still a bit blue, and the white was, well, a bit white. I was clutching at straws now. So, I painted over all the blue / white with dark oak stain, promptly wiping this off while still wet, thereby leaving the original, natural wood but now stained darker. At last, I was satisfied with the weathered finish of these parts, so they were now ready for assembly later on.

### **The superstructure**

With the mechanical side tested, it was time to move on to the superstructure. This is very basic, consisting of a small wheelhouse, a boarded and tarpaulined hold for





*Boxing the catch.*

***“I was going to need a lot of fish...”***

the catch, a companion way to the engine room, and a couple of small access hatches, all made from 0.8, 1.5 and 2mm plywood – plus, of course, two masts.

Fitting the wheelhouse windows proved the biggest challenge here. I prefer to use glass (picture glass) or photographic slide glass if available in lieu of plastic or perspex. Somehow these latter alternatives never look quite right to my eyes. I find them difficult to fit without adhesive smears and prone to come unstuck and a pain to keep clean and static free. But glass really needs to be fitted into a frame/pocket to hold it securely. When planning the structure, therefore, this additional thickness must be taken into account.

Other than fitting the windows, construction of the wheelhouse followed the usual method.

## The finishing touches

It is, of course, the finishing touches that create the interest in a model.

I wanted all the ‘ropework’ on the trawler to be realistic in size and form, so I sent an order to ‘Ropes of Scale in Canada, spending about £18 on various ropes. Within a couple of days these arrived, and I was delighted with their quality. What I was not so delighted about was the export taxes associated with the purchase. This amounted to an additional £18. But I bit the bullet and started to fit them. Then, blow me – a couple of weeks later I received a VAT invoice from Fed Ex plus disbursements, which totalled another £13. My few lengths of rope had cost me a whopping £49. Buyer beware!

I was going to need a lot of fish, so I turned to Macs Mouldings, which stocks a whole range of 1:12 scale bits and pieces, so I managed to net all sorts of accessories for the deck, including a haul of over 200 fish! While



*In search of the next shoal.*

these resin mouldings are not painted, they’re really good and require no cleaning up. I simply sprayed them with silver, and they were ready for fitting into a series of wooden boxes made from 1mm plywood.

Over the next few days, the detailing continued and as can be seen from the photos, there was a lot of it.

## Getting Fifie over the finishing line

When I next met up with Mark, he informed me that he was, regretfully, withdrawing from our contest. Work commitments would just not allow him to complete the project within the envisaged timeframe. Completely understandable; I’m retired, had already spent hours on the Fifie and still hadn’t quite finished.

So, I admitted I didn’t yet have any crew figures. Most of the resin ones I’d seen, and there aren’t many available in 1:12 scale, were on the clunky side. Others, available through doll’s house suppliers, looked too doll-like (funny, that!). And while I know the introduction of 3D-printing has revolutionised modelling, it’s one new trick too far for this old dog! Mark, on the other hand, has embraced all the latest technology, including 3D printing, and very generously offered to ‘print off’ (is that the right term?) a set of fishermen for me.

Maybe, just maybe, when Mark’s Fifie is finished we will see it in Model Boats. Trust me, it will be worth waiting for. I can assure you it will be very, very good! ●



*HMS Condamine in 1949.*



# The River class frigate

**John Parker** recounts the fascinating history of, and modelling options for, this World War II Battle of the Atlantic tide turner

**W**hen war broke out in 1939, Britain was once again faced with the U-boat threat to her supply lines. The hard-learned lessons of World War I had been forgotten; too much reliance was placed on the development of ASDIC (the anti-submarine detection system) as the solution to the submarine menace, and once again there wasn't a sufficient number of escort vessels. The improvised Flower class corvettes went some way toward relieving the situation, being cheap and quickly built, but they were too small and too slow, with barely enough seaworthiness and range for the North Atlantic. Something better was needed.

## A Twin-Screw Corvette

A new design was approved in March 1941 and revealed a vessel of some 300ft (92m) long, which was to be known as the River class. Providing the required speed of 22 knots to chase down a surfaced

U-boat proved a problem however, as it meant that turbine machinery and a longer hull would be required. The many shipyards that would need to be brought into the emergency building program had no experience of turbines and their yards could not handle the increased length, so a compromise was made on a speed of not less than 20 knots using reciprocating engines. These took the form of two triple-expansion engines of the same type used in the Flower class, providing a total of 5500 horsepower and leading to the type being referred to initially as the Twin-Screw Corvette.

Accommodation and amenities for the 114 crew was vastly improved over the Flower class, and the River class was well equipped for anti-submarine warfare. Typically, these vessels carried 100 depth charges, with eight throwers and two stern rails, a Hedgehog (a forward firing spigot mortar) on the forecastle deck, ASDIC, type 271 radar and High Frequency Direction Finding

(HF/DF). The main guns were usually two 4-inch general purpose types, mounted fore and aft, and a typical AA fit consisted of 2 x 2 pounders in single mountings or twin Oerlikons plus 2 x 20mm Oerlikons on the wings of the bridge. The initial requirement for minesweeping gear was later dropped in exchange for extra depth charges (up to 150). 440 tons of fuel oil endowed the River class with a range of 7,200 nautical miles, roughly twice that of the Flower class.

## Production

The River class was built to merchant ship rather than naval standards to reduce the cost and enable as many shipyards as possible to build them in the minimum possible time. A conventional riveted structure was adopted for the same reason, but shipyards were able to substitute welding in certain areas if they had sufficient expertise, resulting in a lighter hull. The use of reciprocating engines enabled the experience of



## RIVER CLASS LEADING PARTICULARS

(GROUP 1, ROYAL NAVY)

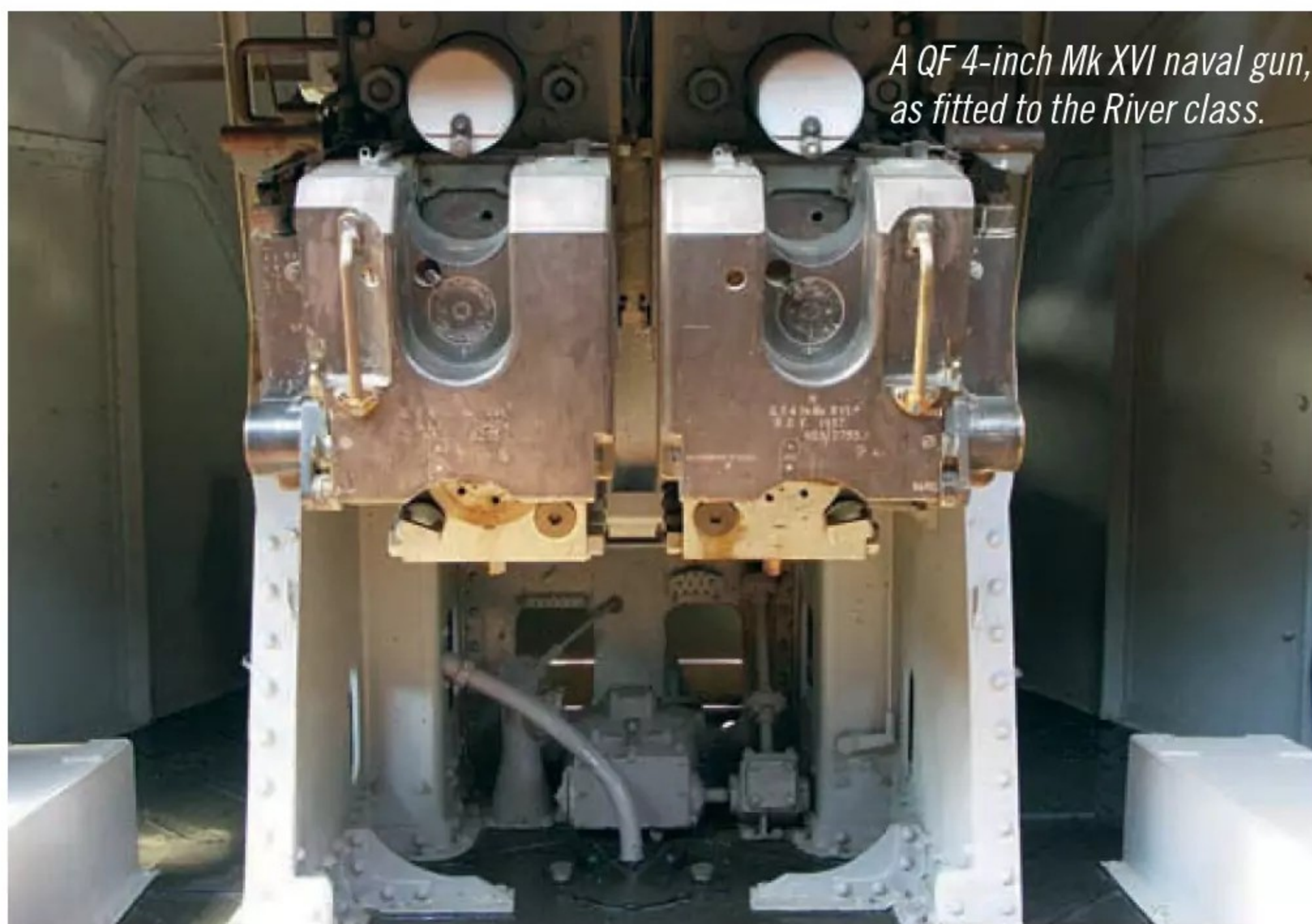


<b>Length:</b>	301.25 ft (91.8 m) overall	<b>Range:</b>	7,200 nmi (13,300 km) at 12 knots (22 km/h; 14 mph)
<b>Beam:</b>	36 ft 6 in (11.1 m)	<b>Armament:</b>	2 × QF 4 in (102 mm)/40 Mk XIX guns, single mounts
<b>Draft:</b>	9 ft (2.7 m); 13 ft (4.0 m) deep		Up to 10 × QF 20 mm (0.79 in) Oerlikon A/A on twin and single mounts
<b>Displacement:</b>	1,370 long tons (1,392 t) 1,830 long tons (1,859 t) deep load		1 × Hedgehog 24 spigot A/S projector
<b>Propulsion:</b>	2 × triple expansion reciprocating, 5,500 ihp (4,100 kW)		8 × depth charge throwers, 2 × rails, Up to 150 depth charges
<b>Speed:</b>	20 knots (37 km/h; 23 mph)		
<b>Complement:</b>	107		

A River class in the North Atlantic.



A QF 4-inch Mk XVI naval gun, as fitted to the River class.



HMAS Diamantina at the Queensland Maritime Museum.

*“The River class played a critical role in the Battle of the Atlantic. In particular, its range enabled it to provide mid-ocean escort where other types could not, and its availability in ever greater numbers from 1943 helped turn the tide of the battle”*

a vast shipbuilding workforce to be tapped into. In all, over the period 1941 to 1944, 151 River class frigates were built in Britain, Canada and Australia. The design was used as the basis for the American Tacoma class (known as the Colony class in Royal Navy service), which had a lighter, all-welded hull.

From the River class was developed the Loch class, which introduced extensive prefabrication and welding in its construction, as well as the more advanced Squid A/S mortar. Increased sheer was noticeable as a distinct kink in the side profile. A further development was the Bay class, based on the hulls of uncompleted Loch class frigates. These were anti-aircraft frigates for the Royal



Christina O., the luxury yacht converted from the HMCS Stormont.

Navy, with an enhanced AA armament of 2 x 4-inch twin-mount HA/LA guns and numerous smaller weapons.

### In service

The River class played a critical role in the Battle of the Atlantic. In particular, its range enabled it to provide mid-ocean escort where other types could not, and its availability in ever greater numbers from 1943 helped turn the tide of the battle. Although responsible for numerous U-boat sinkings, this was not the main purpose of these vessels. Their success was not measured by

their number of U-boat kills but by the number of convoy ships escorted safely across the Atlantic. Constant harassing tactics kept the U-boat under attack, or the threat of attack, with depth charges or mortars, forcing them to go deep and unable to get into a firing position. Several Rivers were lost in the process, but most managed to return to port before sinking, a testimony to the qualities of the design. As well as their role in the Atlantic, River class vessels also served in the Indian and Pacific theatres of war, particularly in the





A River class model built from the mixed media kit by Black Cat Models.

later years of service with the Royal Australian Navy.

In the post-war world, the large number that were suddenly superfluous to requirements either found ready employment in the fleets of many navies throughout the world or were extensively modified so that they could continue to provide useful service in the Cold War. Some lived on into the 1970s or later. Only one complete example of the River class survives today, HMAS *Diamantina* at the Queensland Maritime Museum in Brisbane, Australia. The Sri Lankan Navy had one listed as a training ship until recent times, but its current status is



The October 2013 issue of Model Boats that included a free plan for HMS Tean.



Peter Cole's completed model of HMAS Murchison. Image courtesy of Peter Cole.



*“There are various options available to the modeller when it comes to River class frigates...”*

uncertain. In 1947, the Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis bought the River class HMCS *Stormont* and completely transformed it into a super-luxury yacht, calling her *Christina O.* after his daughter.

### HMS Plym

One River class ship, HMS *Plym*, did not spend the last of her days rusting away in reserve or succumbing to the scrap yard, for it can be said that she ended her active but unremarkable career with a bang! In late 1952 she set off on a long voyage to the Monte Bello Islands off Western Australia, to be moored in a lagoon and left deserted, laden with the seeds of her own destruction. Shortly before 09:30 local time on October 3, 1952, the 25-kiloton atomic bomb in her hold was remotely detonated and she ceased to exist, except as radioactive particles scattered over a wide area. The sacrifice as a detonation platform was to gauge the effects of a nuclear explosion on shipping as part of Operation Hurricane, the UK's first nuclear bomb test.

### Modelling the River class

There are various options available to the modeller when it comes to River class frigates...

The Naval Historical Society of Australia can provide 1:100 plans to scratch-builders on two sheets for HMAS Bay class frigates (<https://navyhistory.au/shop/hmas-bay-class-frigates-1945-to-1955/>) and other plans can be found online.

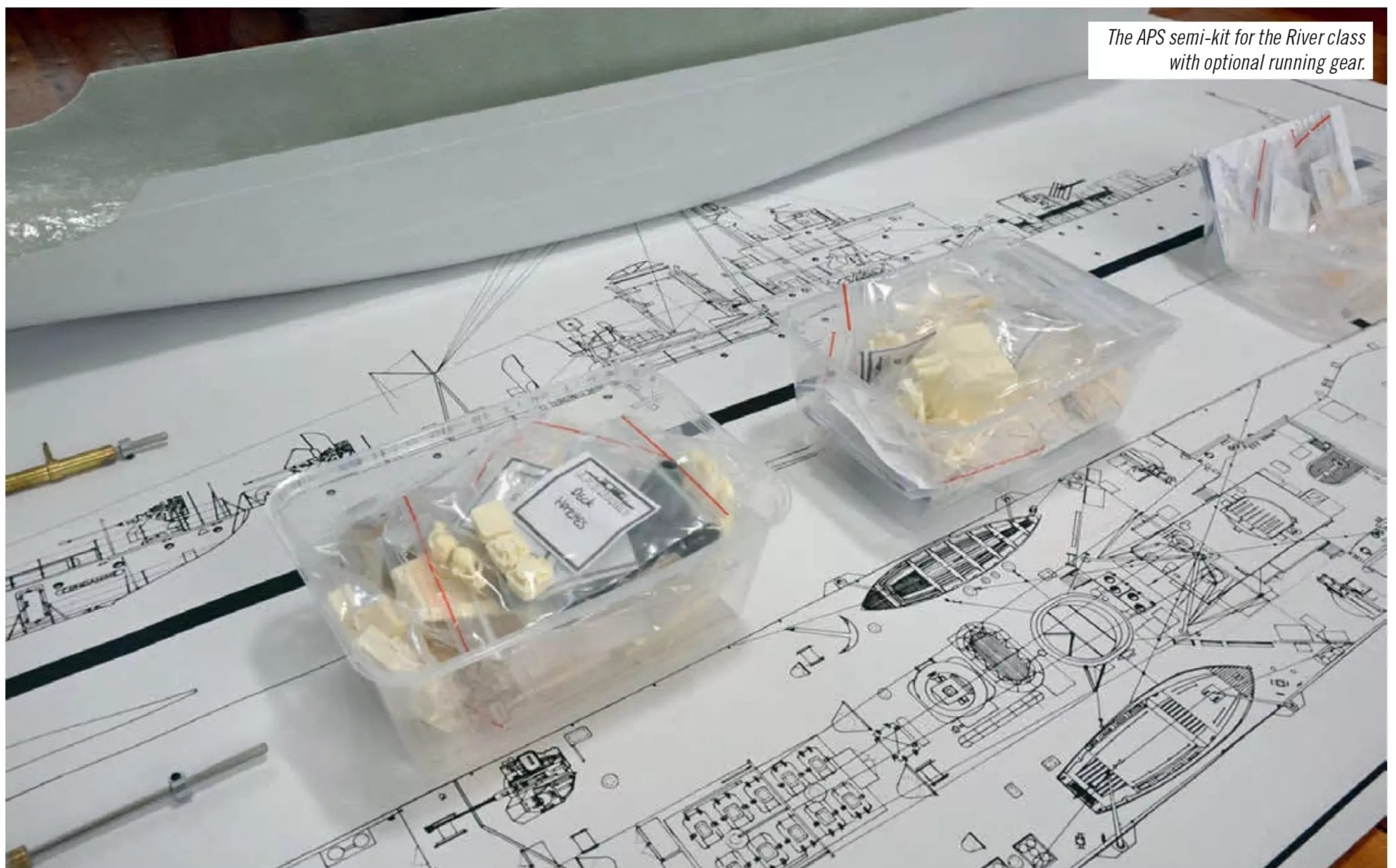
A simple standoff semi-scale R/C model of the River class was provided by Glynn Guest as a free plan in the October 2013 issue of *Model Boats*. To a nominal scale of 1:144, this 635mm long balsa model doesn't require a fancy tool kit to make and is therefore suitable for beginners or those attempting their first scratch-build project. Despite the simplification, the model still looks the part on the water. If you can't find that particular issue, the plan is available from Sarik Hobbies as plan number MM2085.

A 1:200 scale card kit of HMCS *Waskesiu* is available from Neptunia ([www.neptunia-hobbies.com](http://www.neptunia-hobbies.com)) along with laser-cut frames and photo-etched metal accessories.

Several mixed media kits are available, as follows: the Chinese MRY-SFW company ([www.mry-sfw.com](http://www.mry-sfw.com)) offers 3D-printed kits of HMS *Spey* K246 at various scales, waterline or full hull; Starling Models ([www.starling-models.co.uk](http://www.starling-models.co.uk))

has a 1:350 scale mixed media kit of HMS *Nadder*, as well as 1:700 scale kits of HMS *Rother*, HMS *Lagan* and HMCS *St Stephen*; Black Cat Models ([www.blackcatmodels.eu](http://www.blackcatmodels.eu)) offers a 1:400 scale River class. and SkyTrex ([www.skytrix.com](http://www.skytrix.com)) offers a 'Cruel Seas' 1:350 scale River class.

For those wanting a larger, fully-detailed R/C working model, the 1:72 scale 'semi kits' from APS Models of Australia ([apsmodels@optusnet.com.au](mailto:apsmodels@optusnet.com.au)) are worth considering. These consist of a fibreglass hull with plating detail, plus many of the superstructure items (armament, ship's boats, funnel, searchlight, deck fittings and so on) needed to complete the model. The modeller is left to construct the basic superstructure and deck plus any remaining features such as the masts, railings and davits. Two models of the River class are available, HMAS *Diamantina* and HMAS *Macquarie* from Groups 1 and 2 of Australian production (which can be built to represent any other vessels of their respective group), plus the Bay class HMS *Largo Bay* and the Loch class HMS *Loch Alvie*. All are around 1300mm long and displace 6 – 6.6kg, enough to carry a good twin-screw powerplant as well as working features such as a smoker or sound system. ●





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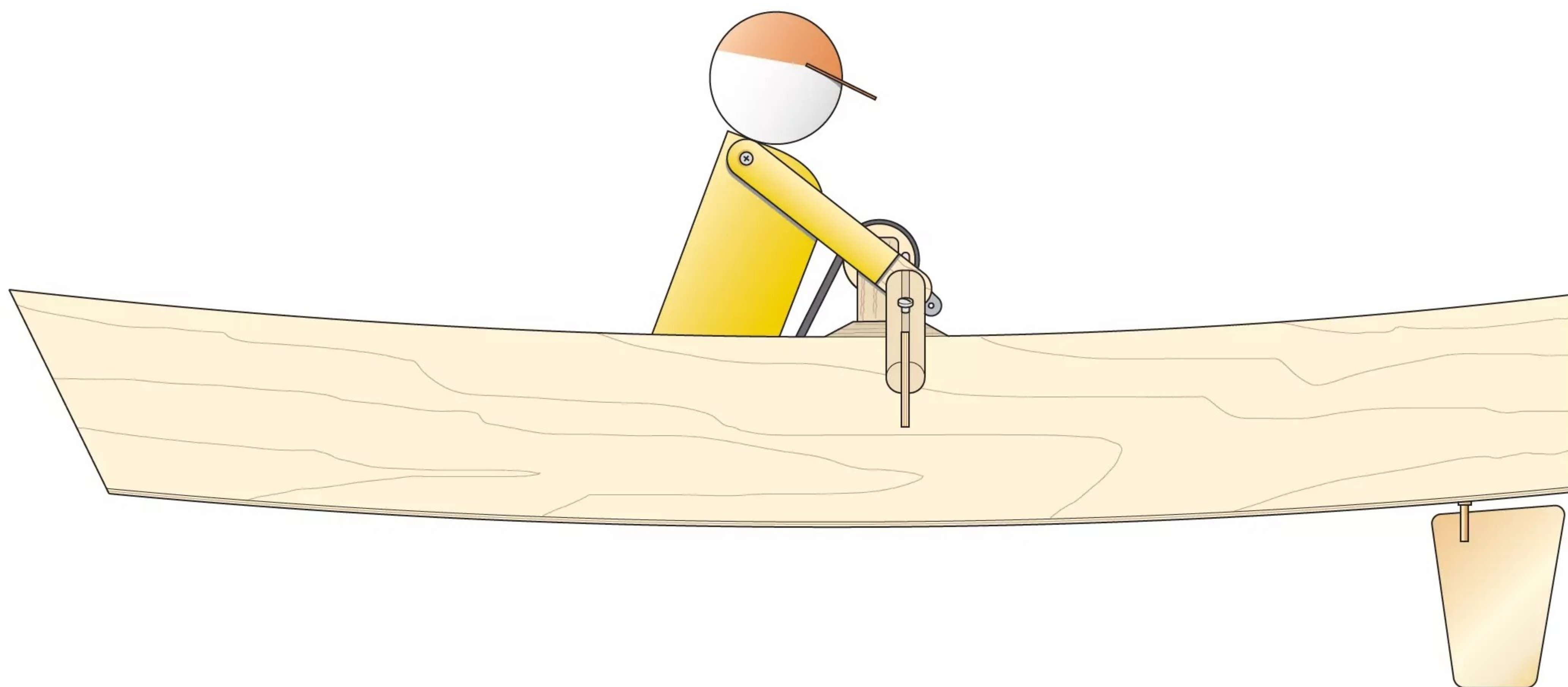


# A SIMPLE RADIO CONTROLLED OAR PROPELLED MODEL

DESIGNED BY GLYNN GUEST







# RowVer

*"Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream..."* **Glynn Guest** provides a guide to constructing a simple radio-controlled oar-propelled model

**B**y abandoning the idea of independently controlled oars for both steering and propulsion, a radio-controlled model based upon a rowboat can easily be made. The rowing mechanism for this model doesn't require any exceptional skills, materials or equipment to make. So, in calm conditions, you can enjoy a leisurely row around the pond/lake.

## Paddle power

Having had some success with the twin paddle canoe model *Waddler* (see **Photo 1** – the plan and build guide for which was published in October 2016 issue of *Model Boats*), it was inevitable

that my thoughts would eventually turn to a rowing boat model.

The canoe paddling mechanism drew heavily on a small model powered by an elastic band and designed by Peter Holland. This needed scaling up and modifying to suit a larger model and the use of electric power. The resulting motion while not anatomically perfect was close enough to give this model a reasonable air of realism when sailing.

The two paddlers were independently controlled and operated on opposite sides of the canoe model. 'Tank Steering', that is controlling the paddles via two speed controllers plugged into two separate receiver channels and operated by the vertical moment of the two transmitter sticks, was used to sail the model. This allowed it to be steered by adjusting the paddling speeds and, with opposite motor rotations, even spun it round on the spot. It was not difficult to keep the two canoeists operating in approximate synchronization and maintaining a straight course, and even if one was paddling at a slightly different rate, it wasn't obvious. This, however, was to become a major problem with the model rowing boat plans.

## Possible rowing solutions

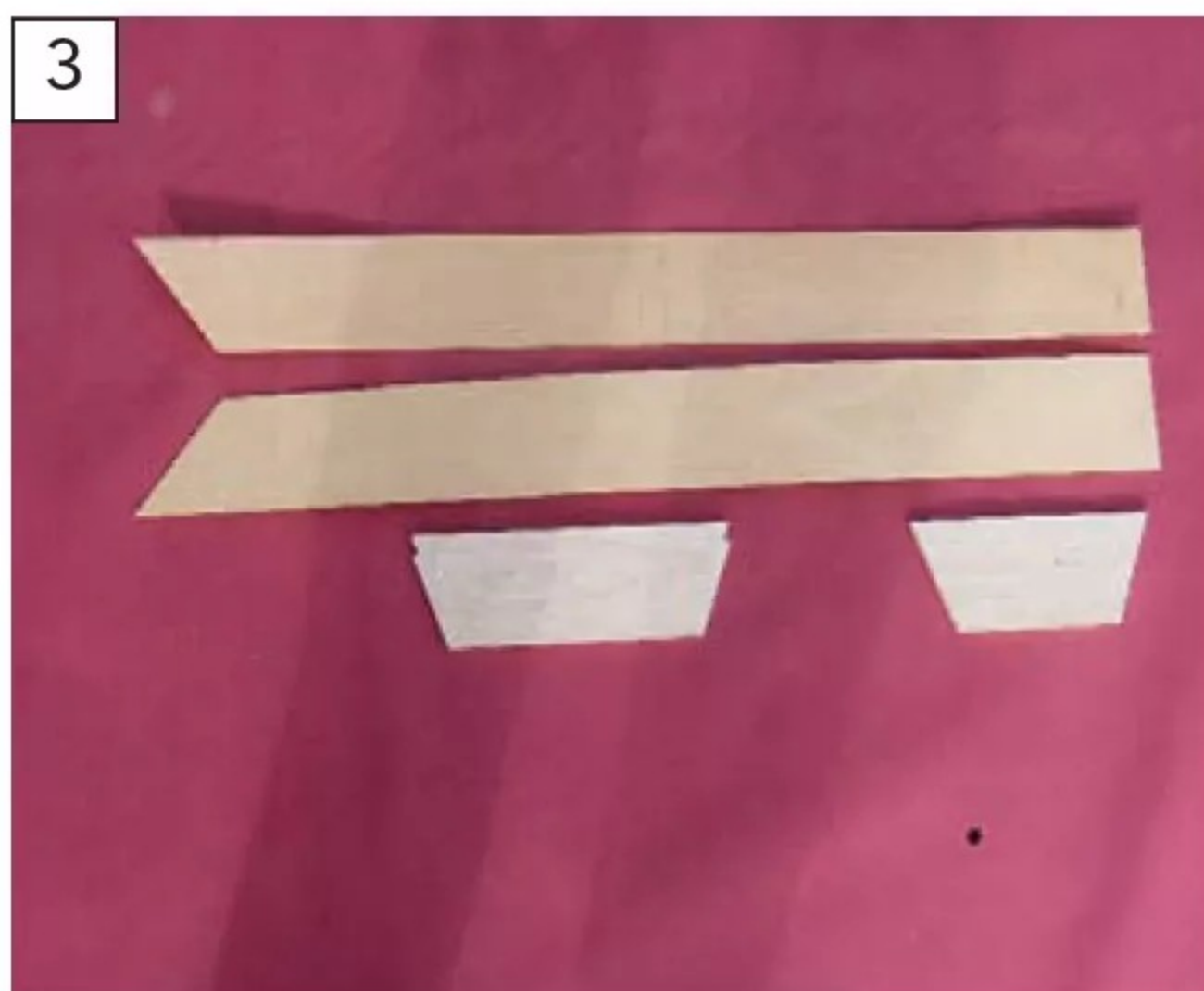
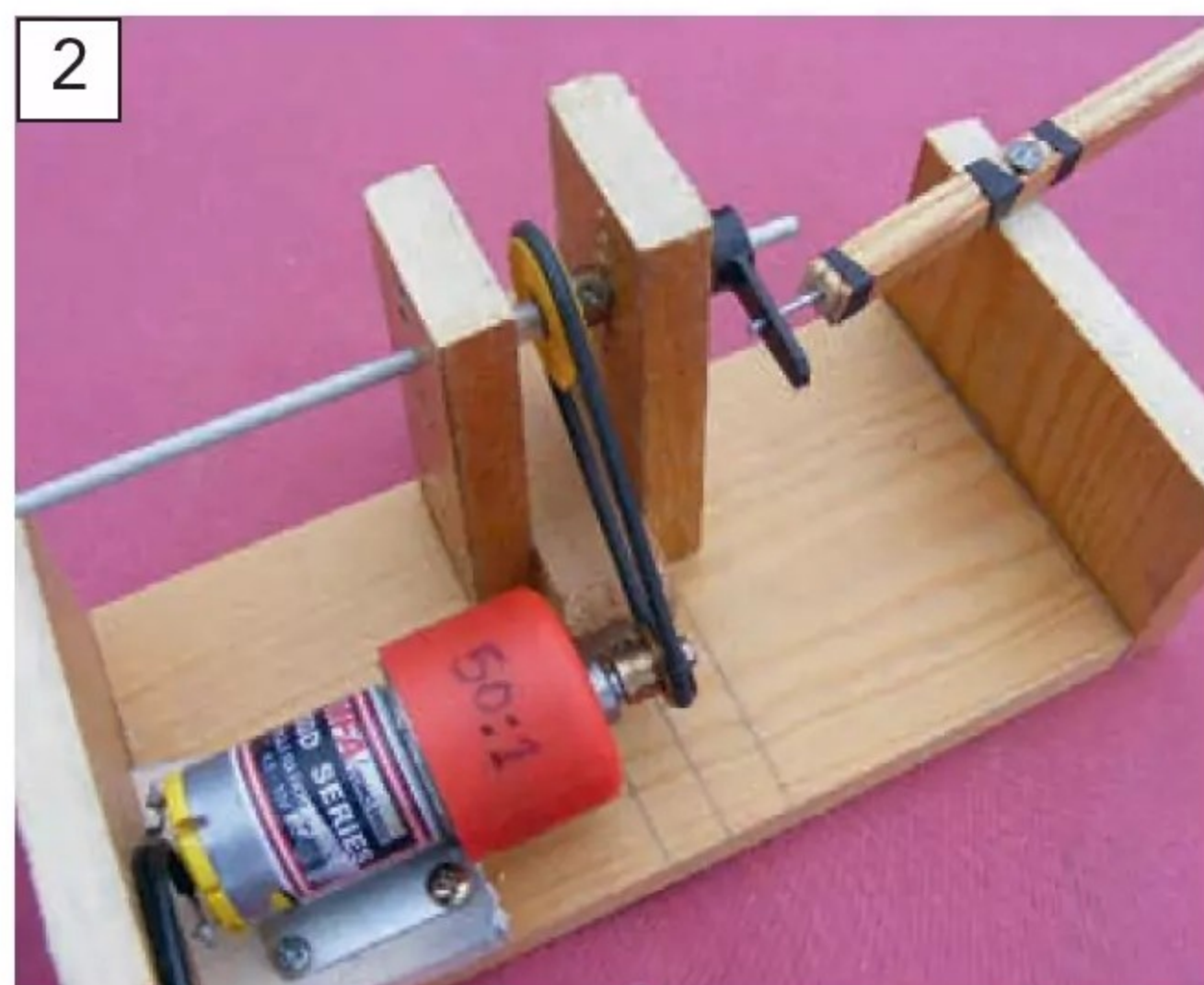
The first idea was to have two independently operated and controlled oars. This would allow the full-size practice of stopping the oar on one side to allow the other oar to turn the model. However, the immediate problem would be maintaining the coordinated motion of both oars when not turning, as while you could get away with a slight mismatch of paddling speeds in a canoe model, this is not something you'd expect to see in a rowing boat. This conjured up visions of continually struggling with motor speeds in an attempt to keep the oars moving together, while probably treating any pondside spectators to an amusing (for them) and embarrassing (for me) spectacle.

Many years ago, I'd built the Graupner *Tina* rowing boat model for a kit review. This used a single motor to drive the

*"The rowing mechanism for this model doesn't require any exceptional skills, materials or equipment to make"*







oars in a perfectly synchronized fashion. Steering was effected by using a servo to alter the rowing mechanism and lift one still rotating oar out of the water. This looked a trifle odd, but another problem quickly became apparent. In all but the calmest of water, any rocking of the model would immerse the lifted oar back in the water to oppose the desired turning effect. The load on the servo, which had to raise and lower the oars, was also worryingly large.

Using clutches to disengage one oar or the other was a possible solution, as was the use of a differential mechanism from a model car. Both quickly began to look more complex and expensive routes than I could justify for this model. This was followed by investigating the use of servos and electronics to duplicate the rowing action. Some impressive examples were found on the Internet but, again, cost and complexity ruled these out. My heart was set on something like the simple mechanical system used in the canoe model.

In the end, the idea of abandoning steering with the oars and fitting a big rudder under the hull appeared to be worth trying. This had previously been tried on the *Tina* model, with some success and, while not exactly scale, it would be simple and maybe good enough option for a model that should never be sailed in anything but calm conditions.

## Bench trials

Because this model was in effect sailing into 'unchartered waters', it seemed prudent to carry out some trials. There's no harm in starting a model with

a new idea or two, but it is best to avoid the well and truly impossible ones!

After working out what looked like a suitable geometry for the mechanism needed to produce the oar blade motion, a simple test rig was made (see **Photo 2**). For simplicity, only a single oar was used in this rig.

The first challenge was to ensure the oar could move freely in the vertical and horizontal planes but always maintain the oar blade in the vertical attitude. The simplest solution was to secure the oar to the model with a screw that passed through a close-fitting vertical slot in the middle of the oar. After a little thought, this was made by laminating the oar from three strips of wood, the center strip being cut to make the slot before gluing together.

A length of wire glued into the end of oar drove the oar's rotation. This wire fitted into a rudder tiller secured to a shaft that was supported in holes drilled into two support arms glued onto base of the test rig. In anticipation of any needed adjustments, a series of holes in these supports had been drilled. A band (actually, an 'O' ring) connected the pulley on the geared drive motor to a pulley fitted between the supports and secured to the shaft. This motor (an MFA 950D type with 50:1 gear ratio) had performed well on my previous canoe model, with more than adequate power and speed.

By connecting the motor up to the battery via an ESC and R/C, it was possible to start testing at low speed. This was fortunate, as some adjustments were needed to the oar motion before it would fully immerse

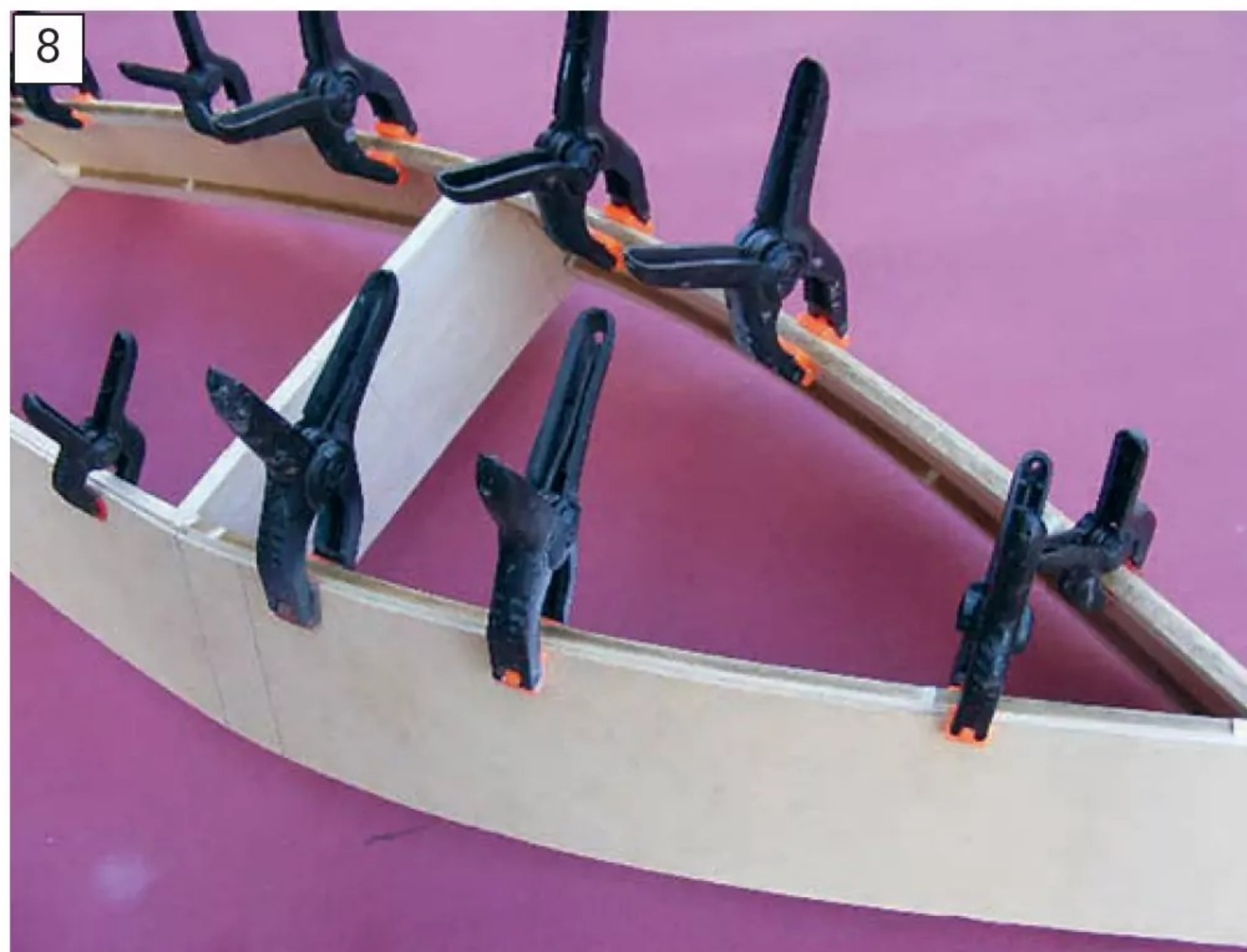
***"You could use alternative materials, but the prototype was built from lite ply and balsa to produce a light yet more than strong enough hull"***

the blade at the bottom of the stroke. At one point the test rig was vigorously thrashing around on the workbench when Mrs. Guest looked in, presumably having become worried by the (even more unusual) noises I was creating. She made no comment. She didn't have to; the way she simply rolled her eyes said everything!

While the test rig did confirm that the desired oar motion could be produced, it also revealed a minor problem. During each cycle, the oar would make an unwelcome knocking noise. Observing the motion closely, I identified that this was coming from where the oar was secured to the test rig by the screw in the oar slot. The oar would jump slightly as it moved from pivoting on one edge of the support to the other edge, rather than moving smoothly. Luckily, I had planned to make the proper oars by using some half-round wooden mouldings, and slipping a strip of this underneath each oar before securing with the screw gave the desired smooth motion and eliminated the knocking noise.

The test rig also showed that the geared motor along with a further 2:1 speed reduction from the pulleys would create the right sort of rowing speeds when using a six-cell Nimh battery pack.





At this point, the model's design and construction could be started with some justifiable confidence.

### A simple hull

A flat-bottomed, shallow draught 'skiff' type of hull seemed best for this model. Not only would it be easy to build but it also ought to be stiffer when sailing and less likely to suffer from the rolling problems encountered with the *Tina* model.

You could use alternative materials, but the prototype was built from lite ply and balsa to produce a light yet more than strong enough hull. A 2mm thickness of lite ply formed the two hull sides, while 6mm (1/4-inch) balsa was used for the transom and bulkheads (see **Photo 3**). The top edges of the hull sides needed reinforcing with strips of 5mm (3/16-inch) balsa. To ease the bending of the hull sides together, these strips were initially only glued to the sides from the transom to the position of the second bulkhead (see **Photo 4**).

Hull construction began by gluing Bulkhead 2 and the transom between the hull sides (see **Photo 5**). The sides of these two parts were angled so that the desired flare and sheer would be created in the final hull shape.

The next stage of construction could only be carried out after the glue had fully set. The leading edges of the two side reinforcing strips had to

be chamfered so that a good, glued joint could be made at the bows (see **Photo 6**). Pulling the sides together ought to show how to shape the strips in order to achieve this. Glue was inserted between the unglued strips ahead of Bulkhead 2 and the hull sides. The bows were then glued and held together with suitable clamps. A little extra reinforcement at this potentially vulnerable place was added with a glue-soaked strip of cloth pressed across the inner surfaces at the bow joint (see **Photo 7**).

Simply gluing the hull bottom sheet to the edges of the hull sides would not have produced a strong joint. To create larger gluing areas at this position, balsa strips (5mm, 3/16-inch, square) were glued along the inside of bottom edges of the hull sides (see **Photo 8**).

Bulkheads 1 and 3 were installed next. Note that both should leave a small gap under the upper hull side reinforcing strips; this is to allow lite ply covers to slide over the bulkheads but under these strips to make removable covers over the bow and stern spaces. A little light trimming of the edges of these two bulkheads might be needed before a good, glued joint can be made with the hull sides. Once dry, the bottom edging strips were sanded to match the hull sides with a sanding block that spanned across both sides at the same time; this was to create a flat surface to which the hull bottom sheet

could be glued (see the cross-section on the plans).

A slightly oversize piece of 2mm lite ply was cut to fit onto the hull bottom. The curve needed to lie flush on the hull was gentle enough for pins pushed through the lite ply into the balsa strips to keep things secure while the glue set (see **Photo 9**). Light trimming and sanding of the excess material at the side/bottom junction produced a neat finish. To provide more support for the rudder tube, a rectangular piece of balsa (6mm, 1/4 inch) was glued to the bottom sheet between Bulkhead 3 and the transom (see **Photo 10**).

### Pulley support arms

The sizes and shapes for the pulley support arms are shown on the plans. However, they must match the other items you plan to use. The centre block must be large enough to allow the easy fitment of the pulley used in the model. Likewise, the holes in arms need to be a good fit with the pulley shaft used, drilled vertically with a smooth but not loose fit (see **Photo 11**).

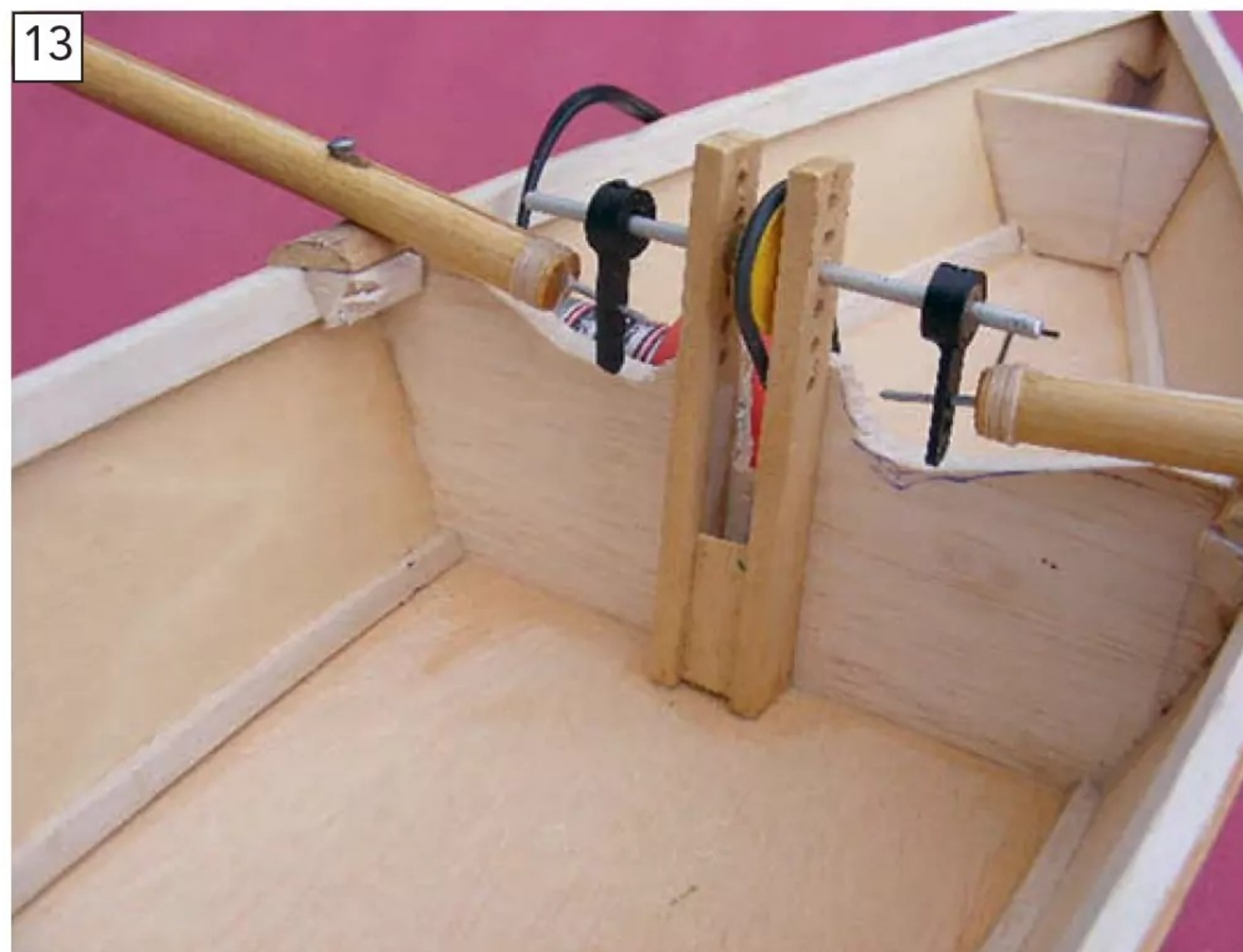
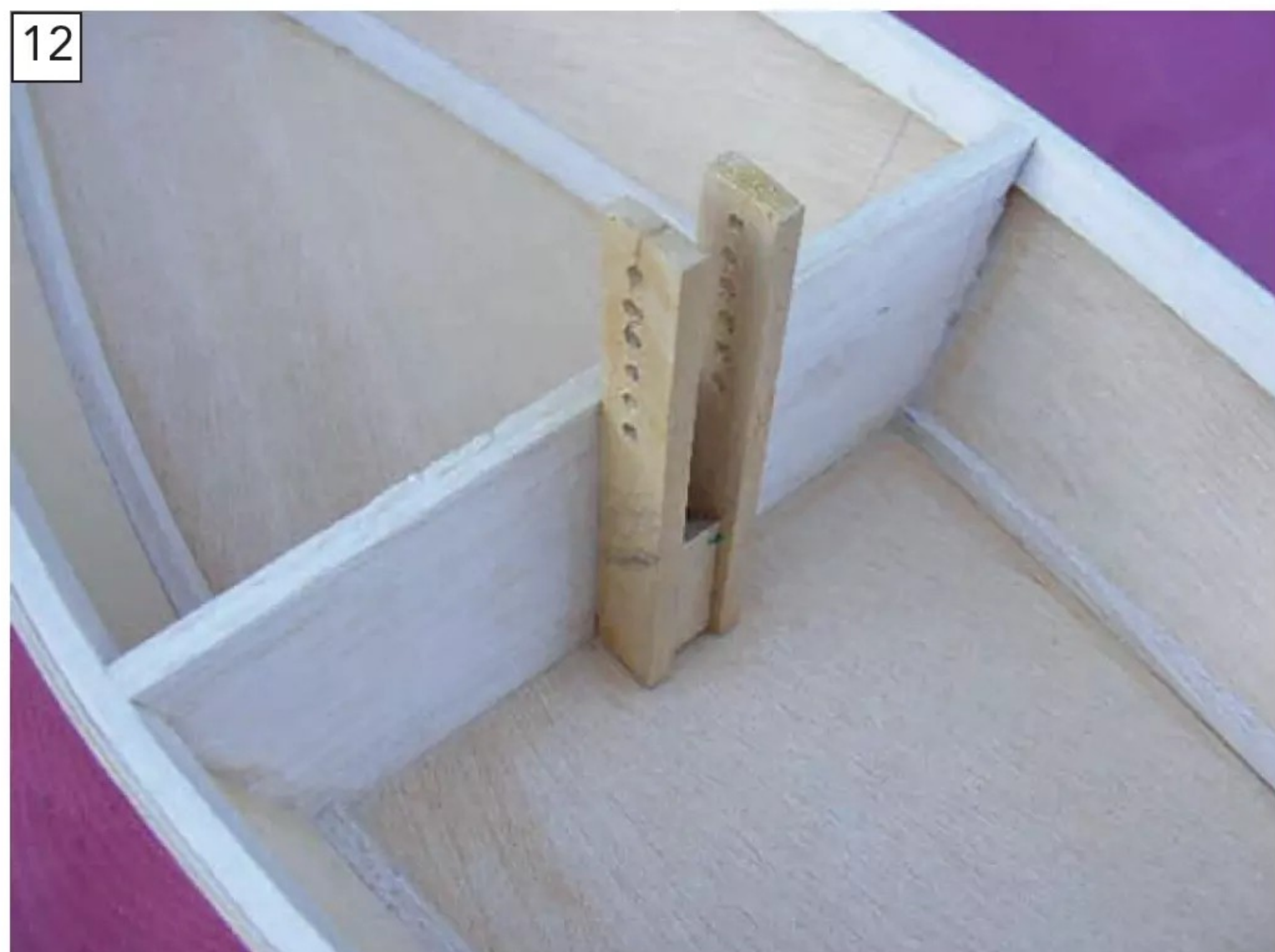
Balsa would not be strong enough for these arms but could be used for the centre block. For my arms, some Pine strip was found in the scrap box. The shaft on the prototype came from an old aluminium knitting needle – this had a smooth and hard plastic coating, which would rotate in a frictionless fashion in the wooden holes. The support arms were glued to the rear face of Bulkhead 2 (**Photo 12**). These need to be vertical and in the central position.

### Rowing mechanism

The two oars must be identical. The plans show a size and method of construction that has worked well for me. By using lengths of half-round wood moulding laminated to a 3mm (1/8-inch) strip core, the slot for the screw needed to secure the oar to







the edge of the hull was easily made before sticking the parts together. It was also simple to leave the core strip short at the outer end to create a slot for the oar blade. Some 3mm (1/8-inch) plywood was used for these blades, as lite ply might not be robust enough for the inevitable knocks and scrapes they were likely to receive.

The oars were reinforced by binding and gluing some cord around the ends (see the plans). The inner ends of the oars needed holes drilling for the wires that would link into the tiller arms on the pulley shaft. In anticipation of the need for adjustments, these wires were made from one of those large metal paperclips. They are easily straightened and more than strong enough to transmit the rowing action, yet a steady force is enough to make any changes needed to produce the desired motion. The model started with these wires just being a tight friction fit into the oars; they were only secured with epoxy once I was totally happy with their operation.

Bulkhead 2 needed some trimming before the tiller arms could rotate freely (see **Photo 13**). Only the minimum amount of balsa was cut away to avoid excessive weakening of the bulkhead and support arms. The motor and its gears were screwed to a balsa block glued to the hull (see **Photo 14**). The size and shape of this block allowed the two pulleys to be aligned with just enough tension in the connecting band

*“Loose but secure!” is the target to aim for”*

to prevent slippage. Any tension above this value would just have created an extra load on the motor.

## Radio gear

A commercially available rudder could be purchased. Mine, however, was made up from aluminium sheet and a metal rod that was a good fit into the rudder tube. It may look rather massive for a model of this size, but this compensates for the model's modest speed.

My rudder servo was placed to one side of the rudder tube (see **Photo 15**). No large forces were likely to be needed to operate the rudder but, to avoid vague steering, the servo still needed a secure installation. A simple single wire link between the servo and tiller arms proved more than adequate. The receiver sat on the other side of the rudder tube. This layout required a slot cutting just big enough for the ESC plug to pass through Bulkhead 3.

To create a reasonable balance when floating, the position of the remaining items was adjusted. You may prefer an alternative layout, but adding ballast to get the correct final floating trim should be avoided. The propulsive power generated by the oars is limited and any extra weight will just slow it down.

Easy access to the battery, ESC and motor without them being too visible was desirable. Hiding them under two lite ply covers either side of Bulkhead 2 (see **Photo 16**) achieved this. These covers were secured with screws into balsa strips glued to the hull sides (see cross-section on plans). Cut-outs to clear the support arms and driving bands had to be made in these covers. The battery could be slid in and out, and small balsa strip glued to the hull bottom was enough to keep it secure while sailing.

There was plenty of space for the ESC across from geared motor – the only precaution being to ensure that all the wiring was neatly secured and could not foul the pulley drive system.

## Sailing trials

Before going any further the model needed a test run in the water and so it had to be waterproofed. The appearance of a plywood dinghy was my goal, so all the external hull surfaces and the oars were treated with a clear acrylic varnish. Three coats were applied, with a light sanding after each coat. This looked about right for a working boat, as the aim certainly wasn't an unrealistic 'mirror smooth' finish.

The first time my models usually get wet is in our garden pond. This is particularly convenient if the model has to be returned to the workbench for 'adjustments' that might be too demanding to attempt at the pond side. In addition, just in case of any really embarrassing disasters, our garden pond is hidden from public view.

The first thing observed was that my equipment layout had produced the desired level trim. The second was that, with its light weight, the model appeared to sit 'on' rather than 'in' the water. Operating the rowing action showed that it would work in both directions, which was a relief. Within





*“The motion of the oars needs to be as near identical as possible. This is best checked under calm conditions, otherwise it will be difficult to be sure of anything”*

the limited confines of my garden pond, the rudder was found to start a turn, even when moving astern.

Buoyed up with the pond trials, it was on to proper sailing trials in a local, but lightly used, canal turning basin. On the day chosen, a light breeze was creating a ripple on the water surface, this being gentle enough not to cause any problems or mask any issues (see **Photo 17**). The oars proved capable of driving the model at a comfortable speed in both directions. The rudder response was, once again, good in both directions and for turns, definitely not quick and tight ones but rather the gentler kind that you would expect from an oar-driven boat.

The best thing, though, was that the rowing mechanism held together with no problems. Well, save for the fact it did make a noise quite different from most working models.

### The rowing figure

The idea of using a doll in this model was an obvious one. However, unless the figure was very loosely articulated, it could add significant extra load on the rowing mechanism. This had been a problem I'd encountered on my previous *Waddler* canoe model and had overcome with a loose limbed

'humanoid' shape. With no pretensions to being an accurate scale model, this worked well.

As a result, RowVer's figure was based around a rectangular plywood back, which I connected to the seat with a small domestic hinge. Across the top of this back piece, I glued a length of hardwood strip for the screws to attach the two arms. The arms were made from plywood with generously sized holes for the upper screws to pass through and for the wire rods on the inner ends of the oars (see **Photo 18**). When the rowing action was operated, these pieces moved freely without adding any obvious extra load on the motor.

It is possible that you'll have to make adjustments to achieve this free movement. The armholes could be too small and need to be enlarged. Likewise, the screws in the upper arm joints must not be too tightly screwed down. The hinge has to be free moving, with no suggestion of sticking at any point. 'Loose but secure!' is the target to aim for.

To give my rower some substance, the plywood parts were bulked out by adding some expanded polystyrene to the back and arms. These were carved with a sharp knife and lightly sanded smooth. The bottom of the body piece needed to be trimmed to clear the seat when leaning forwards. A polystyrene ball was used to represent the head. I made no attempt at any facial features, but the peak of a cap was suggested by gluing card into a slot. A coat of pink emulsion paint was applied to seal the polystyrene and plywood, after which some oil paints were used to 'clothe' my rower (see **Photo 19**). I had planned to add a pair of legs, but it became clear that, when sailing, their absence would rarely be noticed. However, feel free to add these missing limbs yourself. You could even, possibly, add another figure sat in the stern.

### Sailing observations

Following a few sailing sessions, here are some of the things that I have learnt...

It is important to check the sailing trim as soon as the model enters the water. It must float level, with no suggestion of a list to either side. Slight

adjustments to the battery position, it being the heaviest single item in the model, should achieve this. After which the battery must be secured to prevent movement while sailing.

The motion of the oars needs to be as near identical as possible. This is best checked under calm conditions, otherwise it will be difficult to be sure of anything. The oar blades should enter and leave the water at the same time, with the same depth of immersion. The blades work best when they are in the water for about one quarter to one third of the total rotation.

With no propwash over it, the rudder is clearly not going to be as effective as on a conventional powered model. Nevertheless, I find its large size compensates somewhat for this and turns down to around 4m (13-14 feet) in diameter can be made. One thing I've noticed is that if the oars are stopped clear of the water and full rudder is applied, then the model can turn more tightly while it drifts to a stop. I have found this to be a useful feature at times.

A final warning: although model's light weight (1.1 kg, or 40 oz) does make launching and recovery an easy task, it also makes it susceptible to drifting down wind. That said, this is a model designed purely for leisurely sailing in calm conditions. So, mindful of this, choose an appropriate body of water on which to sail and be sure to check weather conditions before you decided to go rowing. An ideal scenario would be a warm summer evening, with a transmitter in one hand and a refreshing beverage in the other! ●





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# The Learning Curve

Having got to grips with kit building, **Stuart Deacon** finds a very different proposition on the menu!

**part 3**

**A**fter tackling my first card and wooden kits, with some success, the next stage in my modelling journey came about quite unexpectedly. During a leisurely lunch my wife and I were having with Craig and Ilona, friends

we see perhaps once every year or two (don't forget Australia is a big country), I found myself casually sharing a few photos of the models I'd recently built on my phone. This prompted Ilona to explain her father had made her a lovely

pond yacht when she was a child but that sadly over the years it had become "a little battered". Would I be interested, she asked, eyes full of hope, in looking at it to see if it could be repaired?

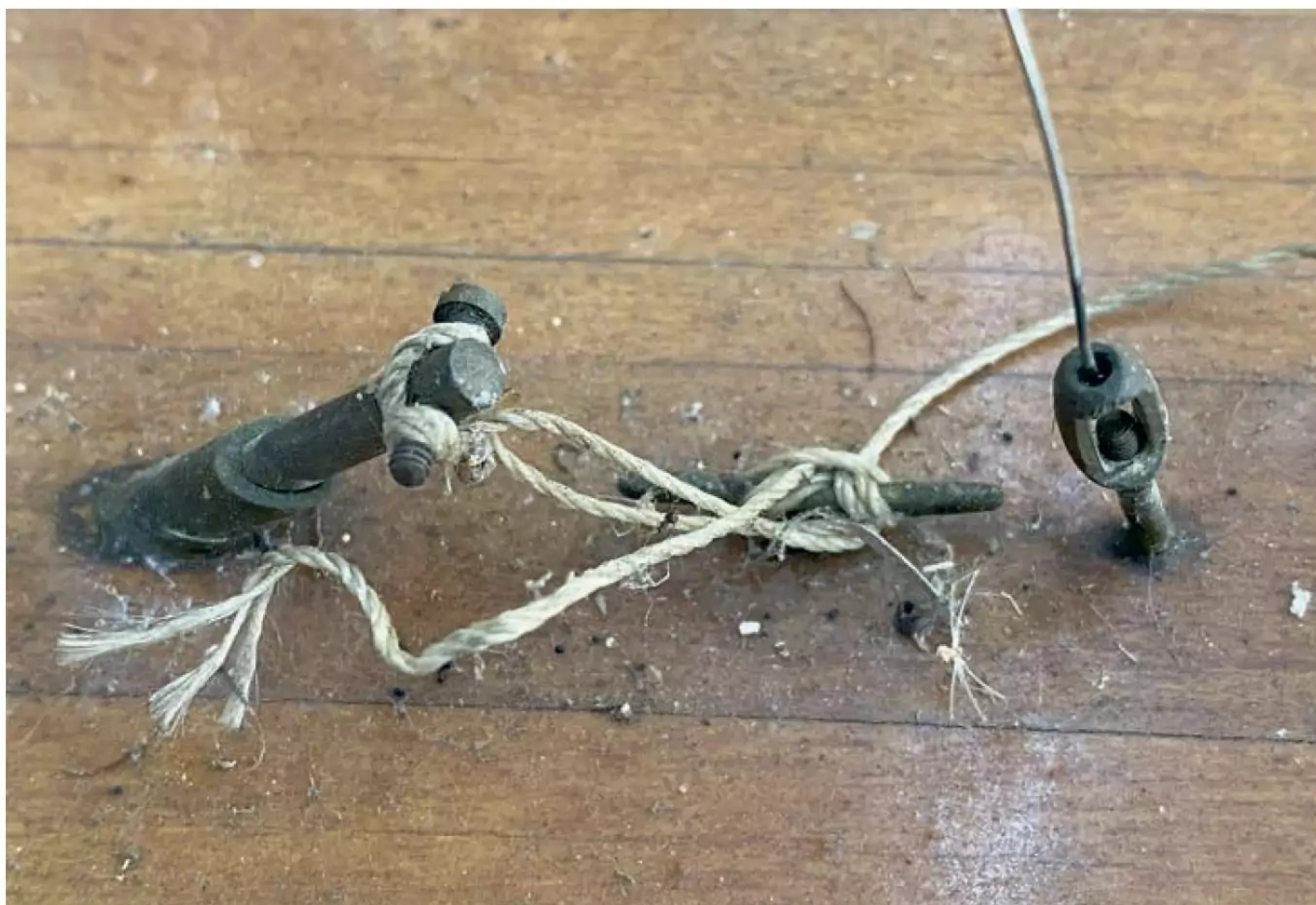
As a result, shortly after, said model was delivered. You probably won't be surprised when I tell you this old pond yacht was more than a little battered – mast in pieces, fittings broken or missing, and years of grime accumulated from under house storage. Never having tackled a restoration like the one required, I knew had a



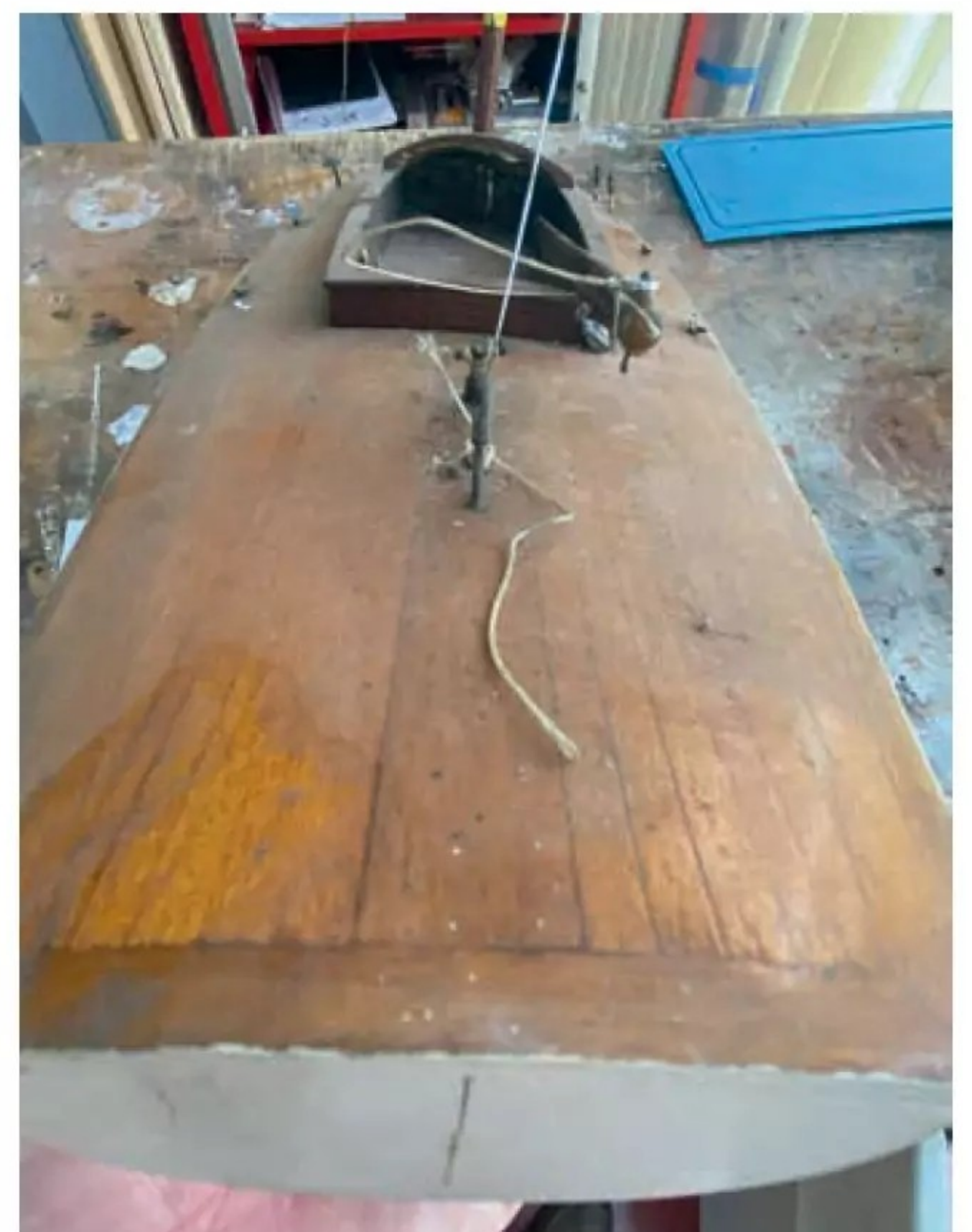
*The pond yacht as delivered, in need of restoration.*



*There was also some nasty damage to the bow.*



*Unfortunately, many of the fittings were either broken or missing.*



*Even before a much needed clean up, the deck detail clearly indicated the workmanship and TLC that had gone into the boat's original construction.*



*“This old pond yacht was more than a little battered – mast in pieces, fittings broken or missing, and years of grime accumulated from under house storage”*

challenge on my hands, but Ilona clearly had faith in me, so I was determined to try and meet her expectations.

## Putting in the prep

Time to get stuck in then, and the first job was, of course, to give the model a good clean so that I could properly assess the extent of the damage.

What I noticed straight away was the workmanship that had clearly gone into the hull and deck. The deck had been fully planked and laid across curved deck beams, all fittings had been handmade, and the hull had been carved beautifully from its bread and butter built up construction. The lead keel had been drilled in places to produce a balanced trim for the yacht. Also very evident was that, at some stage in its life, the hull had been

repainted, complete with a rather wobbly waterline. Ilona?

Work began with removing all fittings from the hull (breaking some in the process), carefully grouping the individual parts and sticking them onto pieces of masking tape (to avoid them getting misplaced/lost) for later attention. The damaged portion of the bow needed to be removed, replaced with a new piece of wood and then blended in with its surroundings. Stripping the old paint off

the hull proved interesting. I’ve no idea what kind of paint had been used, but it took numerous coats of paint stripper and lots of time consuming and laborious scraping to remove it.

Once the hull was back to its bare timber, and with no filling required, the next task was to rub it down to a nice smooth finish with fine sandpaper.

I also cleaned all the brass components. Now ready to begin the restoration in earnest, I called Ilona to further



*Stripping the very stubborn to remove paint from the hull took several attempts and involved lots of paint stripper, scrapping and vigorous sanding.*



*At some point in its history, this model had undergone a repaint that had resulted in a rather wobbly waterline.*



*Stuart's repair of the bow.*



*Finally bare again, the hull prepared for repainting and varnishing.*





The hull painted and varnish in its smart new finish, shown off against the backdrop of a beautiful old (35 years plus) Stag Horn fern.

***“Although this pretty little boat was to spend the rest of its life as a display model, I wanted to make the steering functional”***

discuss what she was ultimately hoping for, i.e., something she could sail again or a static model she could simply put on display. The latter, she decided, somewhat to my relief, would be her preferred option.

## Making good

I then placed the boat, still in bare timber mode, in our hot tub so that I could get a good gauge on its waterline. Once back on the bench in its temporary cradle, I immediately



Sanding the final coats of paint with 2000 grit wet and dry paper prior to polishing with car polishing compound.

used the still damp line along various points of the hull as reference points for marking out a new waterline.

I opted for a deep blue below the waterline and, again, a clear coated topside and deck. The waterline was carefully masked before the hull was sprayed with the blue and a clear gloss varnish was applied to the topsides and deck. Each surface was then rubbed back with a fine grade wet and dry paper between each of the four to six coats of spray finish. The final coat was rubbed back with 2000 grit wet and dry paper prior to polishing with some car polishing compound to obtain a good final result.

The cockpit was treated to the same cleaning, sanding and clear coating, although I added a planked deck inside the cockpit with black card caulking, something which had worked well in my

earlier kit build of the gun deck (see the November 2025 issue of Model Boats).

Although this pretty little boat was to spend the rest of its life as a display model, I wanted to make the steering functional. I really didn't have a clue about how pond yachts were steered, but some research on the internet gave me some good guidance.

The original cockpit had a small wire hook, which I think would have held a spring or rubber band, along with a brass fitting to secure to the rudder post, rope sheets for the boom, a rope traveller and a small spring connected back to the original cockpit hook. Functionally, as the wind pushes the sail to one side, the attached ropes from the boom back to the tiller pull the rudder over to counteract any movement of the bow into the wind and thus keep the yacht on its



Before and after shots of the cockpit, the after image showing off the splendidly planked decking with black card caulking.



Stuart's version of the pond yacht's self-steering system.





The tool used to form the loop on the various wire rigging components.



The fore sail under construction. Note the tiny stainless-steel grommets used for the rope lashing to the fore stay, mast top and sheet.



The superbly restored pond yacht, now named the Raymond G, ready for delivery to Stuart's friend Ilona.

planned track, the spring balancing the system. Tested outside in a breeze this all appeared to work as I think it was supposed to while in actual pond use. However, I wasn't game to give it a go on the lake where we live as it's 6km long. So, with visions of it sailing over the horizon, it stayed on the workbench.

The existing fittings were refurbished, soft soldered where broken or remade where missing. The mast fitting was set on a new timber mast and a new goose neck fashioned for the boom. The wire rigging was made up and tensioned using the original bottle screws. For the wire rigging itself I used a little tool I found online for twisting the eyes into wire fishing lure leaders.

The sails were cut from white calico cloth, with the edges simply glued down, and I added some miniature stainless-steel grommets for the various ropes and sheets that would be used for the sails.

There were now just some final touches to be made. I decided to name the boat for Ilona's father and the original location of its construction, which I applied using gold self-adhesive vinyl lettering (one of my wife's hobbies is card making, so I was able to take advantage of her scan and cut machine to very neatly produce this).

The wooden stand and bow support that I'd made from left over timber was attached to the hull with screws and threaded bolts through the underside and into the lead keel.

## A Ray of sunshine

Presentation of the Raymond G of Brisbane to Ilona elicited a very emotional response, so I think it got the tick of approval! ●





*A close in shot of the Absalon coming around to port.*

# Absalon, Part 2

**David Wooley** completes his build of Billing Boats' 1:100 scale kit for this commanding Danish multi-purpose frigate and concludes with an on the water performance evaluation...

**A**s the Absalon is a comprehensive kit, I'll endeavour to detail as much of the main construction as space will allow. Just as a reminder from Part 1, a start was made on the assembly of the various structural elements. The radar towers were formed from 2mm thick lite ply, and the funnel exhaust casings were slotted together.

Moving on, these parts were given several coats of sanding sealer and sanded down, this being followed by a coat of Hycote plastic grey primer. Once dry, these basic structures were then located but not at this stage fixed, on the removable weather deck (see **Photo 1**).

## Referencing the full-size vessel

At the top of the forward tower is the Thales 3D Air Search Radar, ringed in red in **Photo 2**; further down and ringed in yellow are the Ceros 200 Mk 3 Fire Control Radars. For the model, these radar arrays come as part of the kit. The latter two are formed in styrene, while the 3D Air Search is lite ply (see **Photo 3**). All the WT doors, ringed in red in **Photo 3**, are also supplied, in lite ply, but as I felt these were rather bland, I decided to craft



*Each of the main towers/masts temporarily located to their positions.*

my own from .50mm thick styrene – and I have to say they proved a simple but effective enhancement.

The kit supplied centre tower/ comms and EW (Early Warning) mast supporting electronic counter measures with a large EW sphere is sited at the top of the mast (see **Photo 4**). Construction follows the same pattern, with the parts removed from the lite ply sheet and carefully

bonded together. The yards are also formed from lite ply, with brass wire aeriels added (see **Photo 5**).

Moving aft, the final mast /tower supports the Scanter Surface Search Navigation Radar (see **Photo 6**). For the model, provision is made at the top of the mast so as the yards slot in on each side. Akin to all the major structures, the mast and base of the mast are

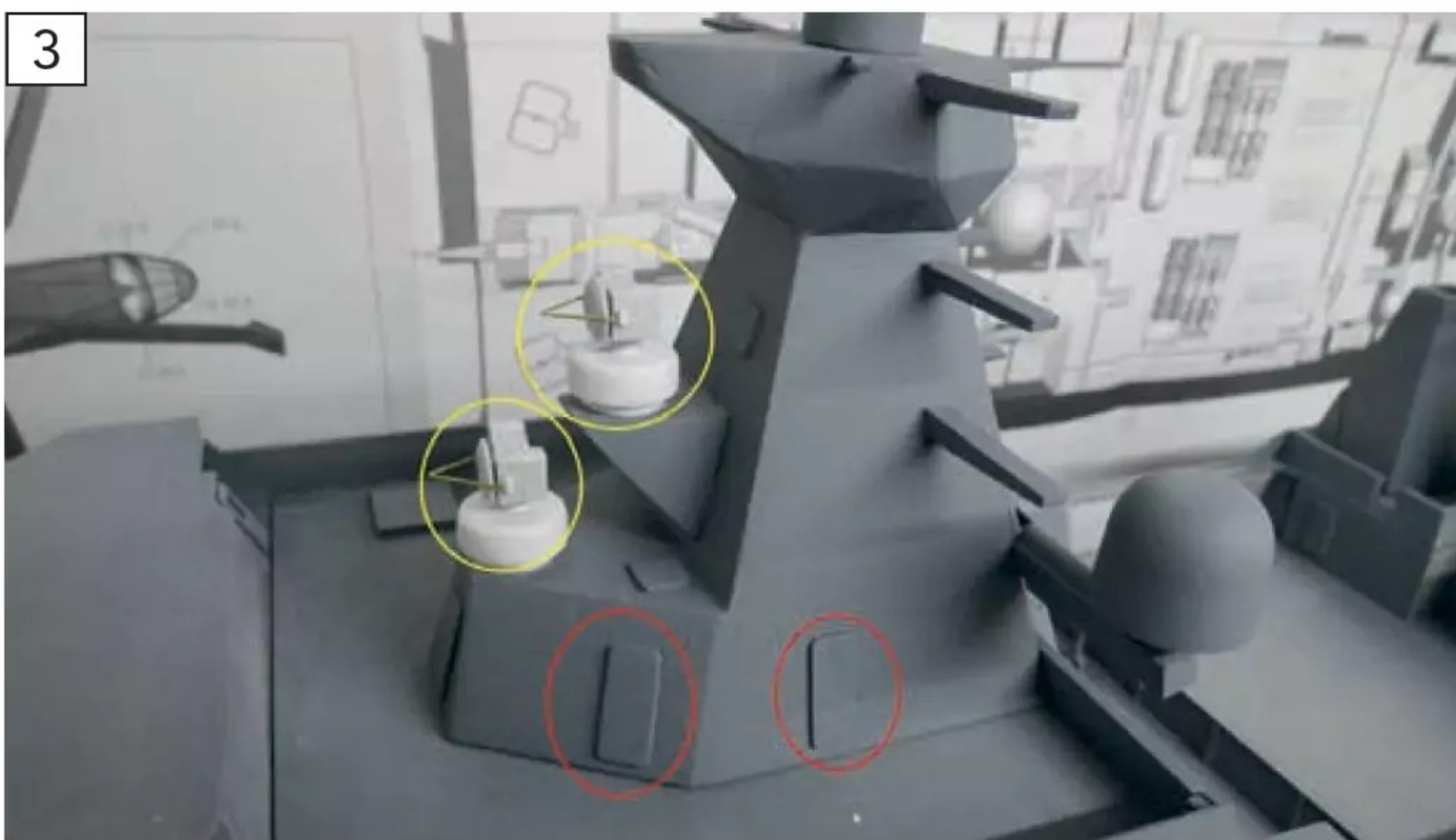




A detailed shot of the forward tower, highlighting the air search and fire control radars.



The EW radar sphere and ESM (Electronic Support Measures) mast arrangement.



The forward tower on Billing Boats' Absalon after it is preliminary primer coat.

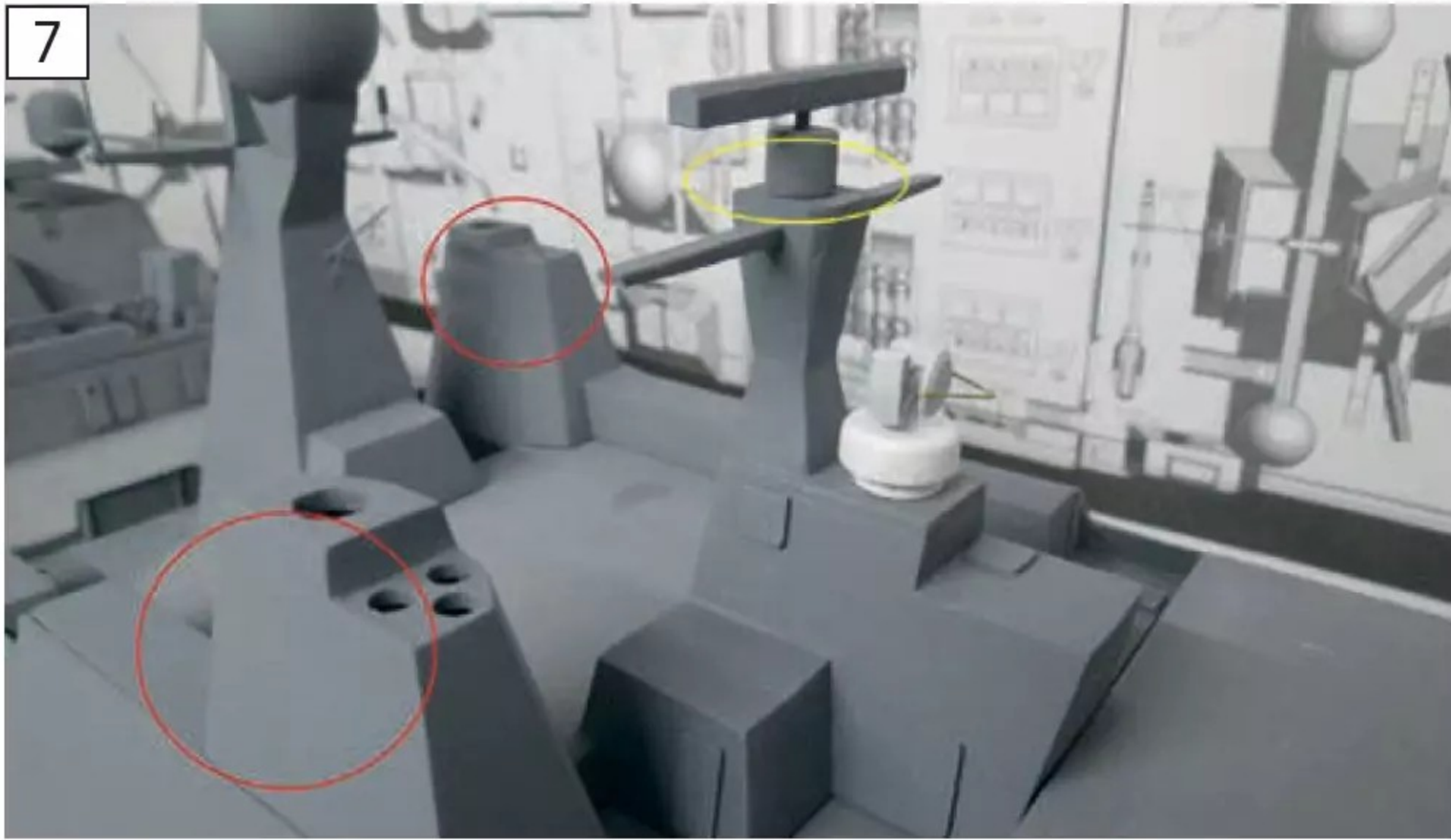


The sphere is supplied with the kit, as is the ESM mast assembled from lite ply.



Absalon is fitted with a dedicated surface search/navigation radar tower, which is an unusual shape, having low radar cross section properties.





Moving on from the assembly of the various sections, preparation of the lite ply was undertaken in a methodical three stages: primer filler, surface primer and finishing coat.



The assembled launch tubes and cradle.



To ensure both launch tube and VLS box assemblies fit neatly into their respective location, each has its own bed.

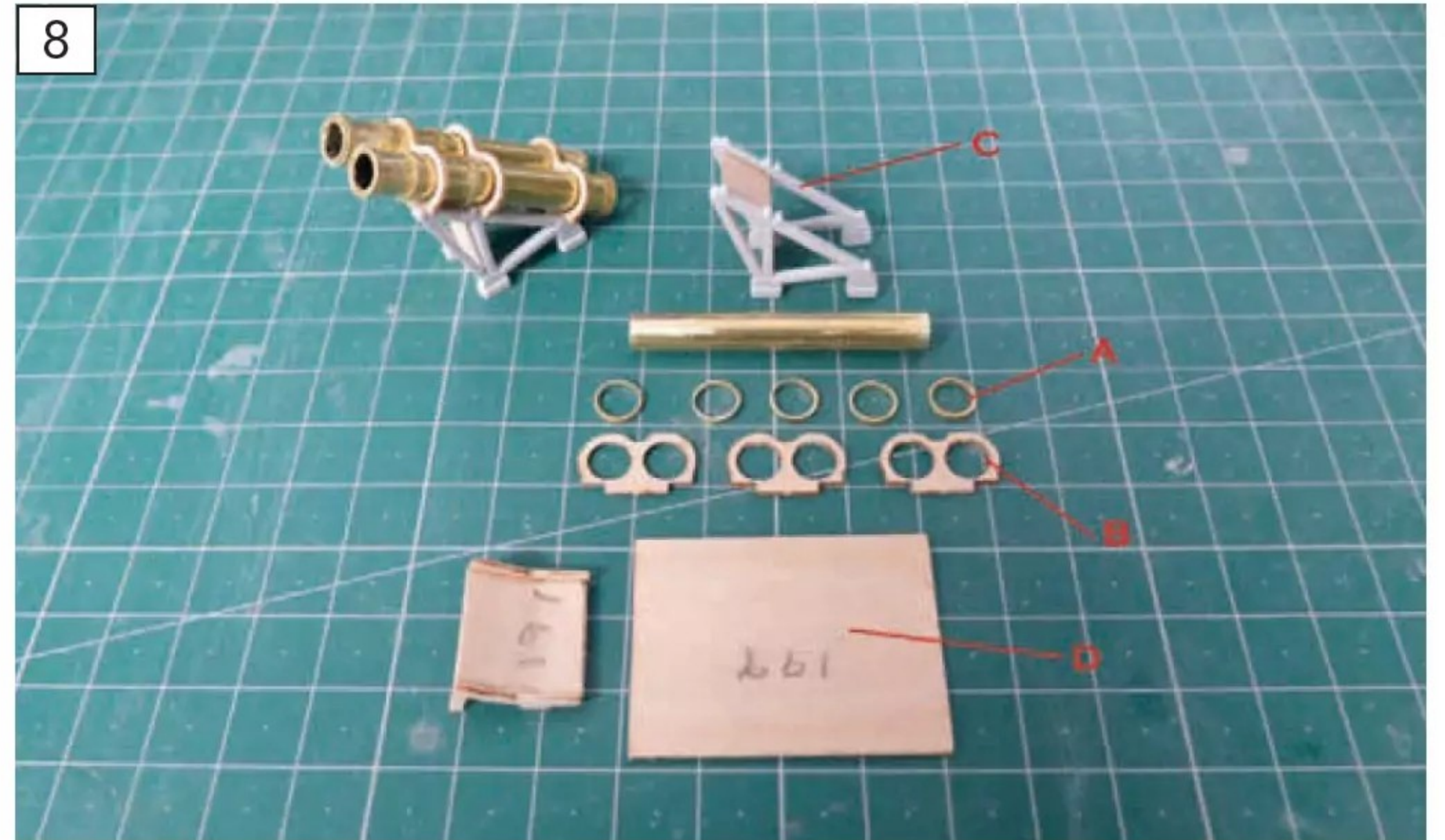
assembled from lite-ply and require several coats of sand sealer. Please note that there is a protective screen to be fitted around the radar housing (this will be discussed later), with the location ringed in yellow in **Photo 7**; also, each exhaust casing (ringed in red) is off set.

## Harpoon anti-ship missile launches

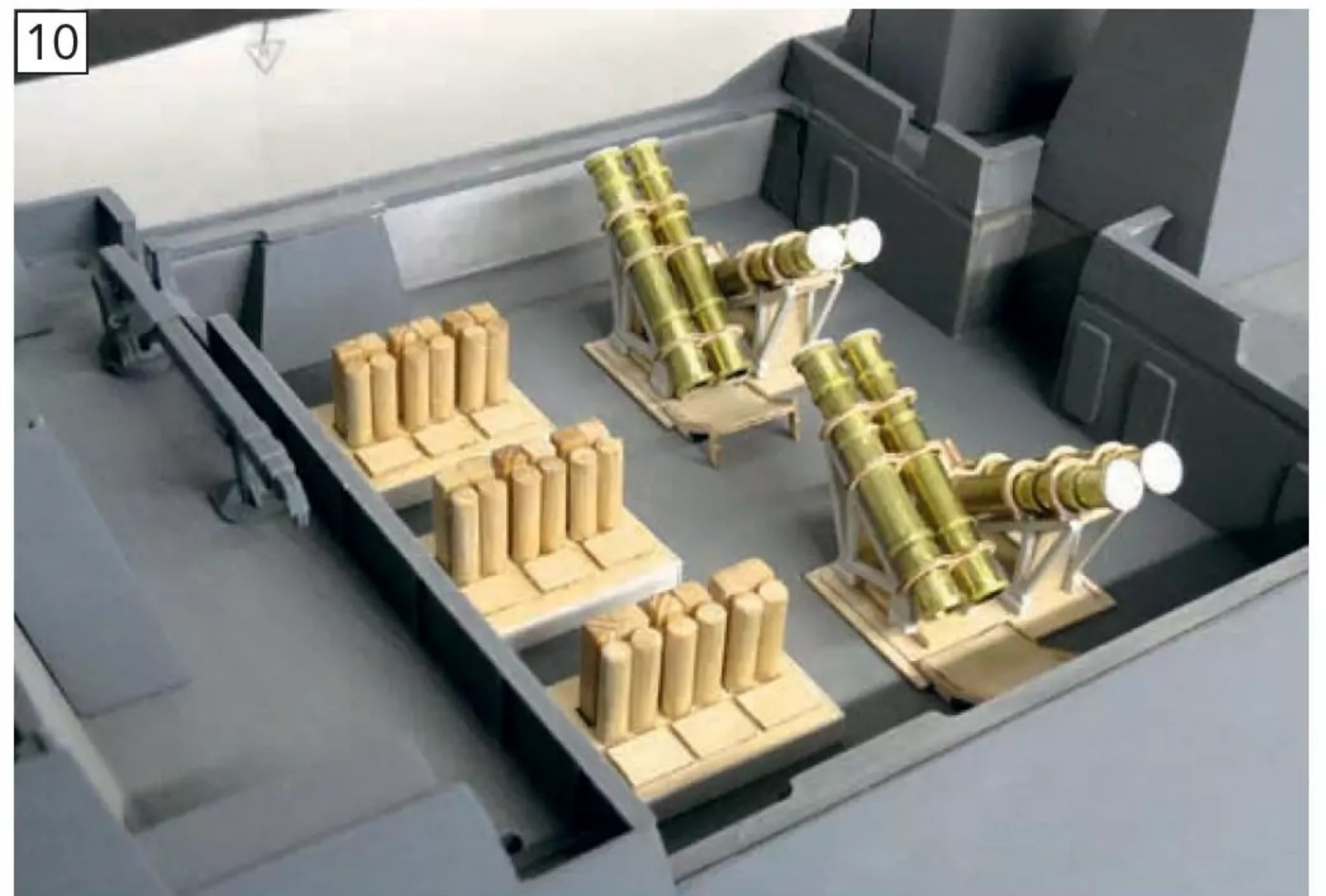
These launches, a feature of most warship designs, are located amidships, with the tubes as part of the kit formed in brass. The brass and timber rings (see **Photo 8**, A & B) are

located to the brass tube, with the combined assembly placed onto the styrene support frame (C). The timber (D) forms the missile tube support bed and exhaust gas deflector. The fully assembled missile tubes and support frame can be seen in **Photo 9**.

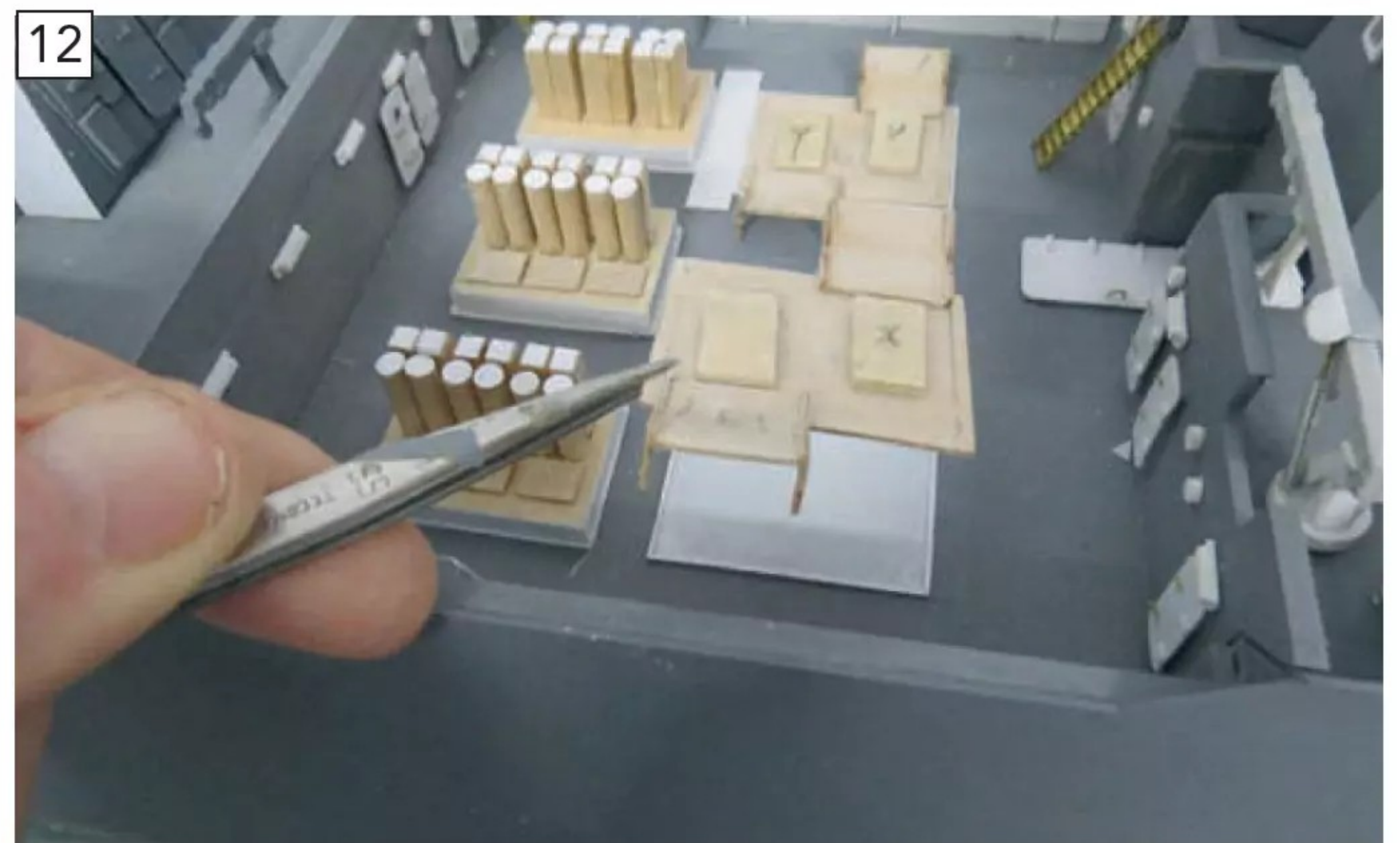
In **Photo 10**, adjacent to the two sets of four tubes plus support bed mounted into the missile well are the box launches for the VLS (Vertical Launch System). These are formed from timber supplied in the kit. Rather than just set the launches into the well as per instructions however, I took it upon myself to



The individual parts that will form the missile launch tubes.



The launch tubes and exhaust platform temporarily in place amidships.



Each bed has a raised surround, into which is located the launch tube assembly.

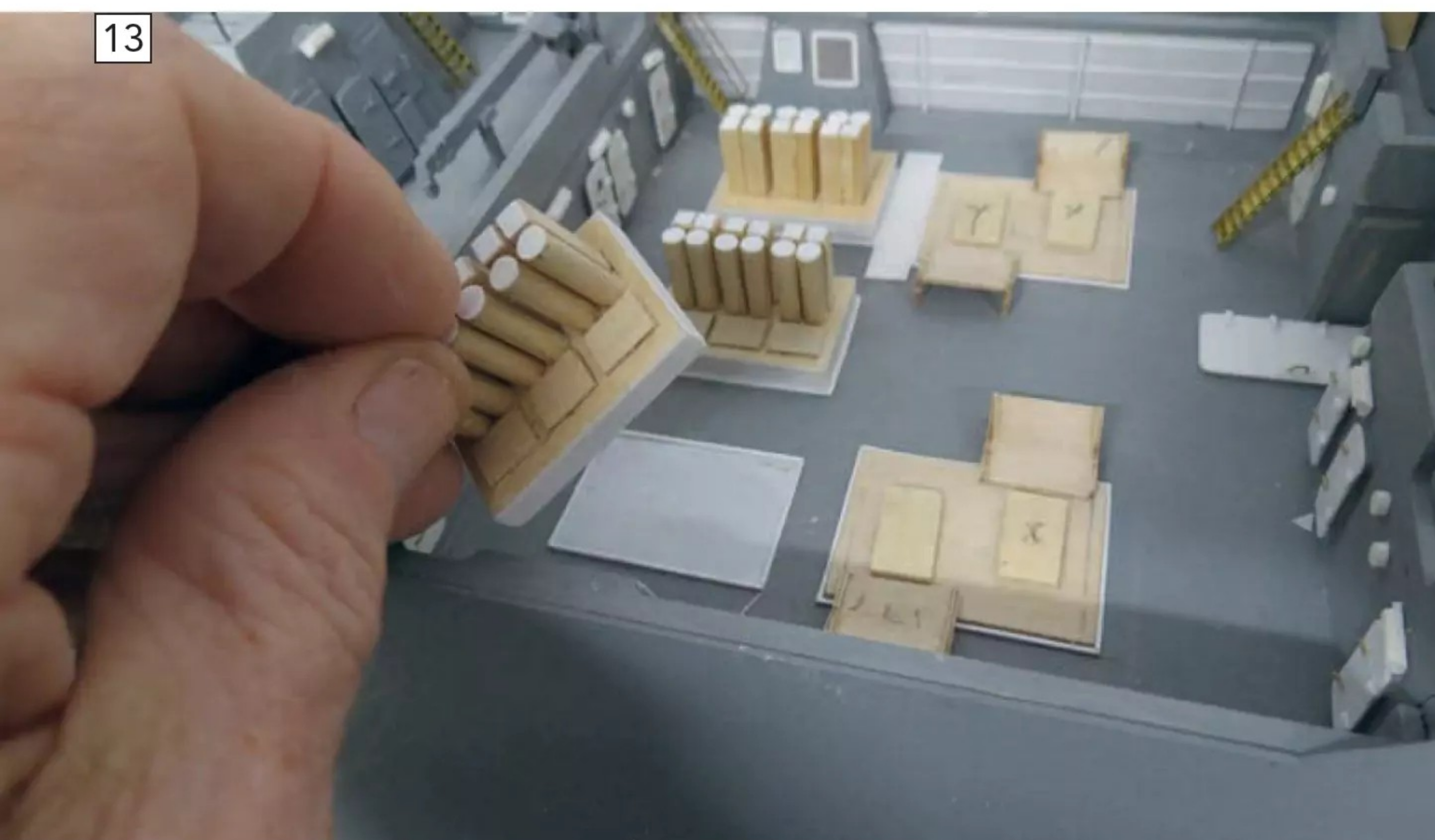
install some pre-arranged guides, thus eliminating any need for subsequent adjustment (see **Photos 11, 12 and 13**).

## Lifting extendable cranes

*Absalon* is fitted with two extending arm cranes, enabling the centre well to be quickly re-configured as part of its multi-mission role or for missile reloads. Photo 14 illustrates how the kit provides for these cranes, which are formed from:

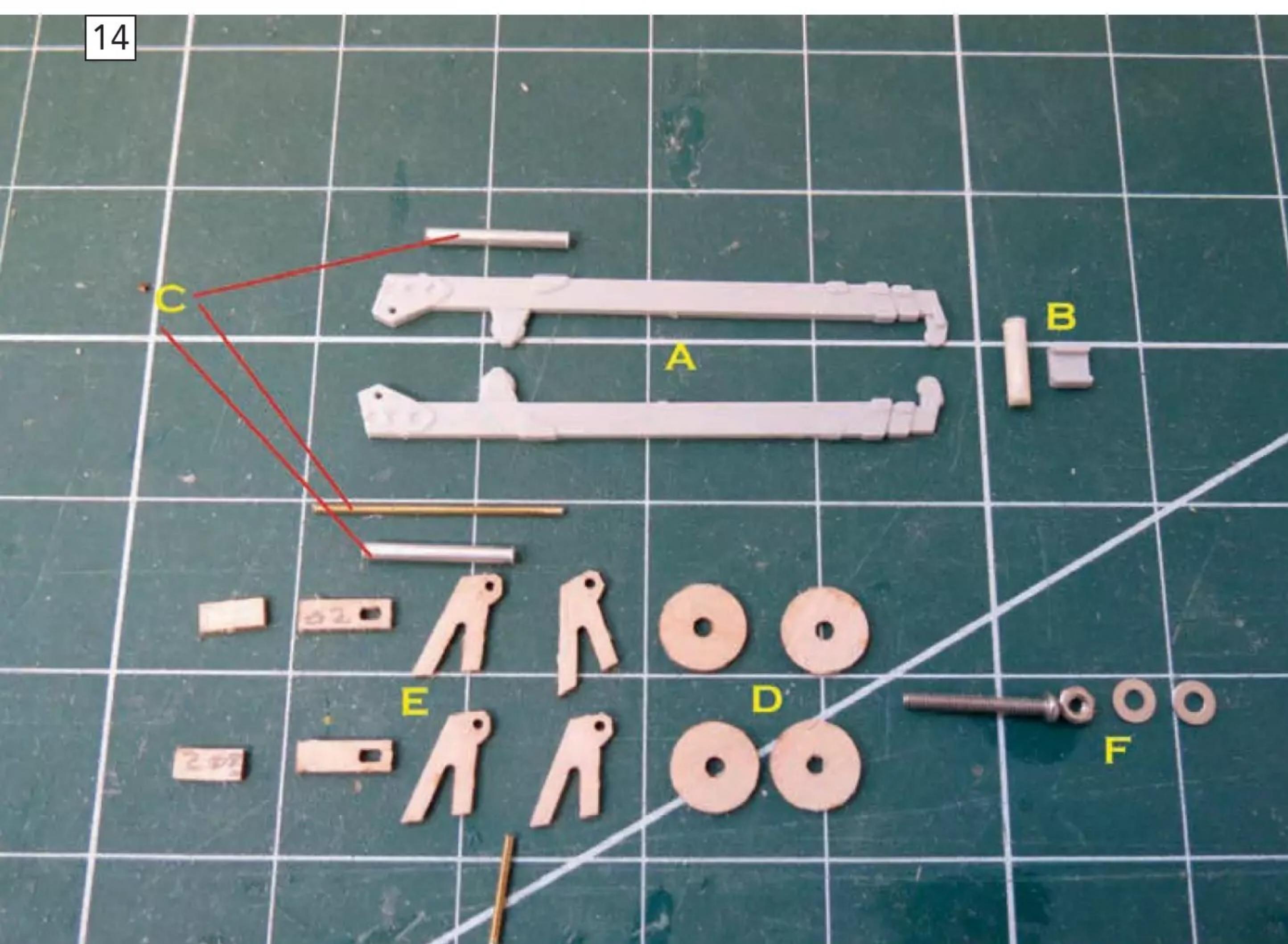
- A The two halves of the crane arms, in moulded plastic





13

Employing this method ensures a fuss free fixing when each of these fittings are airbrushed.



14

One of two knuckle boom crane assemblies.



15

One of the cranes fixed in position.



16

Absalon is fitted with two Millenium 35mm Close in Weapon Systems.

- B  
A forward arm-support, supplied in timber
- C  
Hydraulic arms, supplied as aluminium tube and brass rod
- D  
Circular bases for the two cranes, produced from lite ply
- E  
Crane support frames for the two cranes, again, fashioned from lite ply
- F  
Deck fixing bolts

The assembled and fitted into position crane can be seen in **Photo 15**.

## The gun fits

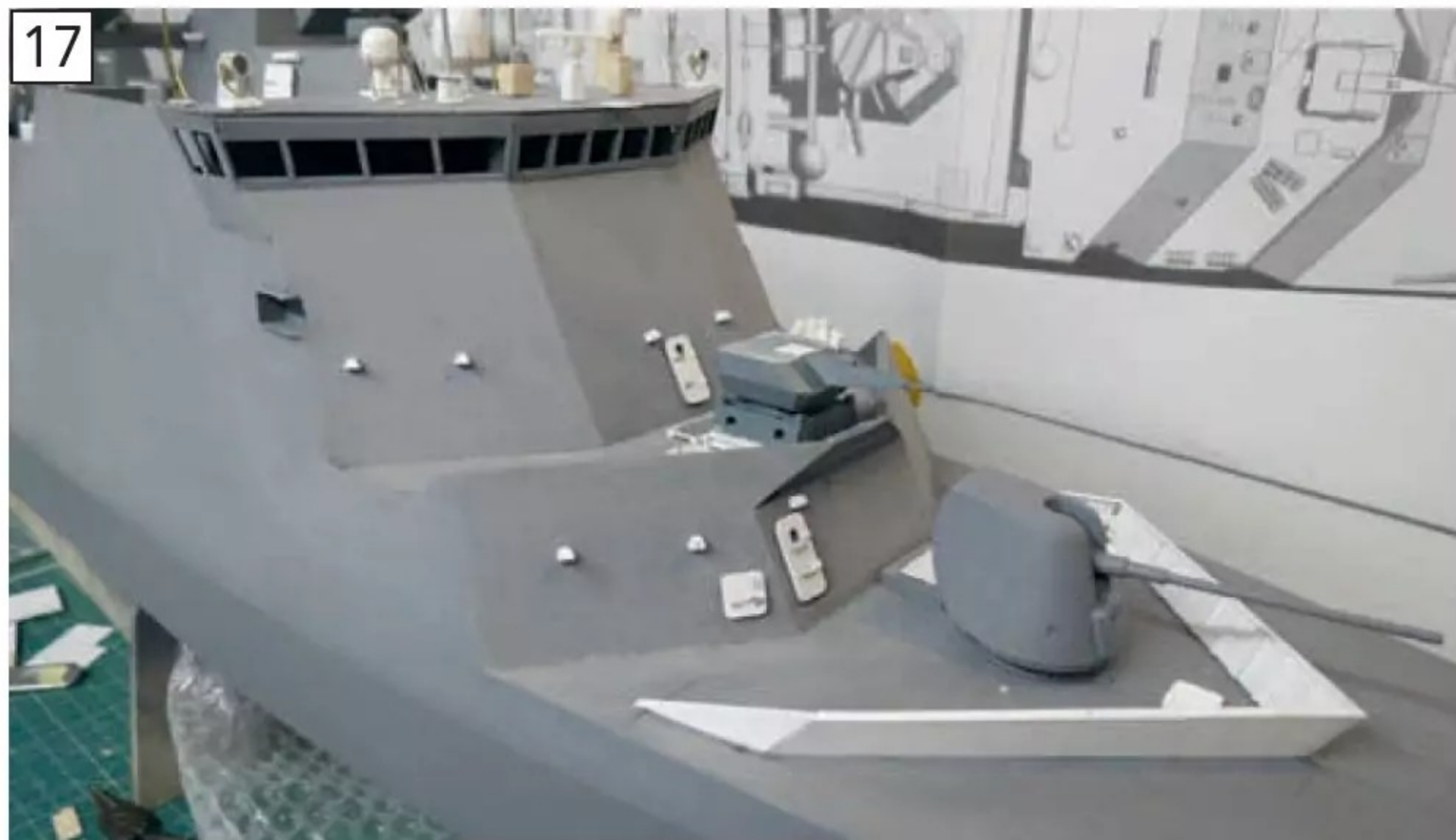
*Absalon* is fitted with two types of guns. Right forward is the main gun, a single 127mm/62calibre Mk 45 Mod 4 dual-purpose gun. Then there are two 35mm Millenium CIWS (Close in Weapon System) guns – one forward super firing above the 127mm, the other aft above the hanger entrance (see **Photo 16**).

For the model, the kit parts needed to assemble the 127mm DP and the Millenium guns are moulded in plastic, while their mountings are formed from lite ply. As with many of the fittings, assembly is straightforward, although the 127mm does require work to get the best finishing results. Certain aspects, however, especially in terms of scale accuracy, could be refined by swapping the kit supplied parts out for 3D-printed ones. All of the main guns fitted to my model were 3D generated. By opting to go down this route, more defined detail can be achieved in aspects such as the access door, mounting and barrel, helping to elevate the overall appearance of the model (see **Photo 17**).

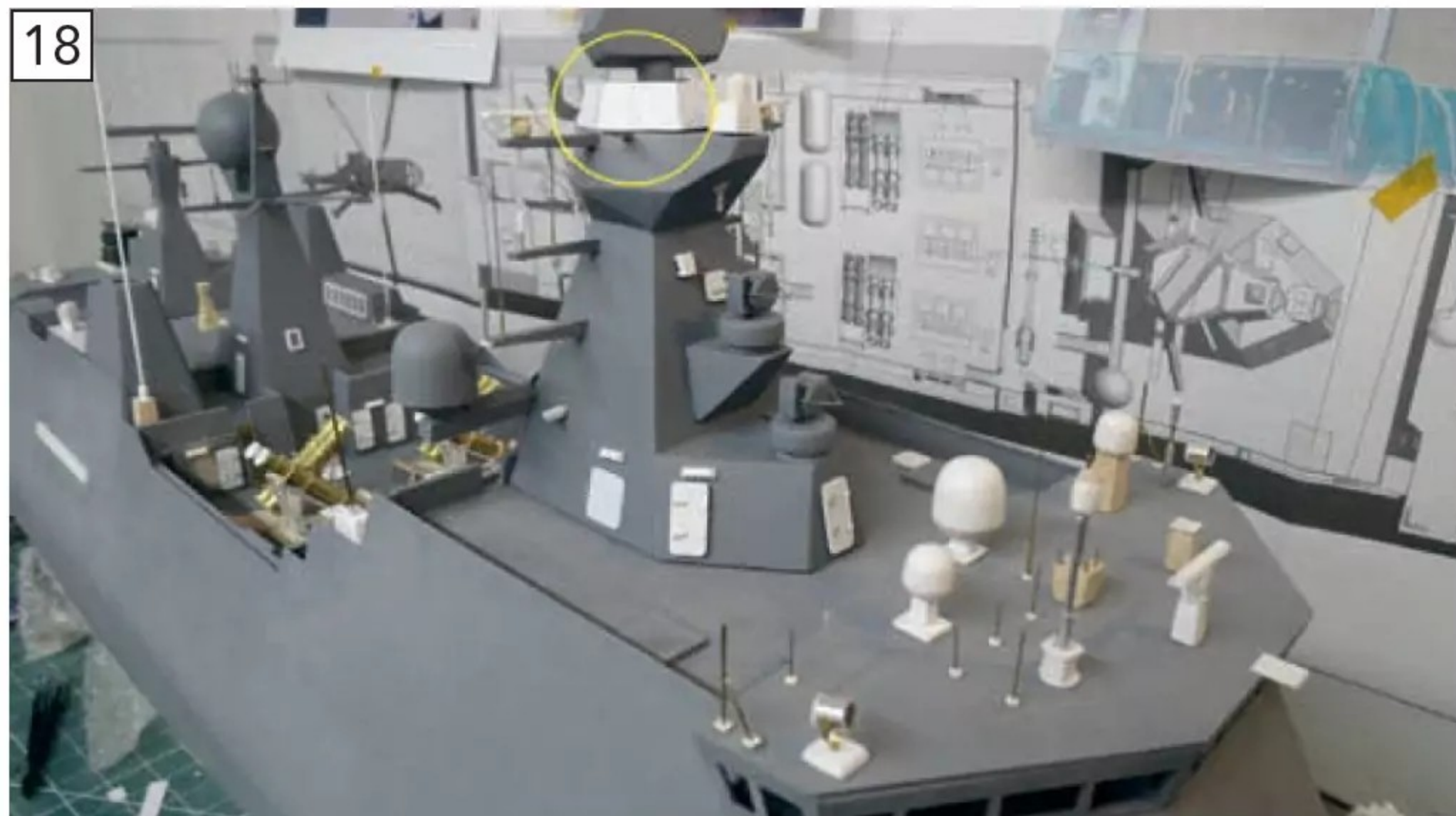
## Dry fit fittings

I always like to dry fit as many of the fittings as possible prior to painting.

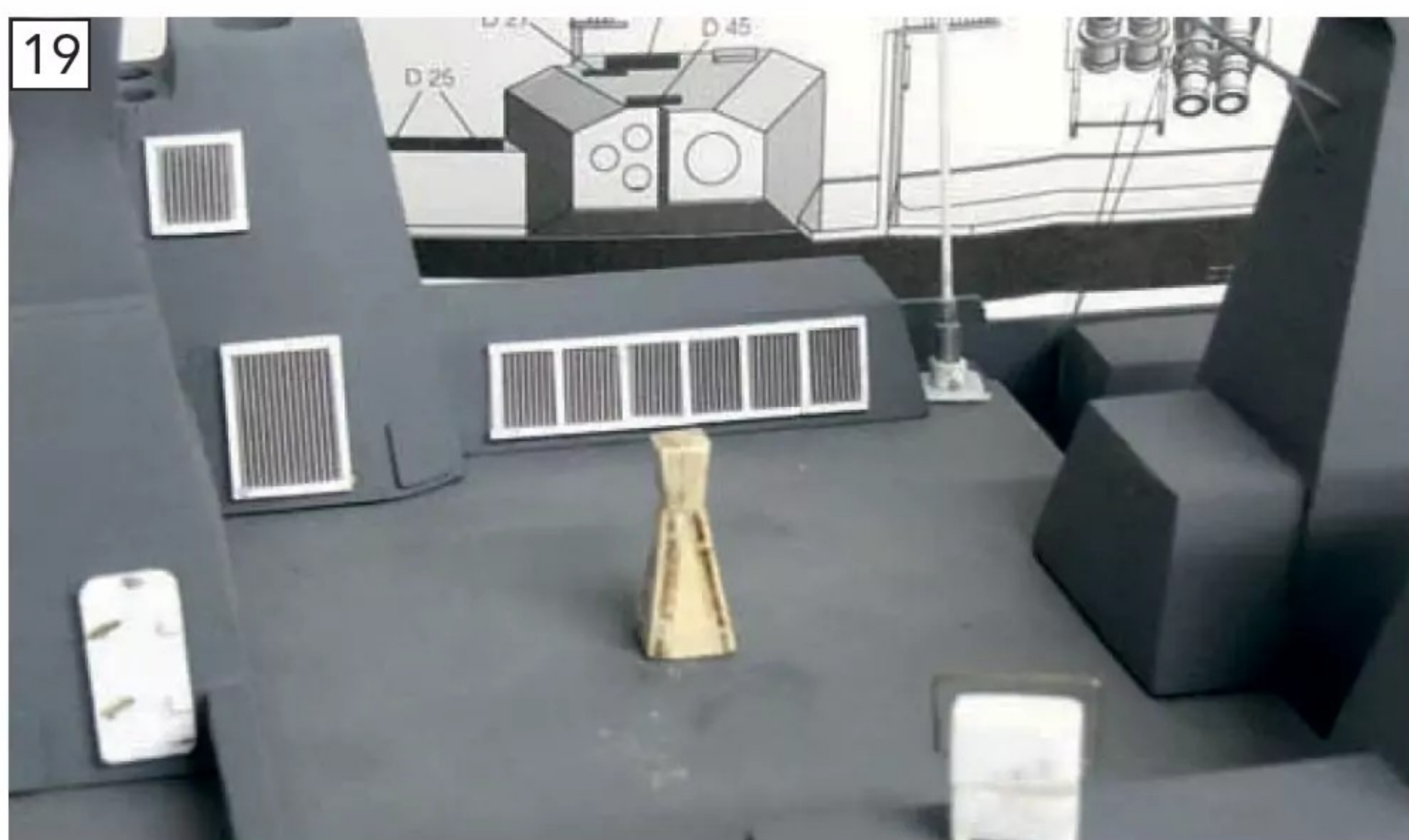




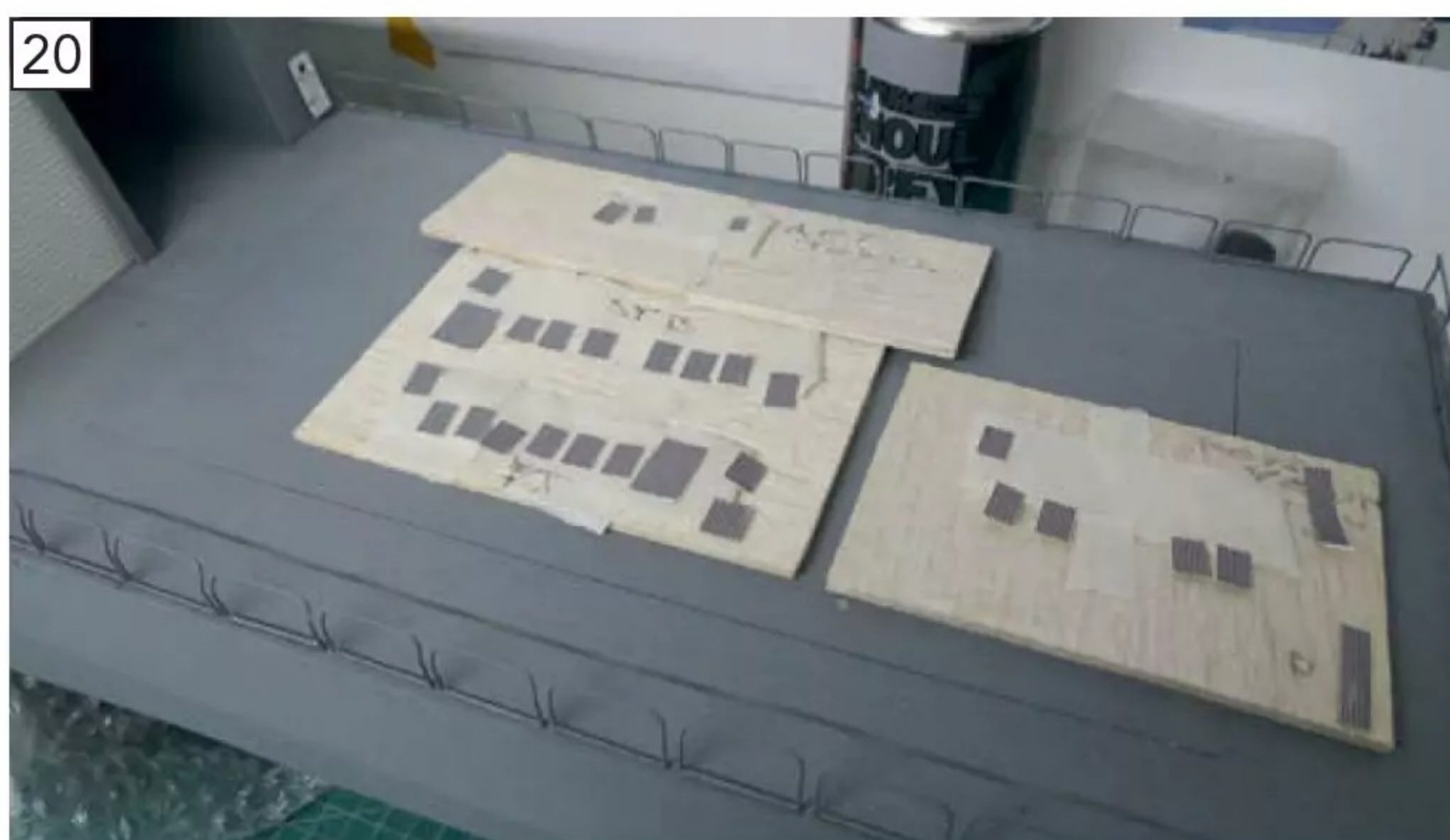
Both the Millennium guns and the main 127mm main gun were formed from 3D-printed parts.



Adding fittings to the bridge roof for a dry run.



Absalon has numerous ventilation grilles, each housed in a distinctive surround.



Each grille detail was removed and carefully logged to ensure its return to the same location on re-fitting.



A selection of the paint used on Dave's Absalon model.



Smaller assemblies were comfortably accommodated in Dave's spray booth.

***“Determining which paint to apply is a ‘make or break’ task. Even after years of experience, I still have to think hard on this subject”***

Further to this, and where possible, I will add locating rods beneath my fittings to ensure a trouble free fit once they've been airbrushed. This way, if any errors in location become apparent, then relocation is far less problematic. **Photo 18** shows the dry fit of Absalon's bridge roof detailing, all of which came supplied with the kit, including the moulded styrene domed features. It's worth noting that at the top of the main tower there is a screen surrounding the radar housing. In the

build booklet this is shown covered with a cloth material fixed to a series of brass stanchions. To maintain the angular features, however, I diverged by using 1mm styrene, shown ringed in yellow in **Photo 18**.

## Ventilation grilles

Strangely, Absalon has numerous external ventilation grilles which, having stainless steel surrounds, are quite noticeable. As a departure, and to further enhance the model, these stainless grille frames were added, using Evergreen strip. Prior to painting the simulated grilles were formed from an assortment of BECC stickers cut to suit the frames sizes (see **Photo 19**). Before painting the frames, each grille was carefully removed and laid out so it

could be returned to its exact location (see **Photo 20**).

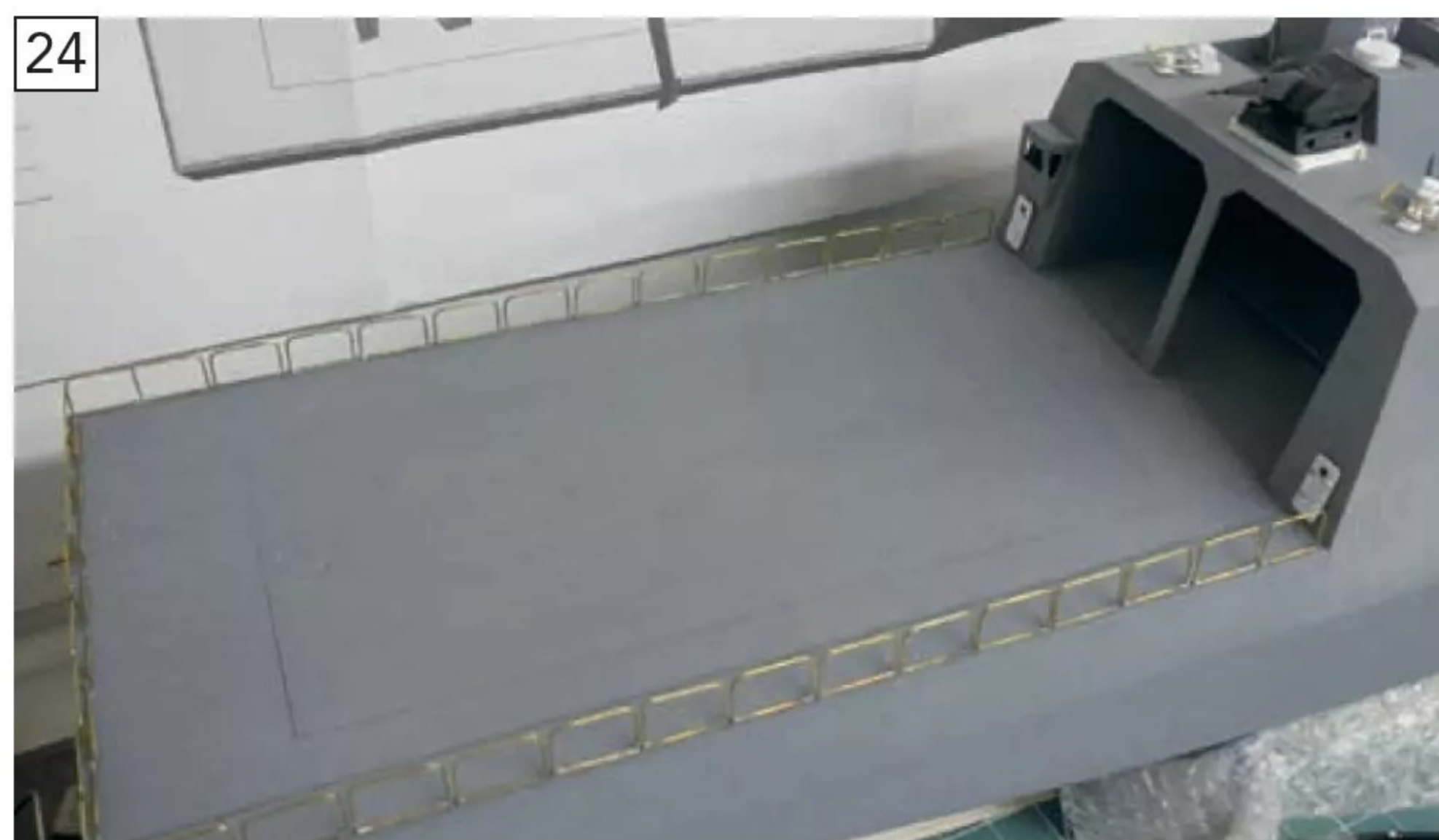
## Spray painting: final primer and finishing coats

Determining which paint to apply is a 'make or break' task. Even after years of experience, I still have to think hard on this subject. Thanks to paint and airbrush aficionado Dave Howard, I am guided along a path which is not a "will it or won't it" type of situation. As mentioned, all the Hycote primer coats, from the filler primer to the grey primer, work well and are suitable for all kinds of surfaces, including timber and ABS. When it comes to finishing coats, I had previously always used an airbrush and restricted spray can application purely to primer coats;

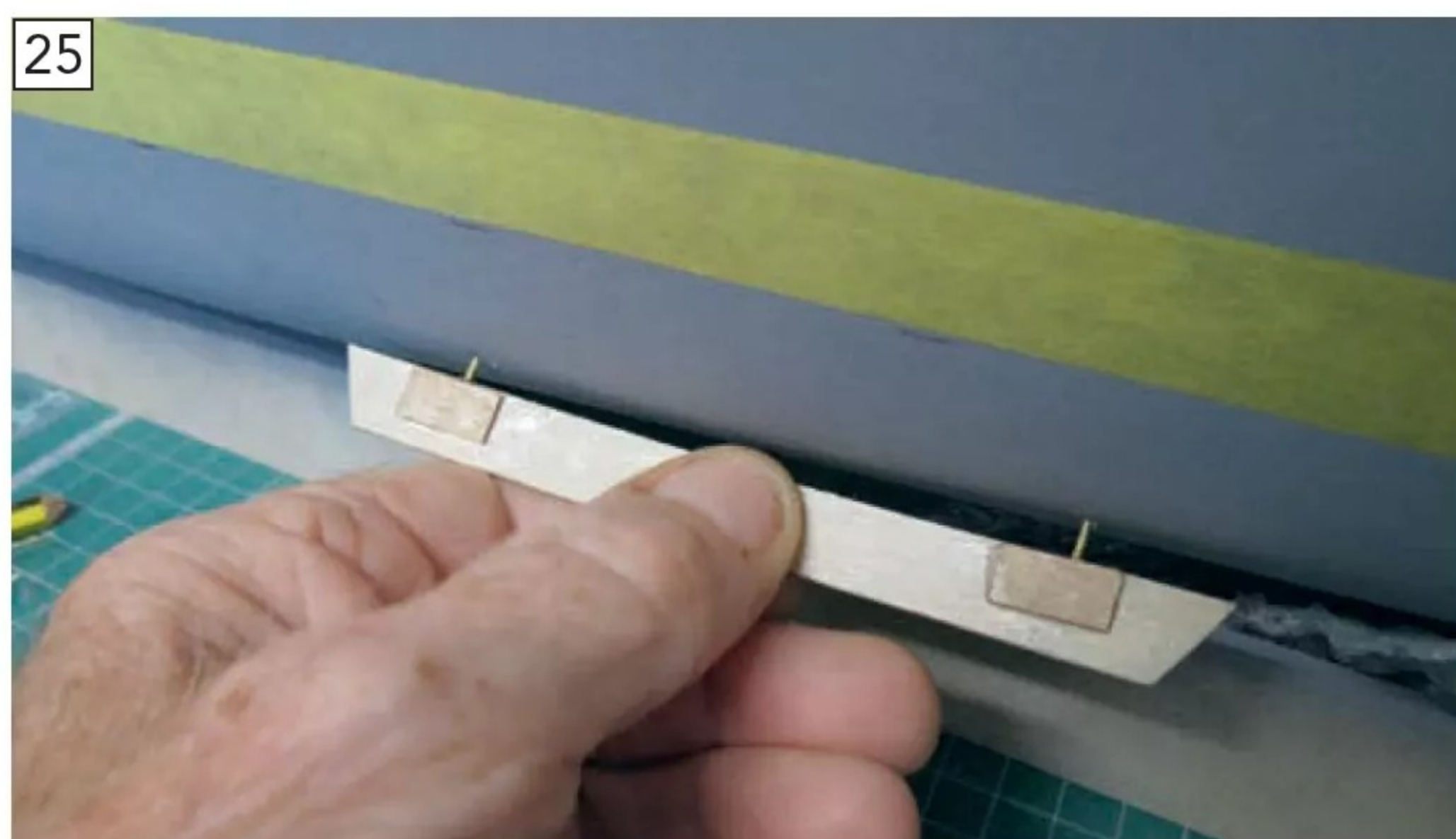




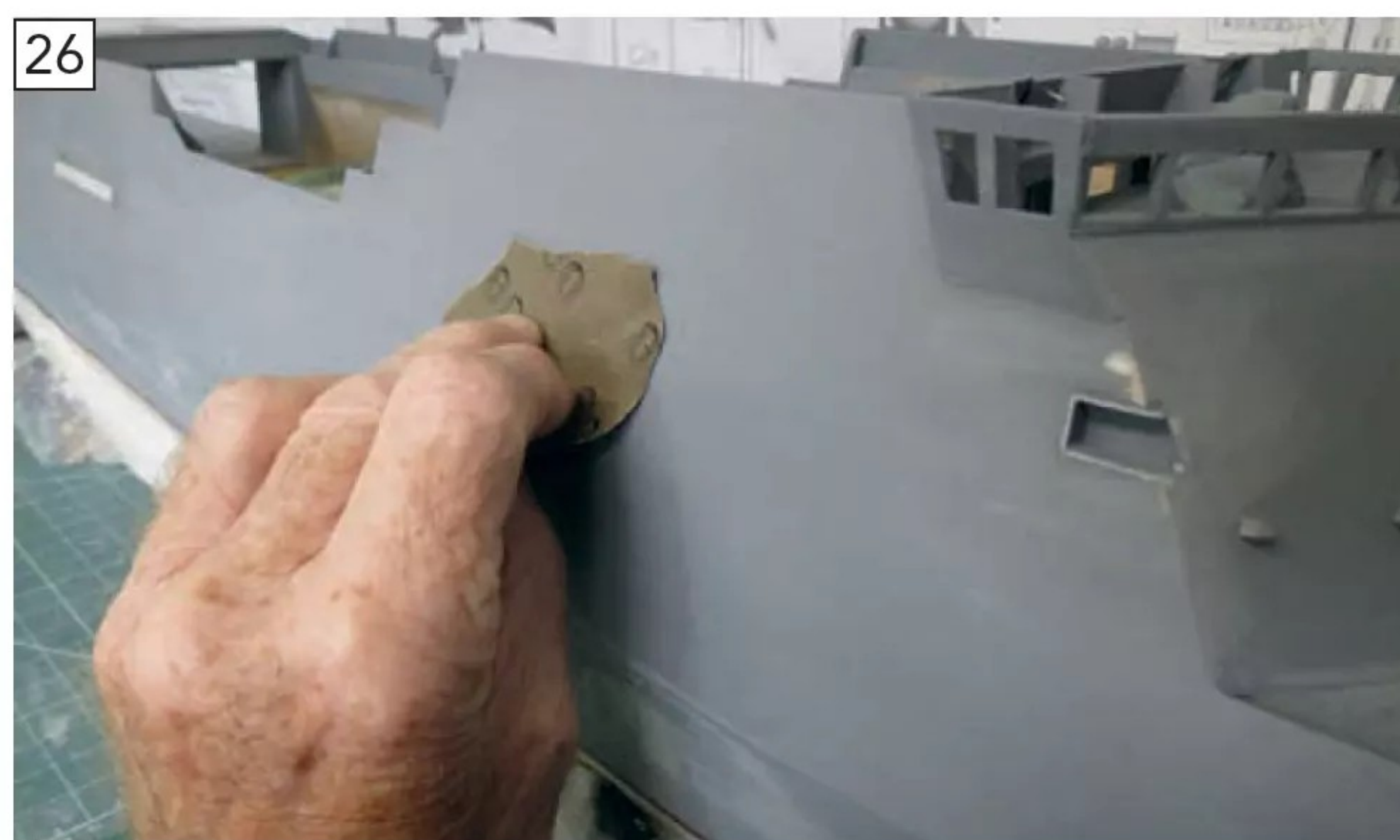
*Absalon primed and ready for that all-important final rub down with fine wet and dry.*



*The outer edge flight deck rails, formed from brass wire.*



*Fixing the bilge keel.*



*Rubbing down the primer coat with 800 wet and dry.*



*Dave Howard kindly applying the finishing coats of Colour Forge Ghoul Grey matt paint.*



*The all-important final result.*

after being introduced to Colour Forge spray paints, however, I have gradually changed my mind. For brush and airbrushing touch ups and complementary to Colour Forge's Ghoul Grey on the *Absalon* I used Citadel Grey Seer, which is a water-based paint (see **Photo 21**).

With all the fittings in place, a final primer coat could be applied. For the smaller fittings I could use the spray booth in my workshop (see **Photos 22**), but the larger parts needed to be sprayed outdoors (see **Photos 23** and **24**). Prior to applying the Halfords red anti-foul, I noted that an official image of the *Absalon* in dry dock showed bilge keels fitted. For the model, these were formed from strips of 2mm thick 120mm x 15mm wide marine ply,

coated with P38, and sanded down to form a slight wedge shape. As the Halfords red is a primer, the anti-foul plus the bilge keels were given several coatings (see **Photo 25**).

With the anti-foul masked off, the upper surfaces of the hull and superstructures were rubbed down using 800 to 1200 wet and dry (see **Photo 26**). Taking the Colour Forge Ghoul Grey, several coats were applied to the model outdoors (see **Photo 27**). These coatings dry rapidly, and any masking can be removed soon after (see **Photo 28**).

The boot topping on the *Absalon* is a black band, overlapping both the anti-foul and hull side. When masking off, and to maintain consistency of width, spacers were used to good effect (see **Photo**

**29**). With the masking prepared, the spacers were removed, and the area was sanded down with 400 wet and dry – this removes any small ridges that may have formed (see **Photo 30**). Once prepared, the black boot topping was airbrushed using Tamiya Matt Black – another quick drying product, meaning that within 30 minutes all the masking could be removed.

## Anchor hawse

In this kit, some of the hull features, such as the anchor hawse, come in the form of stick-on decals. As an alternative, forming an actual opening for the anchor presents no problems. Using the decal as a guide, access into the hull for the hawse can be made and a box cut to an exact



29



Using spacers to provide consistency between the masking tape.

30



Carefully sanding down any raised edges.

31



Replacing the decal hawse with one formed from styrene.

32



The new hawse in position.

33



The completed bridge frontage.

34



The almost complete well deck, with only the ladders to be added.

35



A view looking forward from the hangar.

fit, with a flange around the edge so as the box will sit neatly in place (see **Photos 31 and 32**). The anchor type is an AC14, which for the model is formed from styrene.

## Finishing

The final stage was to spray the entire model with several coats of Mr Hobby UV clear matt lacquer. This helps to keep the painted surface in good condition and works to protect the paint from the ravages of UV when exposed to bright, sunny conditions (see **Photos 33, 34 and 35**).

## Helicopters

The Billings kit comes complete with a moulded styrene 1:100 scale AW101 helicopter. The two halves of the body need to be removed from the sheet and bonded together.



36



Two 1:100 scale AW101 helicopters, but one is styrene while the other is all metal.

37



Flight deck markings on the Absalon.

38



Replacing the original markings with a slightly brighter shade of yellow

The rotor blades and tail rotor are supplied on a sprue. To upgrade the appearance of my helicopter, I added side doors and windows. Billings had also supplied me with a diecast replica of the 101 similar to that used in the James Bond release *Skyfall*, this model having had its Spectre markings removed and replaced by Danish roundels. Initially, I thought the diecast helicopter would be slightly overweight, whereas the styrene 101 was light and could be adapted to sport a working rotor. However, as we shall see, I did end up adding the diecast 101 with no ill-effects – securing this model to the flight deck, however, proved challenging (see **Photo 36**).

### Flight deck markings

As mentioned, *Absalon* changed from using the pennant markings L16 to F 341, which are added to the hull sides forward, aft and on the transom. This change can also be evidenced on the flight deck (see **Photo 37**). I noticed during my visit to *Absalon* that the deck markings had been revised, and that the colour of the markings were a deeper yellow than those supplied in the kit. Thankfully, fine self-adhesive colour sheets are readily available, and these can be cut to any shape required. My thanks to Dave Howard who kindly plotted all the revised markings on his die cutting machine. These were then carefully added to the flight deck of my model (see **Photos 38 and 39**).



39



The completed flight deck,

40



Absalon ready to go for the first time as a completed model.

*“I noticed during my visit to Absalon that the deck markings had been revised, and that the colour of the markings were a deeper yellow than those supplied in the kit”*

## Taking to the water

Having completed ballast and trim trials, I was reasonably sure the completed Absalon would behave as expected.

One of the prerequisites of launching a new model is to do so on a calm day, and, if possible, with the sun in the right position. In the past I wouldn't have given a second thought to leaving the ballast in situ. Now, alas, lifting models in and out of vehicles is best done while

the model is still as light as possible, and, likewise, I try to launch from as close to the lake edge as possible (see **Photo 40**). This factored in, once I had re-ballasted and assessed for trim pondside, the Absalon was ready to go (see **Photo 41**). After several adjustments I was confident enough to start using the independent drive to achieve the best results, especially when docking (see **Photo 42**).



41



And away she goes...

*“The Absalon has all the qualities necessary for making a marvellous display piece and/or an excellent model to sail”*

## Conclusion

When reviewing both the kit's construction and the resulting model's performance, my overall conclusion is that the Absalon has all the qualities necessary for making a marvellous display piece and/or an excellent model to sail. Although the original

design for the Absalon goes back to the late 1990s, there is an element of modernity and elegance in its appearance, with the latest Royal Navy frigates, such as the Type 31, paying homage to this advanced (for its time) Danish frigate. ●

## References and acknowledgements

For research purposes, Dave referred to the following titles:

- *Combat Fleets*, 15th edition
- *Warship 2022*

Dave would also like to extend profuse thanks to:

- The Danish Navy and the ships' companies on *Esbern Snare* and *Absalon* for their assistance while aboard.
- The crew at Billing Boats for the supply of his *Absalon* kit
- Mark Hawkings for the supply of 3D fittings
- Dave Haward for his exceptional knowledge of, and advice on, paint finishes.

42



A delight to sail!



# BOILER ROOM

**Richard Simpson** shares lessons learnt



*The initially completed model enjoying the sunshine. Richard felt a great sense of achievement at the time for finishing a model that had been so long in the making.*

**M**ost Boiler Room articles focus on products and techniques, how things work in the world of model steam, and how we can best achieve a particular result. What we don't tend to touch on as much are the things that can go wrong and the lessons that can be learnt when they do. It doesn't matter how much experience we have or how long we've been playing with steam plant, there will always be things that catch us out. Sometimes rectifying an issue is a simple, ten-minute job, sometimes the whole boat has to come apart again. Drawing on personal experience, this month I am going to share an example of the latter!

Some of you might just remember a build I described in the June to September 2022 instalments of Boiler Room. This involved work on an unfinished project which had been shelved for many years before I finally revisited it during the Covid lockdowns. It was based on an old clinker-built hull, originally constructed by a retired full-size boat builder from a plan published in *Model Engineering* magazine back in 1972. The plan had been drawn by a Mr. H. Croker of Australia for a boat he named the *Wide-A-Wake*.

Due to its size, this hull proved ideal for a 1:6 model, allowing me to use

action figures and other reasonably easy to source accessories in that same scale. These went well with the steam plant installed (a John Hemmens Caton plant, incorporating a Richmond horizontal boiler with twin poker burners and a 'V' four Caton engine), resulting in a model with everything on display and thus plenty of detail and visual interest (see **Photo 1**). The model was also used as a test bed for two then new to the market products from Denes Designs, one being its Automatic Boiler Controller (ABC) and the other its Engine Control Unit (ECU).

Following completion of the model in 2022, what can happen when an



2



The Automatic Boiler Control Unit sits neatly inside the side box, with the sensors from the boiler, the servos to operate the gas valve and the water valve and the connection for the power supply all connected.

*“Twice I put the model on the water, only to have to recover it after just a few minutes later when the engine simply stopped”*

engine has been sat on a shelf for many years and not thoroughly checked out quickly became evident. Twice I put the model on the water and then had to recover it after just a few minutes because the engine simply stopped. On both occasions, the same fault was found to be the issue. There is a grub screw through the top end of the con rod that forms a crosshead bearing with the piston rod, and this had managed to unscrew itself to the point where it became seized in the crosshead guide – not the end of the world, but removing the engine to rectify the problem proved a little frustrating at pond side, especially after all the effort that had been required just to get such a large model into the water and under steam.

### The electronic devices

For those not familiar with the two electronic units that went into this build, let me recap...

- **The Automatic Boiler Control**  
The ABC, controls two main functions of the boiler. Firstly, it controls water level via a sensor that sits on the boiler sight glass and sends a signal back to the control unit. This signal can then be used in a couple of different ways. It can either be set up to stop or start an electrically driven feed pump, which starts when the level is low and stops at a pre-determined level, or it can be set up to control a servo operated valve that redirects feed water supply from a pump. In my plant the pump is an engine-driven pump that supplies feed water to a two-way valve, operated by the ABC. This directs the feed water

4



Initial trials went well, with everything working as it should, apart from when, on a couple of occasions, a screw became loose, resulting in the engine locking up. Fortunately, Richard was able to rectify the situation at the pondside.

either to the boiler or back to the feed tank, depending on the level signal. The second function that the ABC controls is the boiler pressure. This is done from a sensor in the boiler that actually measures temperature, although this is converted to relate to pressure in the ABC unit. This signal is then used to control another servo-operated valve which, in this case, changes over a gas valve from full flame to pilot flame. The set point can be adjusted on the ABC unit (see **Photo 2**).

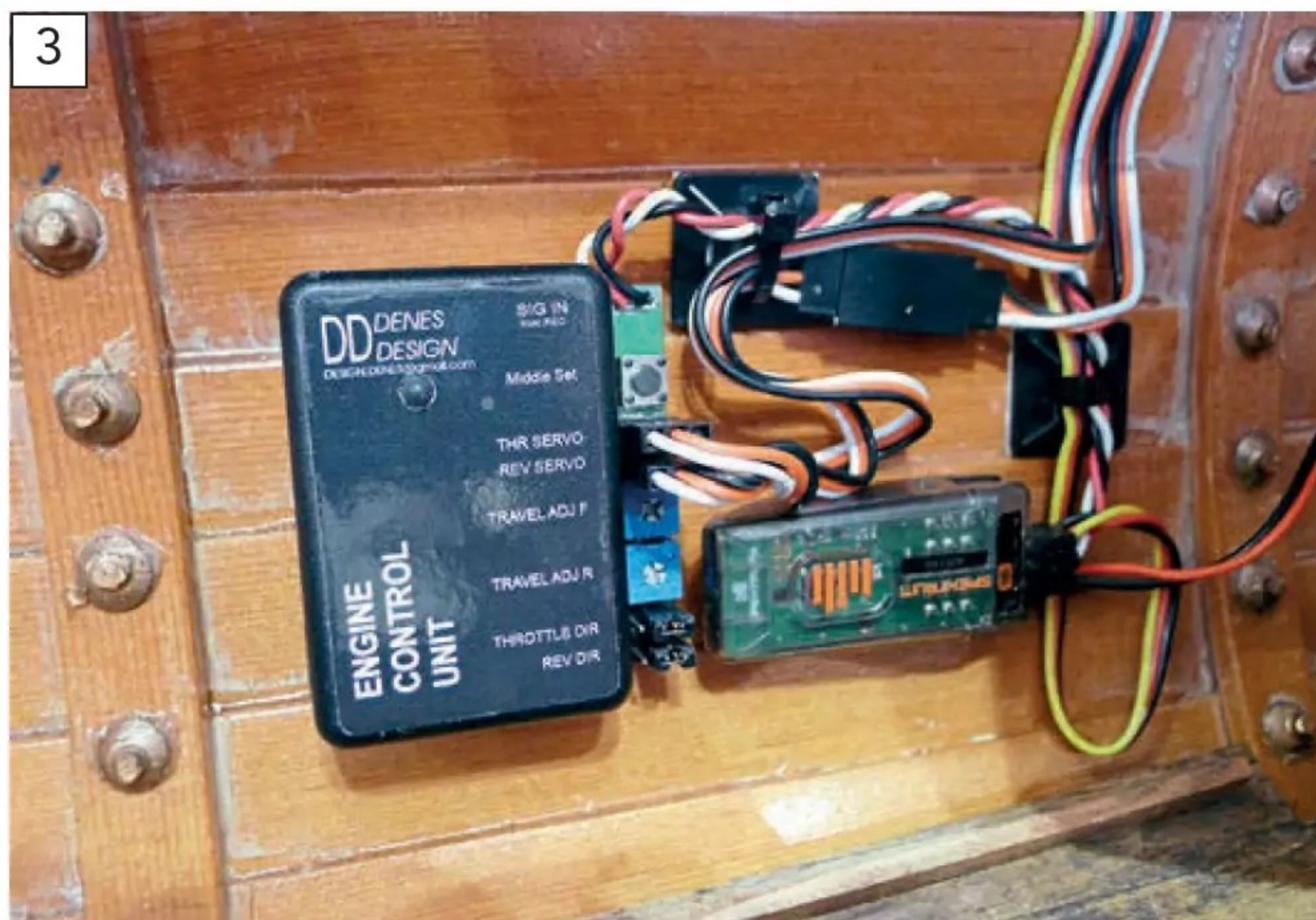
- **Engine Control Unit**  
The ECU combines the two functions of a valve-operated engine, namely the reverse function and the speed control function. While the Caton engine is fitted with an engine control valve on top of the engine, a far more accurate speed function can be obtained by using the 90-degree steam outlet valve on top of the boiler and using the engine valve as a reversing valve. Normally these would be controlled

from the radio handset by two channels, an on/off channel to operate the reversing servo and a proportional channel to control the speed function. What the ECU does is to combine these two functions seamlessly into a single proportional channel on the transmitter. The engine control stick can be set up in the middle; pushing the stick forwards operates the engine ahead with speed control, while pulling the stick back reverses the engine and, again, then controls the speed (see **Photo 3**).

### A period of reliability

After the initial hiccups on the first outings, the model has since enjoyed what I would consider a period of reliable operation, where everything has just come together nicely and the model has performed well. It doesn't get sailed very often as, being 1:6 scale, it's a bit on the large and heavy side, but when I do put it on the water it has real presence and certainly draws attention (see **Photo 4**). The

3



Likewise, the Engine Control Unit sits inside its own box alongside the receiver. Its own power supply is attached to the inside of the box with available external charging connections and a switch mounted on the box.

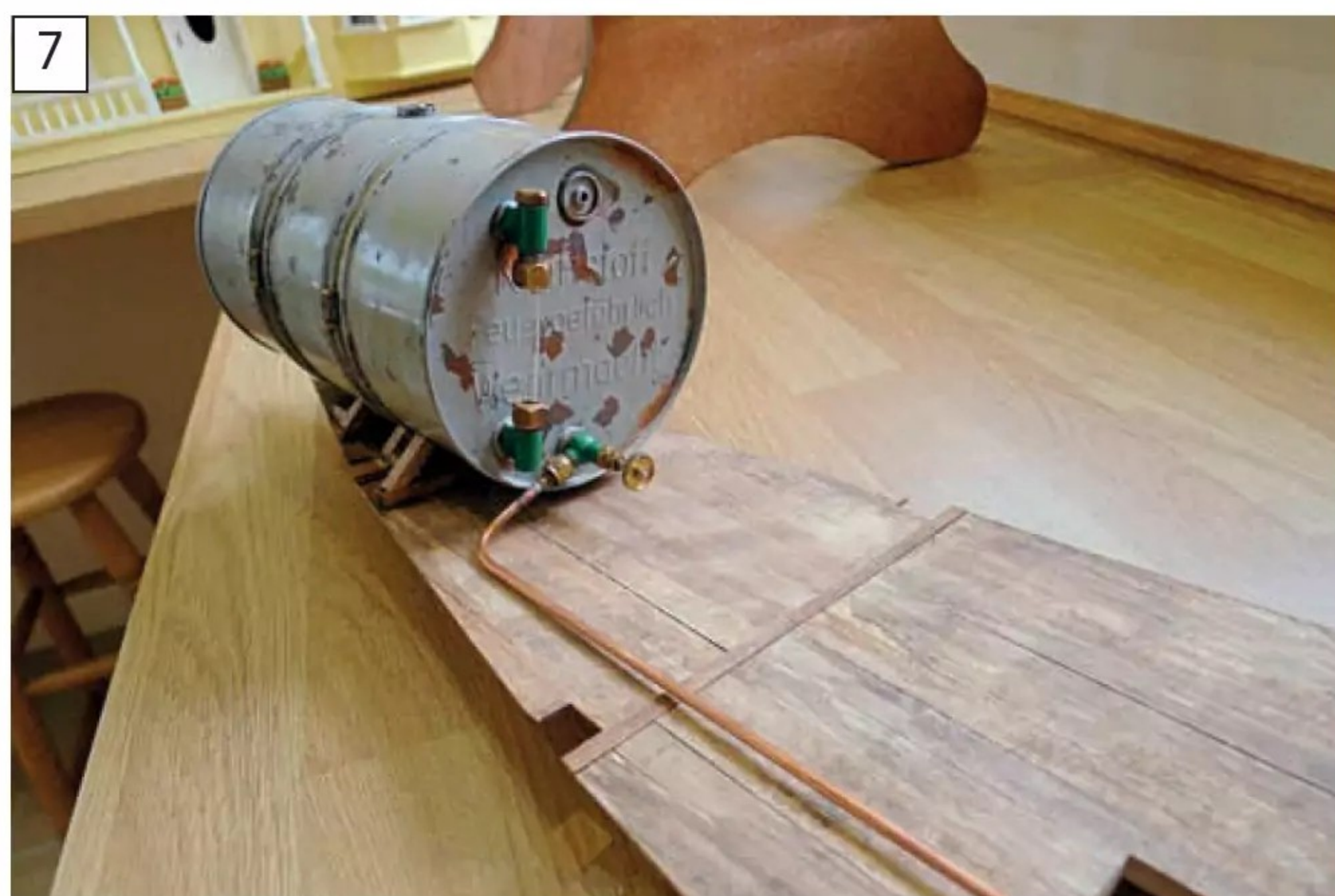




The original oil drum, being tinplate, took soft solder perfectly, so the bushes for the sight glass and the outlet valve were soft soldered in place.



A painting and weathering job started off with an all-over coat of gunmetal, followed by some random patches of rust coloured enamel.



A coating of hairspray was followed by a water-based light grey acrylic, which could then be sprayed with water to allow the paint to be 'chipped' with a small scrubbing brush. The drum then sat securely in its cradle, held by two boiler bands.



The deck, complete with feed tank and separator tank, forms a single removeable unit. It sits on a vertical beam on the main keel, with notches cut in so that it locates around the side frames.

## ***"This makes control so much more intuitive"***

performance of the engine is well-suited to this model, turning the rather large brass steam propeller easily, while the Engine Control Unit does a superb job of combining the functions of reverse and speed control into a single channel flawlessly. This makes control so much more intuitive and there's very little time spent worrying about what will need to be done if a sudden change of engine direction is required. The ABC unit does a good job of conserving fuel and allows the boiler to match the requirements of the engine nicely. Topping up simply involves adding some water to the feed tank with a syringe as and when necessary.

### **Tank trouble**

What I didn't cover in too much detail when initially documenting the build was the feed tank. This started out life as an accessory for 1:6 scale figures and is a beautifully made scale model

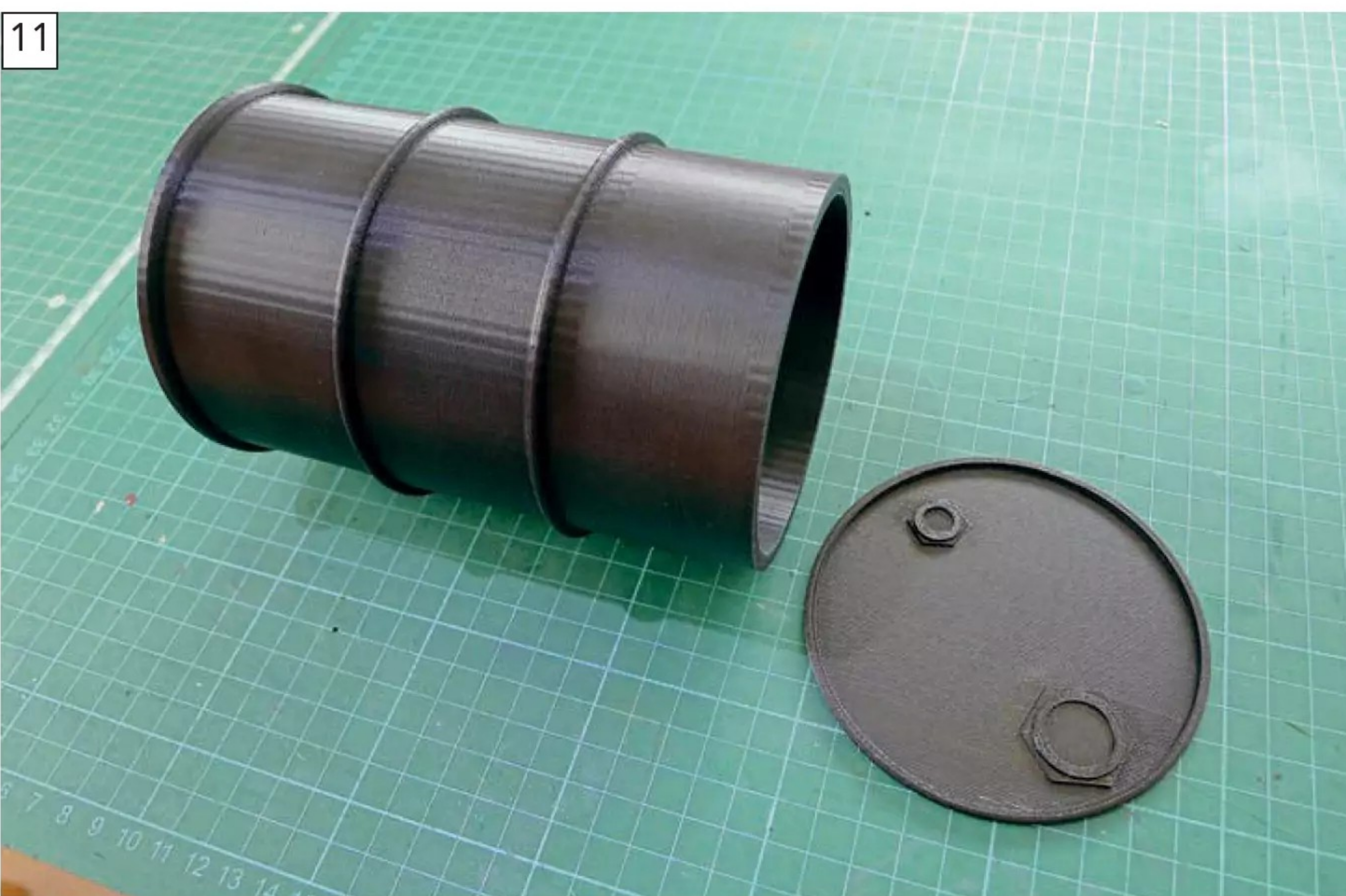


The sorry state of affairs that greeted Richard when he opened up the feed tank. The internal enamel coating he'd applied had failed to seal everything completely, so unfortunately rust had formed in the tank joint.





Also very noticeable were the Verdi Gris deposits, caused by the corrosion of the copper pipes inside the tank as they interacted with the tin tank shell.



Richard's new 3D-printed tank with the separate lid, which, being of a plastic construction, has eliminated the corrosion issue. However, as the replacement tank was very slightly smaller than the original, the boiler bands did need adjusting.

of an oil drum. It is fashioned from thin metal plate, which of course enabled the bushes on the end to be soft soldered on, making for a very neat and scale looking tank (see **Photo 5**). I was well aware that the insides of the tank would almost certainly be a bare metal and most likely ferrous, so I decided to pour a liberal quantity of coach enamel paint into it. The bushes were fitted with blanks, and the tank was rotated in all directions for a long time before the excess paint was poured out again. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I was even able to get my 4mm camera head inside the tank so I could check that the entire internal surfaces had been

coated and protected. The outsides of the tank were primed, base coated (see **Photo 6**) and top coated to give a suitable weathered and paint chipped effect. A cradle was built into the deck (see **Photo 7**) so the tank could slide neatly into the area in the bow of the boat (see **Photo 8**).

Since completion three years ago the model has only seen occasional use, most of the time remaining, again, sat on the shelf, with water left in its boiler and feed tank for all that time. A few weeks ago, therefore, I decided to give the plant a run on the workbench just to make sure everything was still OK. Batteries were charged up, the gas tank checked out, and the boiler

brought up to pressure. Everything looked fine, until I noticed that the water in the boiler sight glass had turned a nasty shade of brown. My heart sank as I immediately realised the consequences of my negligence. There was rust in the feed water.

I eventually plucked up the courage to take the model apart again. This was no mean feat, despite being designed to allow this. The entire contents of the hull had to be removed so that the deck and the feed tank could be taken out. After a couple of days, however, I had all the bits and pieces laid out in the workshop and the feed tank in my hand. Of particular concern was the rust stain on the seam at the bottom of the tank. At this point I had not decided on a remedial course of action, I was still congratulating myself on achieving the dismantling process, but I knew that, at the very least, I'd need to gain access in order to effect a repair to the tank. So, I 'borrowed' the can opener from the kitchen drawer and removed the end. It came out far more easily than I'd expected but I was met with a pretty sorry sight. The internal surfaces were all well coated with enamel paint, but the coating simply hadn't been good enough to withstand the action of water over such a prolonged period. It had clearly failed around the area of the joint, and the corrosion had then spread from there (see **Photo 9**). Also very evident were green deposits around the insides of the tank (see **Photo 10**), a clear sign of galvanic action. This was the result of having fitted the ferrous tank with a copper filling pipe, with a perfect electrolyte between them – the distilled water. Yes, the same distilled water that we used to use in lead acid batteries. Consequently, the copper feed pipe had rapidly corroded, leading to the copper oxide, or Verdi Gris, deposits in the tank.

### Possible solutions

So, having been given a lesson in basic metallurgy, which in itself is a little embarrassing, my thoughts turned to how I could resolve the issue. Initially I considered either trying to recoat the tank insides with something far more appropriate, such as resin, or swapping the tank out for one in an alternative material, such as copper or plastic. I did find someone who could make a copper tank for me, but that would not only have taken quite a while but would also have been prohibitively expensive. I therefore decided the best way forward would be a 3D-printed tank, and managed to find one online, which came supplied with a separate lid (see **Photo 11**). I fitted bushes into this lid, using Stabilit Express glue, to take the sight glass, outlet valve



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The fitting bushes were glued in place with *Stabilit Express*, which doesn't actually dissolve the plastic surface but does have an incredibly strong grip on it – so should provide enough strength for the job.

and return line (see **Photo 12**), before gluing the lid on and painting the tank in a similar way to the old one. This was then fitted to the deck, after slight modifications to the cradle, and filled with water. Unfortunately, however, I soon noted water leaking through the porous surface of the tank. Another important lesson learnt – 3D-printed items are not necessarily watertight.

The final chapter in this story then is that another 3D-printed tank was purchased, but this time the internal surfaces were painted with a resin,

Z-Poxy (see **Photo 13**), to completely seal them before fitting the lid. The external surfaces were also painted and weathered before the tank was filled with water. This time it held. At last, with the replacement tank installed, the model could be put back into operation (see **Photo 14**).

## Tank take-aways

Even when we think we've covered all possibilities, we can still sometimes be surprised by what we might have missed or misjudged in a project. In

this instance, there were three notable take-aways:

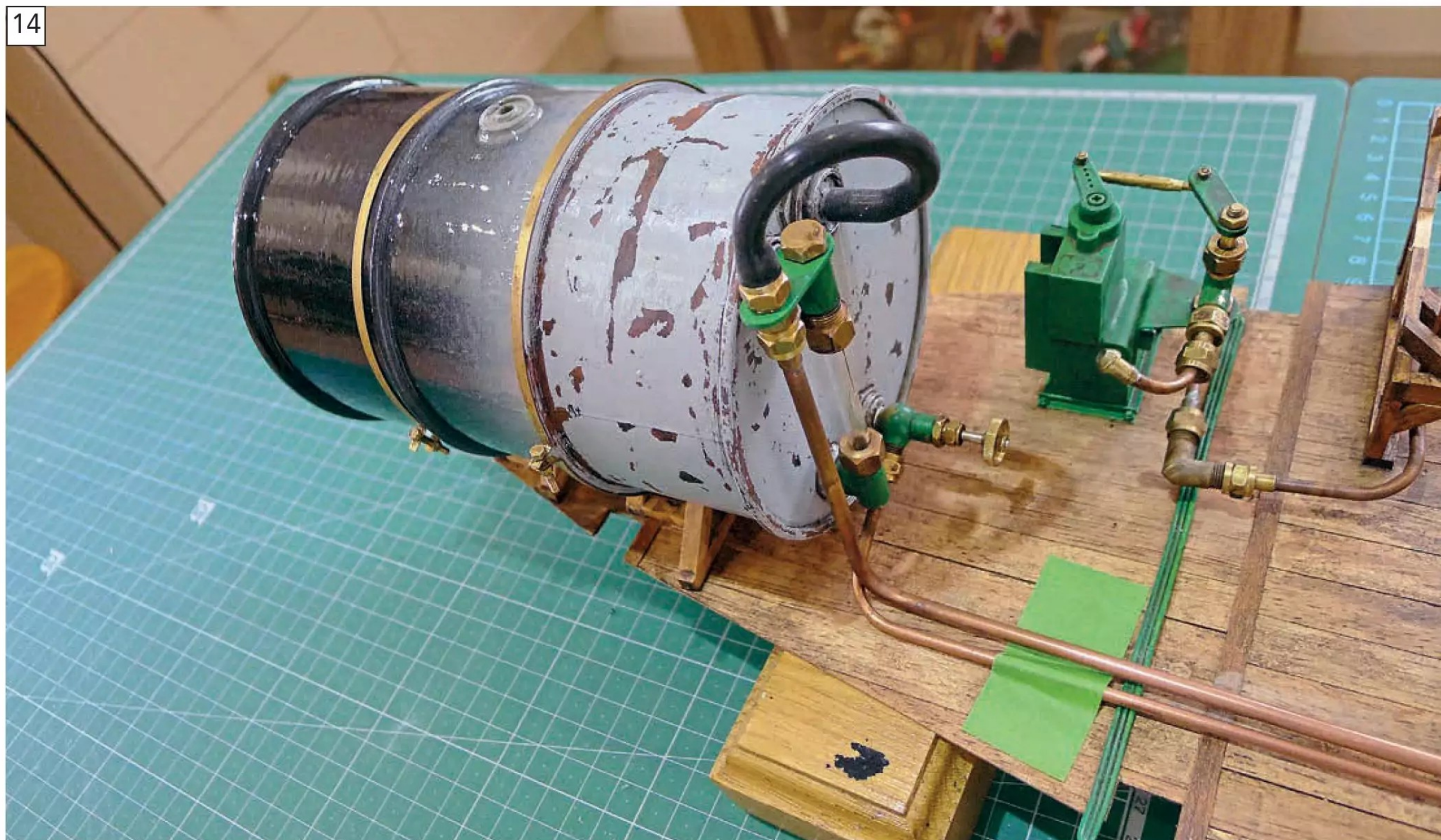
- Never underestimate the ability of corrosion to find a way. I thought coating a tank internally with enamel would be good enough protection. Clearly it wasn't. Maybe emptying the tank between uses might have prolonged its life but, at the end of the day, it would still only have put off the inevitable.
- Don't be tempted to take a short cut on a model you've spent years building
- 3D-printed items may not be watertight. ●

13



The interior of the new 3D-printed tank was given a coat of Z-Poxy finishing resin. This two-part product was simply mixed (50-50) in a small, graduated beaker and painted on with a cheap disposable paint brush.

14



The new 3D-printed water tank back on its base. All plastic and now internally coated, this should not present any further problems as regards rust or electrolytic action. Hopefully the feed water will now stay nice and clean.



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Whether you're highly skilled and experienced or completely new to the hobby, you're definitely invited to this launch party! So please keep the contributions coming by emailing your stories and photos to [editor@modelboats.co.uk](mailto:editor@modelboats.co.uk)

## Edwina

It was interesting to read in October 2025 issue of Model Boats the article on the trading ketch, *Jennifer* – what a fine model it looks. In the penultimate paragraph of Martin Crapper's article, he mentions his surprise that more people do not build working scale sailing boats – my thoughts exactly! Other than Thames barges, few are seen.

I have built several semi-scale craft over the years, including a Norfolk Wherry and a freelance yawl, neither of which would win a place in a scale competition but both sail well, and have given me much enjoyment. The pleasure comes from just sailing them for the sheer fun of it.

I am sending you some photographs of *Edwina*, (my wife's middle name). She (the boat, not my wife, obviously) is a gaff rigged, two-masted yawl modelled to approximately 1:18th scale. I understand that the difference

between a yawl and ketch is the position of the pivot point of the rudder. On the yawl this falls ahead of the mizzen mast, while on the ketch it is normally behind the mizzen and much nearer to the stern, or even attached to the transome. My model has been loosely based on a full-sized boat I photographed at Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu River many years ago, so I had no scale drawings or plans to refer to, only my imagination.

*Edwina* is 38 ins long from stem to transom, the beam is 9 ins. Her hull, built from 1/16in plywood, is of hard chine construction, giving a 'v' bottom. The draft from waterline to the bottom of keel is 7ins. I used three channels for radio control. A large sail arm servo controls the mainsail and foresail. The jib is free, with a bowsie for fine adjustment. A rotary switch on the transmitter controls a second servo attached to the mizzen sheet, which enables the mizzen sail to be set

to balance the rudder. This allows the boat to be set on long straight reaches without further rudder adjustment.

Now approaching 10 years old, *Edwina* has done a lot of sailing and has proved to be a very reliable and a safe model to operate. She is quite happy in winds anywhere between 5 and 25 mph. Even with her gunnel underwater she remains dry inside below deck – very reassuring, so hopefully will be sailing on for many more years.

Thanks for keeping up the good work with Model Boats, I always look forward to the next edition.

**ROBERT YEOWELL**  
**EMAIL**

*What an absolute peach of a model, Robert! And it sounds, and looks – judging by your shots of the model on the water in various weather conditions, that she isn't just stunning but sails superbly, too. Very envious! Ed.*



*Robert Yeowell's exquisite Edwina.*







## Adamcraft dinghy restoration

For a very long time an old model dinghy, made by my father-in-law, Iain Hayter, when he was about 14 years old, had been lurking in the back of our summerhouse. I had always admired the detail of this clinker-



Mark Phillips was intrigued to learn from his brother, Jeremy, that the old model dinghy languishing in his summerhouse, originally have been built by his father-in-law in the late 1940s, could well have been built from a now much sought after old Adamcraft kit. A chat with his father-in-law confirmed this was indeed the case.

built model but refurbishing it to its former glory was beyond me, so there it remained.

Until, that is, my brother Jeremy, who lives in Lincolnshire, who is a keen sailor and enjoys model boat building too, saw the Adamcraft article in the September 2023 edition of Model Boats. He then called to point out that the photos featured closely resembled the old model boat residing in my summerhouse. What's more, he excitedly explained, the manufacturer had been based in Brockenhurst, where I live.

Time for a chat, then, with my father-in-law. Low and behold, it turns out that he knew the son of Harvey Adam, the man behind the Adamcraft brand. My father-in-law

has lived in Brockenhurst all his life and remembers not only building the model in the late 1940s but also sailing it on a local pond - where it got stuck in the weeds in the middle and had to be rescued by another kind gentleman.

While these conversations were going on, an original kit came up for auction on eBay and my brother decided to bid on it. Unfortunately, he was pipped to the post, so realising how disappointed he was, I suggested packing up the dilapidated model in my care and sending this to him instead. The offer was eagerly accepted.

After stripping the boat down, he discovered that most of the ply frames were delaminating, which >



Having seen better days, the kit was then sent to model boat enthusiast Jeremy, who lovingly repaired and restored the model to its former glory, adding a few tweaks of his own along the way.



caused him some head scratching! However, he persevered with the repairs, also making a few minor tweaks of his own design along the way, before reassembling everything. The pictures I am sending you show the result.

While the restored boat will never

be tested on water, as it's unlikely to float for long, he really has done a marvellous job of retaining the essence of my father-in-law's original build.

The 77-year-old dinghy is now back in Brockenhurst, where, as a family heirloom, it will no doubt be on display for many years to come.

### MARK PHILLIPS BROCKENHURST

*What a fabulous family heirloom, and huge congratulations to your brother for doing such a splendid job, Mark! Many thanks indeed for sharing. Ed.*



*Seen here yet to be rigged, and unlikely sound enough to ever be put on the water again, Jeremy has, however, done a marvellous job of retaining the essence of Iain's original build (shown here giving the seal of approval to the marvellous finish achieved).*

### Cruiser

It was interesting to see Jim Pottinger's images of *Vanguard* in last month's issue. I joined Cory Ship Towage (Clyde) Ltd in June 1975 after ten years with Clan Line and was working in Cory's office in Norbury when *Vanguard* was transferred from Greenock to Foyne in early 1979.

I remained with Cory and subsequent owners until my retirement in June 2006. Shortly before that, in 2004, I built a model of *Cruiser* from a Phil Thomas plan, reduced in size by 50% on the office photocopier.

I started buying Model Boats about 1965, have been doing so ever since, and particularly enjoyed the December 2025 issue. Thank you.

**DOUGLAS NISBET**  
**EMAIL**

*Now that is one smart, very professional looking, build, Douglas! Although I can't reproduce them here for copyright reasons, it's plain to see when looking at images of this vessel on the Scottish Built Ships website at [https://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ship\\_listPage=2&a1Page=2242&ref=16084&vessel=CRUISER#v](https://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ship_listPage=2&a1Page=2242&ref=16084&vessel=CRUISER#v) just*

*how beautifully, and accurately, you've managed to replicate this vessel in*

*model form, with no attention to detail spared. Seriously impressive! Ed*



*Douglas Nisbet's skilfully crafted model of the steel screw steamer Cruiser.*



## Margoletta

I have recently completed *Margoletta*, designed by Ray Wood and published as his first free plan in the June 2005 issue of *Model Boats*, a copy of which I managed to find online. It was built as a birthday and Christmas present combined for my grandson, Thomas, as he is a big fan of the Arthur Ransome *Swallows and Amazons* stories and *Margoletta* was the 'villain' in *Coot Club*.

It's the first model I've scratch built from plan, a process I enjoyed very much, using my favourite material, wood. She's only had a very quick run so far on Portishead Lake. We

are looking forward to some better weather.

The next project I have planned is to revisit the boat in a bottle I started over 20 years ago. We shall see how that goes while I've still got steady hands!

Thanks for a great magazine.

**STEPHEN GARRAD**  
EMAIL

*Lucky Thomas! She's lovely, Stephen. I know Ray will be delighted to see your build too.*

*Good luck with your boat in a bottle; I hope you'll send in some pics on completion. Ed. >*





All hands on deck!



Built by Stephen Garrad from the Ray Wood plan, this lovely model of Margoletta is now under the proud new ownership of Swallows & Amazons fan Thomas.



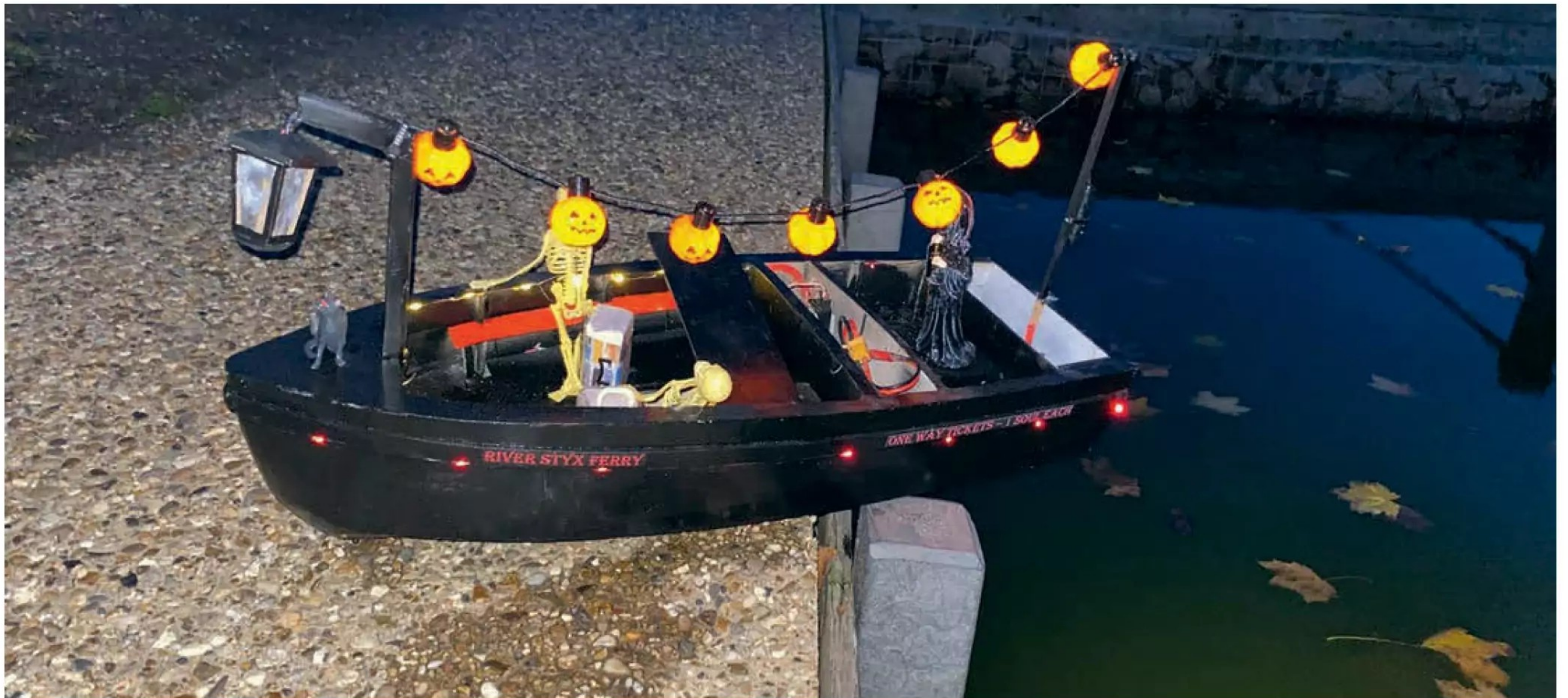
All hands on deck!

## All lit up!

Thank you for including the pics of my River Styx Ferry in last month's issue. You asked for some night shots of my boat, so here you go!

**JOHN GIBBS**  
**EMAIL**

*The thanks are all mine, John. She looks even better than anticipated all lit up! Ed.*



*Making the most of the fact the nights have now drawn in here the northern hemisphere, John Gibb's River Styx Ferry lights up the darkness.*

## Thornycroft Torpedo Boat (2nd class) work in progress

The December magazine featured the splendid version of this boat by Chris Gill, so I thought you might be interested in my 'in build' version of the same boat. This has been on the go for a long time, stopped while other projects were tackled. Plan is by D.J. Metcalf, from Nexus and is TB 85. I

do not have the plan number. Scale is  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch to 1 ft. Steering is by rope and pulley system as per the real boat, which took some working out!

Great magazine, by the way!

**ROGER PICKETT**  
**EMAIL**

*Sounds a tricky build, but coming along nicely there, Roger. I hope that perhaps seeing Chris's finished model may have given you that little bit of added incentive to aim for a 2026 completion date. Looking forward to seeing the end result! Ed.*



*Work in progress on Roger Pickett's Thornycroft Torpedo Boat.*



# Your Letters

Got views to air or information to share? Then we want to hear from you!

Letters can either be forwarded via email to [editor@modelboats.co.uk](mailto:editor@modelboats.co.uk) or via post to **Readers' Letters, Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR**

## Mystery model identified

I was the modeller who built the mystery featured on page 79 of the October 2025 issue, which is a Russian Riga frigate, the *Sea Lion*. I built it in the early 1970s and enclose a photo taken at Sandown Park Model Show.

Could you please send a copy of this letter and the photos to Pete

Bonney, the current owner, and I will be happy to give him the full history of its building.

Just to let you know, I am a founder member of both the Surface Warship Association and the Kent Model Boat Display Team.

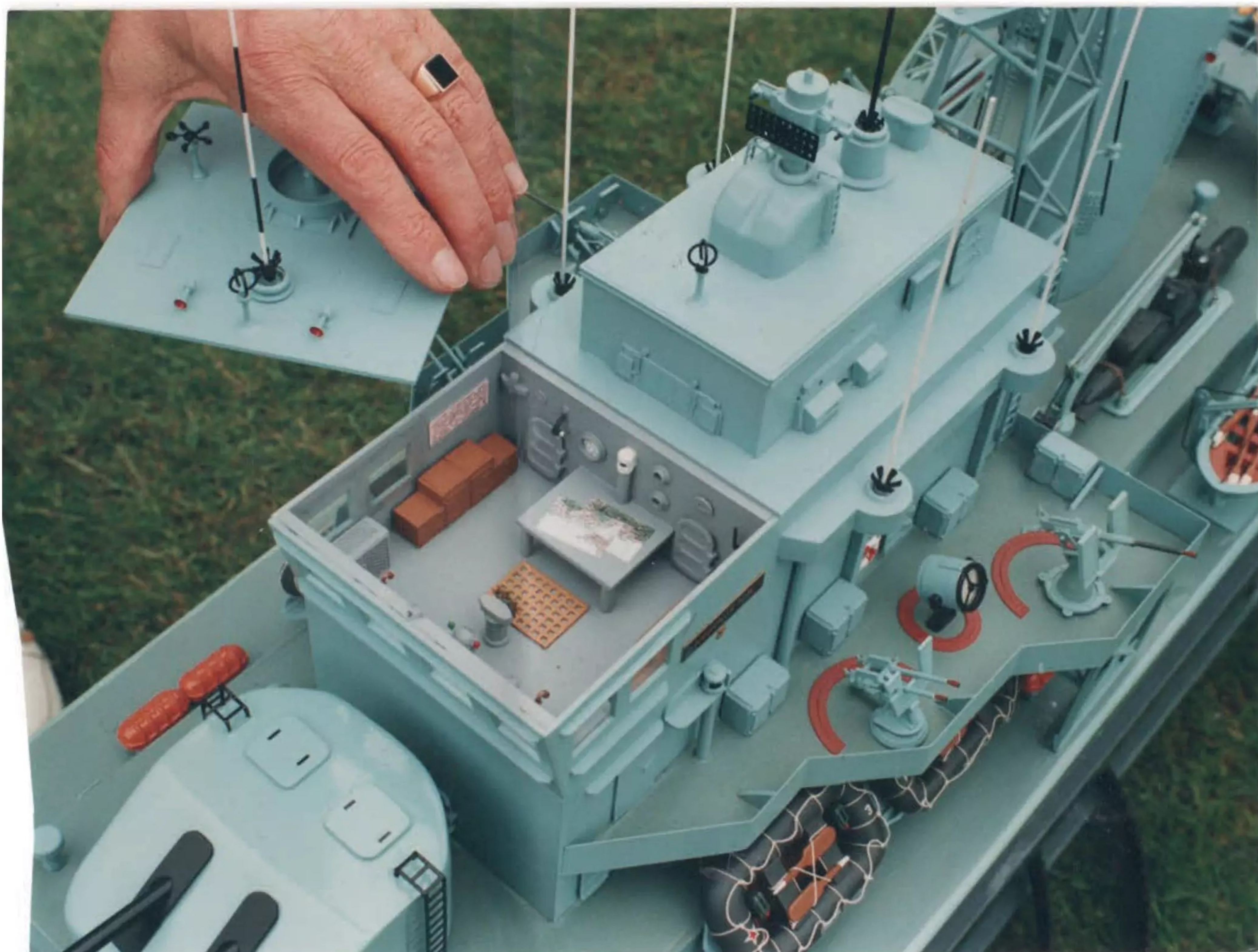
**BARRY CHAPMAN**  
**EMAIL**

*I can't thank you enough for coming forward, Barry! Pete was delighted I was able to put pass on your contact details and immediately emailed back to say how much he'd enjoyed chatting with you. I am sharing here because I am sure this will also be of interest to other readers, and because it's a perfect example of why I love the Your Letters section so much. Ed.*



*The Sea Lion, still only 95% finished (e.g., no rails yet added) on display at Sandown Park Model Show in the early 1970s.*





The bridge of this Russian Riga. This huge model was scratch built from Balsa by Barry Chapman and then sold on to Richard Howard of Beale Park for his naval museum. It has since, however, found its way into the hands of Pete Bonney, whose enquiries regarding its identity in the October 2025 issue of Model Boats have now been answered, thanks to Barry spotting the letter and photograph featured and kindly stepping forward.

## Swordsman 37

I enjoyed reading Chris Fellows' The Water Faireys feature; it has to be the definitive article on the subject.

I bought a rather nice fibreglass hull from someone in Solihull for the princely price of £60 two or three years ago. It is 37 inches long and definitely on my 'boats to finish', list! I think it is a Swordsman 37, as shown on the Fairey Owners Club website. Swordsman 37 was built in 2000 and was the last of the Swordsman-named boats. But, apart from that website, and one or two photos of full size 37s, that's all I can find.

It would be nice to have plans and photos of a model 37. I already have an AeroKits Swordsman 33 - which I started in the 1970s and finished in about 2022! I mentioned it briefly in my *Electric Queen* article (see Model Boats, Sept 2025, Page 54). So, it would be nice to have both the first and last Swordsman.

## ROGER BUNCE EMAIL

Roger's email was, as requested, forwarded on to Chris Fellows, who has already replied directly to him. I am, however, sharing that response (which I was copied in to) here, as I am sure it will be of real interest to other Fairey fans:

"While I am aware of this model, I can't help directly. I do, however, know a man who can! John Kerr, a fellow Fairey Marine enthusiast, has one of the part kits, consisting of the hull, superstructure (no deck) and the metal sheet for some of the fittings, plus a plan. John bought his kit from a member of Eastleigh MBC where the project originated. They have several of these completed, one of which has water-jet drives like the real boats.

"Although Fairey Marine continued production of commercial craft into

the early 1980s, production of pleasure craft ceased during the 1970s. In the years that followed, a number of revivals of the Fairey design ethos saw others offer traditional sports cruisers, including Swordsman Marine (in existence between 2000 and 2008). This company was set up by Fairey enthusiasts at Hamble, home to the original Fairey Marine, and the Swordsman 37 was exhibited at the 2000 Southampton Boat Show. The boats were built by Bridgend Boats, Plymouth, and Yachting Projects, Hamble. The hull was that used in the Fairey Marine Dagger, a commercial/military boat, while the superstructure and interior were added by the former Fairey Marine designer Alan Burnard.

"John was able to provide information on how this model came about. Apparently, members of the >



Eastleigh club were exhibiting some models, amongst which was a Fairey Huntsman; this was seen by another exhibitor, Transworld Yachts of Hamble, who wanted to a model of the Swordsman 37 to put on show. As none were available, a collaboration

was set up, with Transworld Yachts commissioning model drawings and producing the glass-fibre mouldings for the hull, deck and superstructure, and the Eastleigh club members producing the master plugs for the moulds and various packs (with components in cast

resin, vacuum formed and etched metal sheets) for the basic build, along with additional packs for handrails and pulpit rails. A limited run of 20 kits was produced for club members.

"I, for one, can't wait to see Roger's completed Swordsman 37!"



The fibreglass Swordsman 37 hull acquired by Roger Bunce, which is still currently on his list of models to complete.



Roger finally finished the Aerokits Swordsman 33 he started back in 1975 in 2002! He is hoping, however, it won't take him quite as long to build himself a 37 and be able to boast having both the first and last of the Fairey Swordsmans in model form.



A full-size Swordsman 37. Image courtesy of the Sandeman Yacht Company.



A cut-away drawing for the Swordsman 37 model.

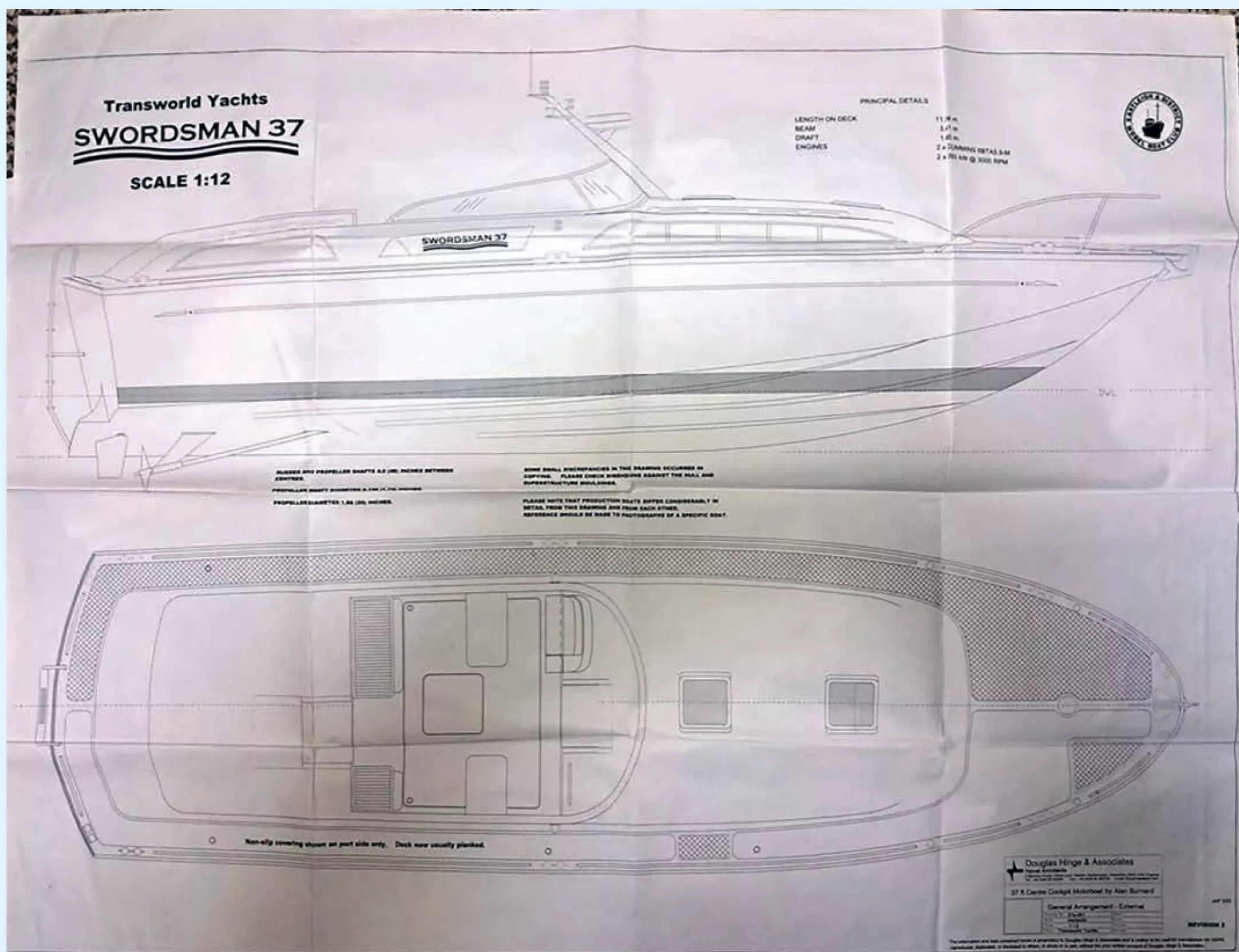


An etched metal component sheet from the Swordsman 37 kit.



An Eastleigh MBC member's kit-built Swordsman 37.





The Transworld Yachts' plan drawn up for the Swordsman 37 model.

## Antwerp celebrations

Founded in 1905, the Koninklijke Model Yacht Club, Antwerp, is one of the five oldest model yacht clubs in the world, and over the weekend of November 14/15/16, 2025, we celebrated our 120 anniversary with an exhibition in the prestigious Castle of Schoten (located in a suburb of Antwerp).

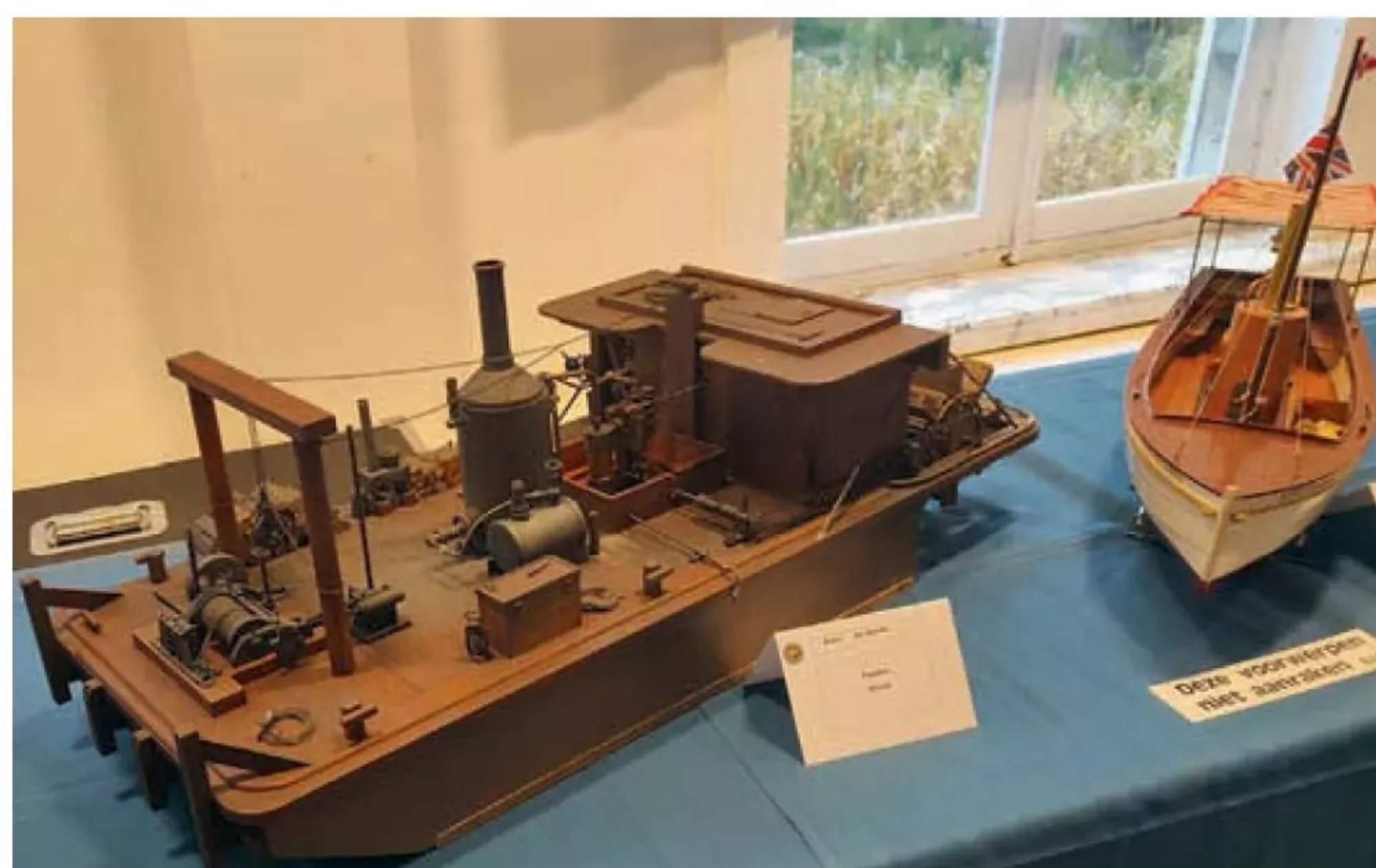
- This exhibition, which incorporated
- Model boats of all descriptions (electric and steam-driven)
- Model railways (electric and steam-driven)
- Model and R/C trucks

was held in conjunction with the SMA (Scheeps Modelbouwclub Antwerpen), which was also celebrating a landmark anniversary (50 years) in 2025.

In total, we welcomed over 500 visitors, including German, French and Dutch modellers, some of whom who had driven for over four hours to be >







there. Everyone left the exhibition with big smiles on their faces, with many members of the general telling us they didn't know that model boats, trains and lorries could be so spectacular!

The event was also covered by the media, with the local television station and members of the press in attendance.

As we have done at past events, we set up a model yachting pond so that youngsters could 'have a go'. Over the

years this proved a resounding success, with four of the resulting new recruits to the club being just 12 years old – so the future looks bright!

In a nod to the past, our former President, Fran Fierens, was celebrated for his leadership of the club for over 40 years, as were our oldest members, Ferre Frederickx and Wim Theys, who first joined the club 75 and 78 years ago, respectively, and are still going strong!

I would like to thank all our members

for their commitment, their positive, 'can do' attitudes, and for making the event such fun. Here's to next 120 years!

**HERMAN KOCKX**  
**K.M.Y.A. PRESIDENT**

*Massive congratulations, and well done, to you and all of the KMYA & SMA members, Herman. Great to see a little taste of the wonderful work put on display. Ed.*



All hands on deck!



In November the KMYA and SMA came together to celebrate their 120th and 50th anniversaries respectively, by putting on a three-day exhibition at the Kasteel van Schoten in Antwerp, Belgium.

## Spraytime with a new toy!

Thank you for the prize of the airbrush I won in the October issue's prize draw. it came as a great surprise. I already have a compressor from The Airbrush Company, so my new airbrush should match up perfectly

I've subscribed to Model Boats for as long as I can remember. Great magazine, great competitions!

**IAN UNWIN**  
**EMAIL**



You are most welcome, Ian! I am delighted to

learn you are so pleased with your prize. Ed





# Next month in **model Boats**

In the Feb 2026 issue of Model Boats, on sale from Friday, Jan 23, 2026, don't miss...



## ▲ **Herzogin Cecilie**

The retro fit of a beauty that had languished for far too long...



## ▲ **The Learning Curve continues...**

with this very impressive first foray into scratch building!



## ▲ **A delightful Disney birthday gift**

Modelling Moana's ocean-going catamaran

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A thematically varied selection of feature-length articles, all your favourite regular pages – including Your Models, Your Letters, news, reviews – and lots more (Please note: content may be subject to change)

You will find more about the exciting content coming next, features of particular interest you may have missed in past editions and details of the very latest subscription offers on our website at [www.modelboats.co.uk](http://www.modelboats.co.uk)

You can, of course, order your copy of the February 2026 issue, which goes on sale at all good newsagents from Friday, January 23, 2026, now, but why not treat yourself to an annual subscription, as monthly copies will then be delivered directly to your door.

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Esperance B908	58.00
FD10 YAWL B701	107.00
Henriette Marie B904	57.00
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Marie Jeanne B580 Fishing Boat	129.00
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Sir Winston Churchill Schooner B706	159.00
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USS Constitution B508	269.00

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Baikal Model Boat Fibreglass Hull 1:40 scale	95.00
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Celia May Steam launch ABS Hull	39.00
Cormotant Model Boat Hull	35.00
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IBEX Brixham Trawler Hull with Plan DASET001	117.00
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Hoga pearl  
harbour tug





# Mtroniks

electronics innovation



## microMARINE

12V/10A Brushed waterproof speed controller

£37.99



## viperMARINE

12V Brushed waterproof speed controller  
15A, 25A, 40A or 75A

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## digiSOUND-6D

Realistic sound for RC boats

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NEW

Improved design for 2025!

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Brushed motors for RC boats

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24 Month Warranty on all Mtroniks electronic products

Over 30 years of  
KNOW  
HOW

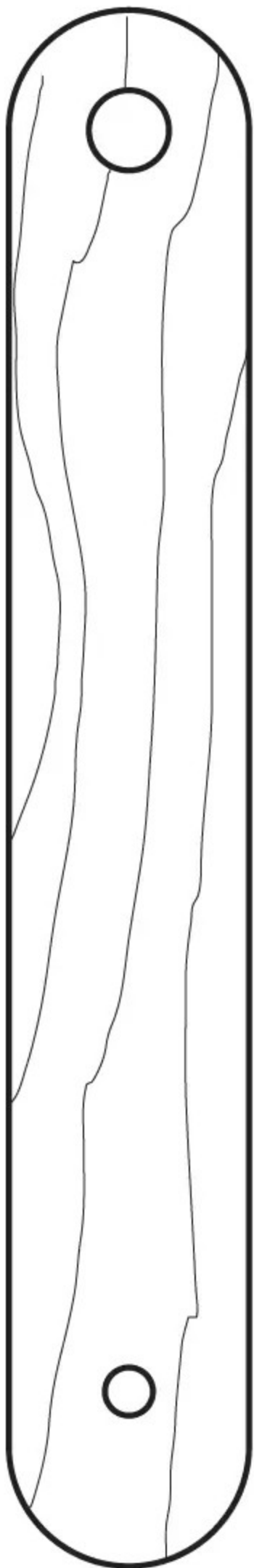


500

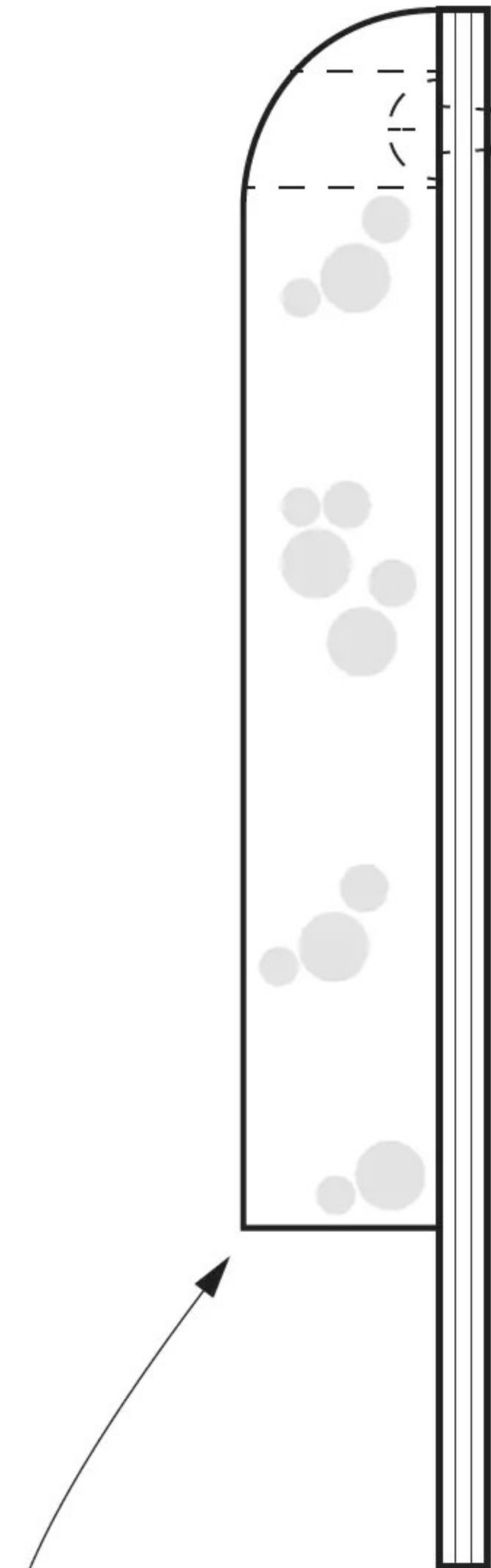
400

300

ROWERS ARMS  
1/8" (3mm) PLYWOOD  
2 REQ'D



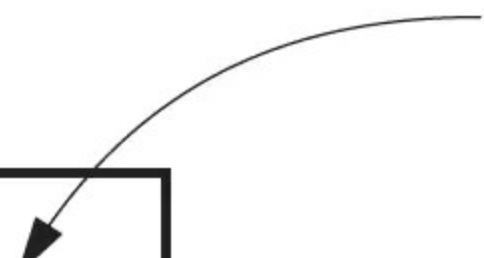
EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE  
TO FORM ARMS



MAKE ARM SCREWS  
AN EASY FIT IN ARMS



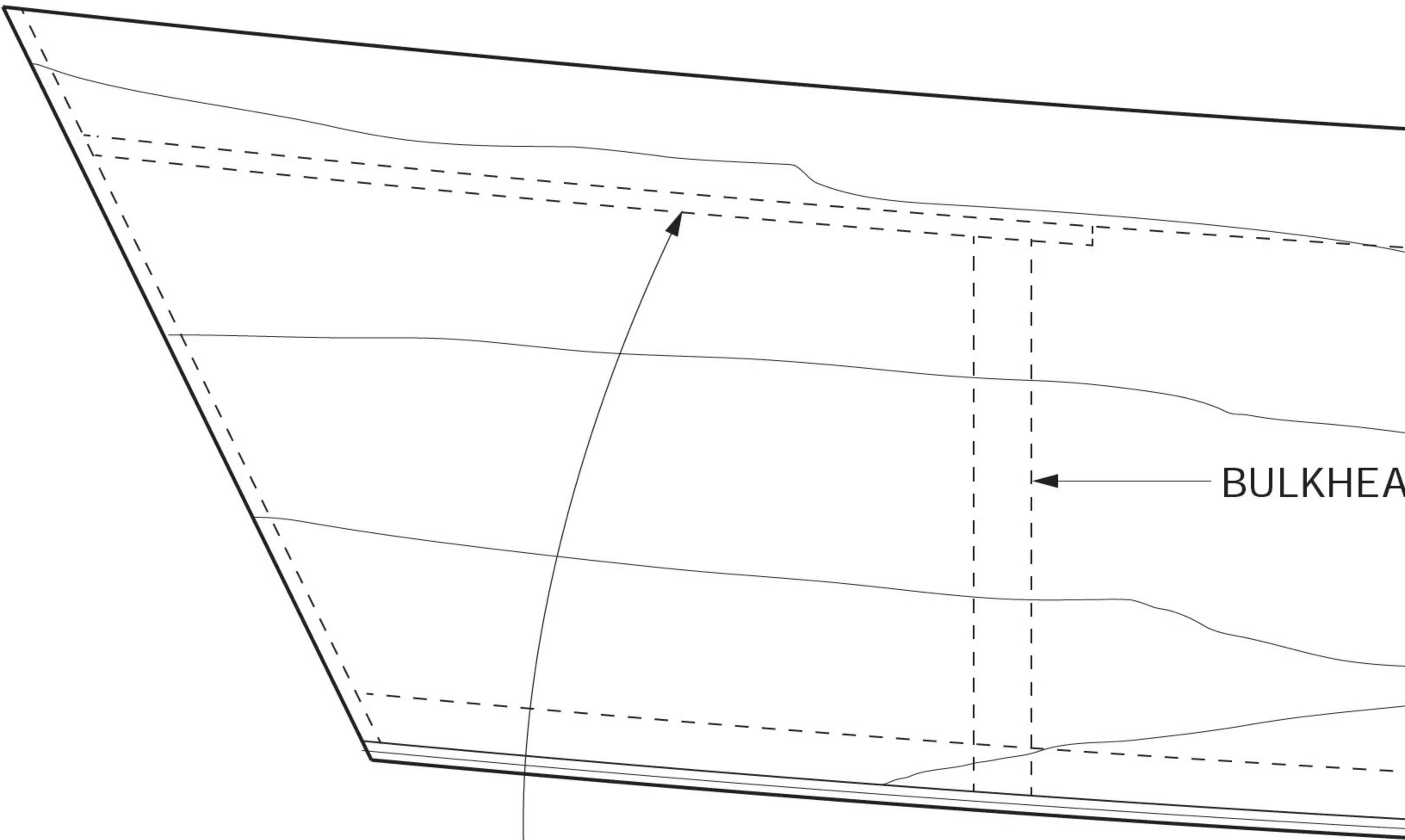
HARDW  
HOLD



R  
1



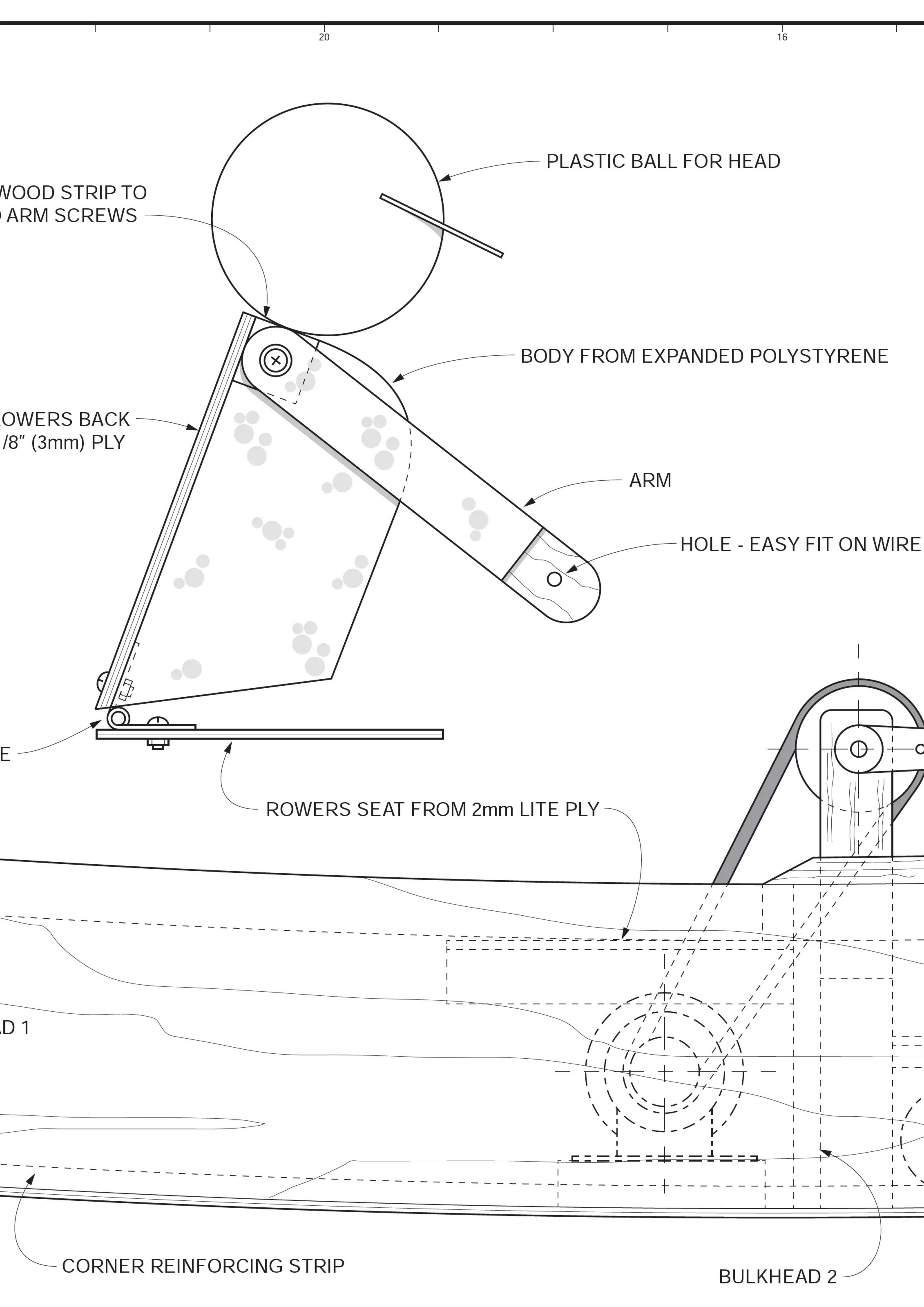
HING



BULKHEAD



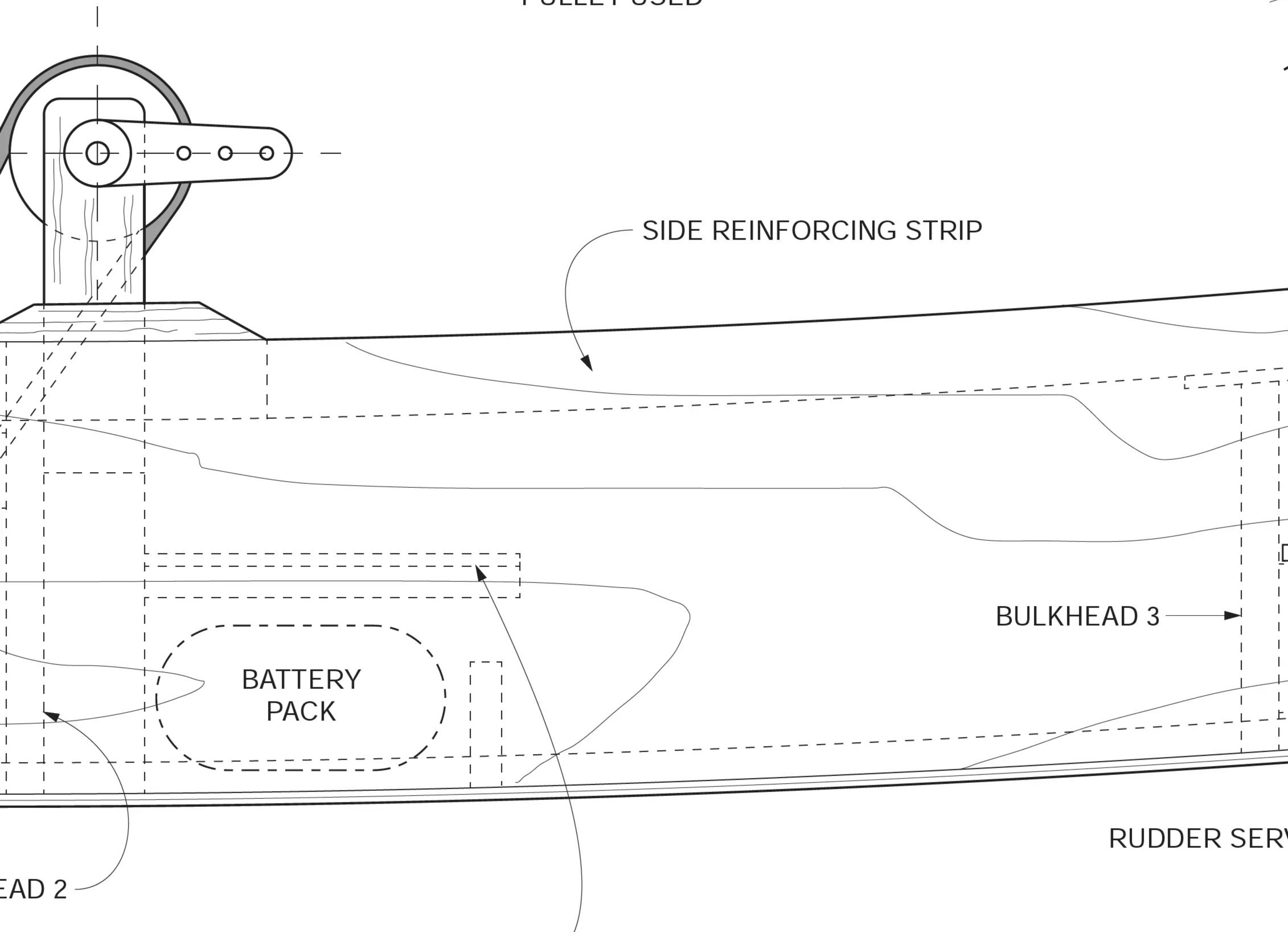
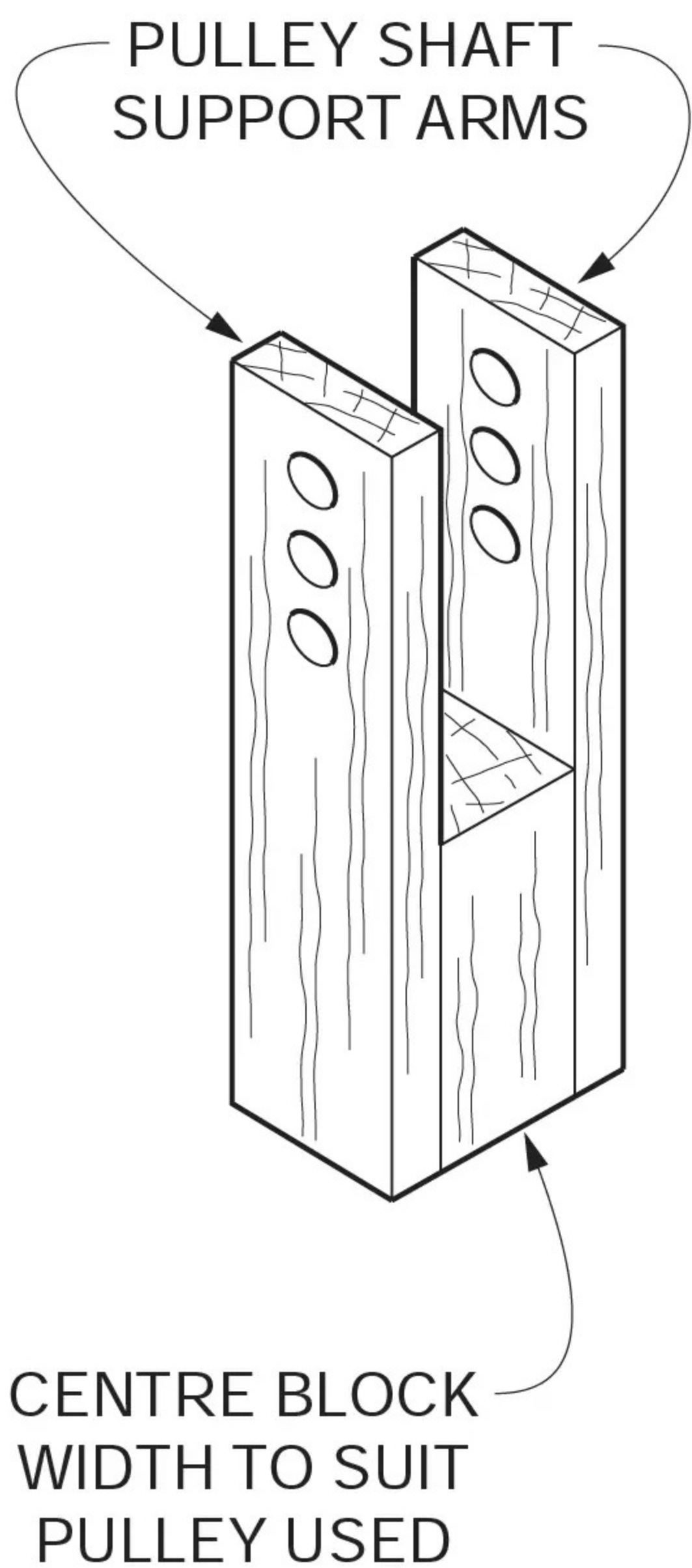






YSTYRENE

Y FIT ON WIRE ROD





# Boats

## ROWVER

BY GLYNN GUEST

PLAN No: MM2184

No. OF SHEETS: 1 OF 2

First published in  
Model Boats January 2026

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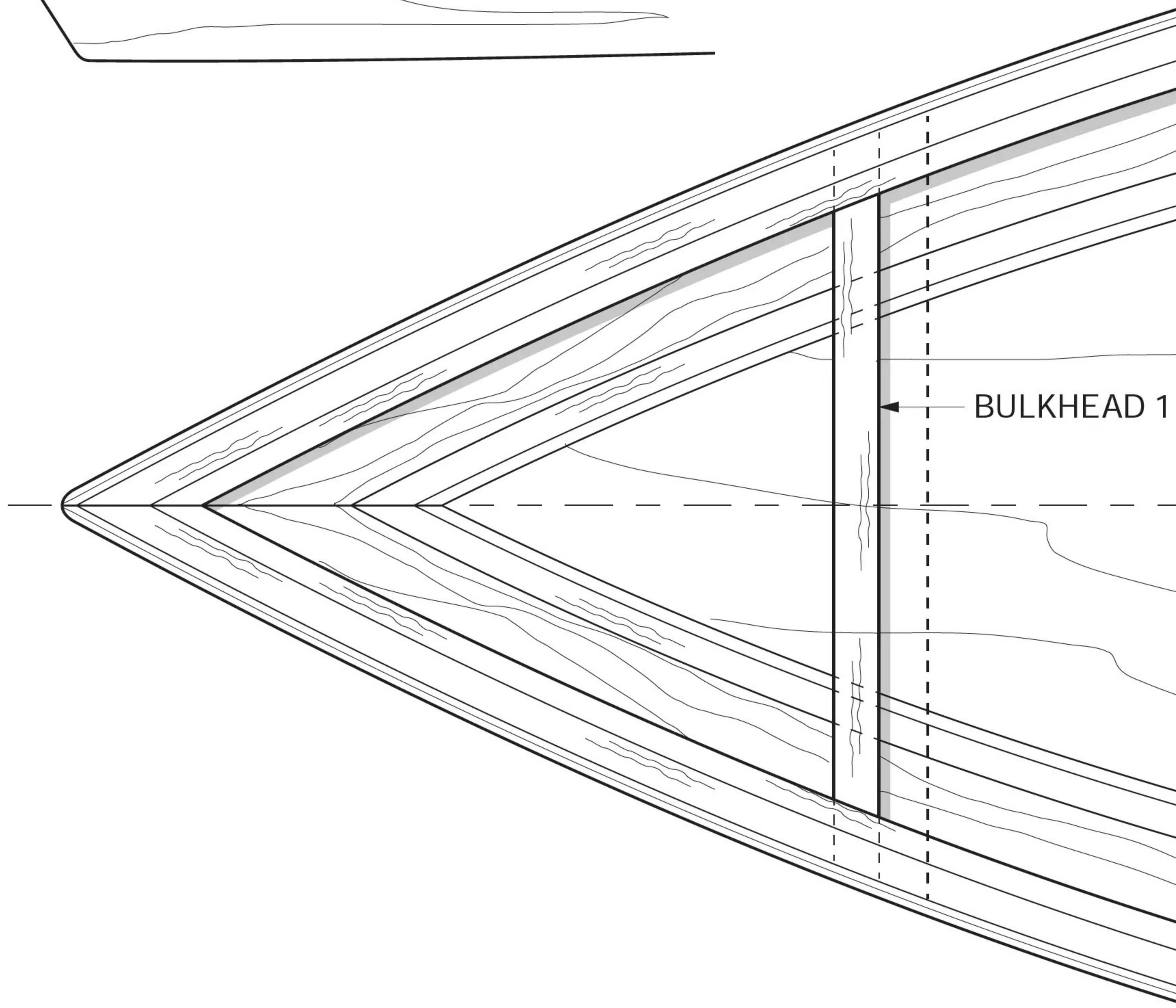
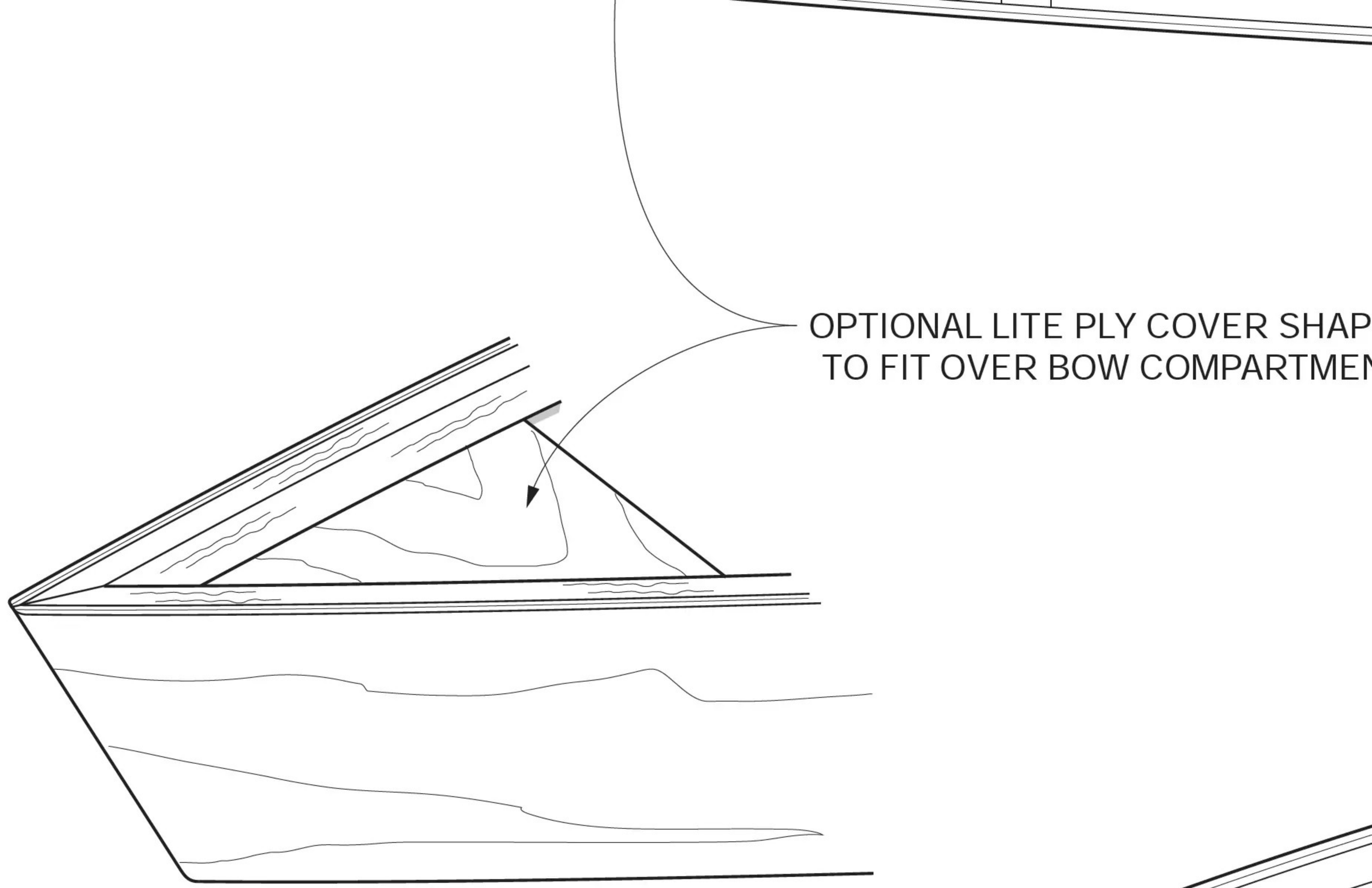


LITE PLY COVER SHAPED TO SLIDE OVER  
BULKHEAD 3 & UNDER HULL SIDE STRIPS

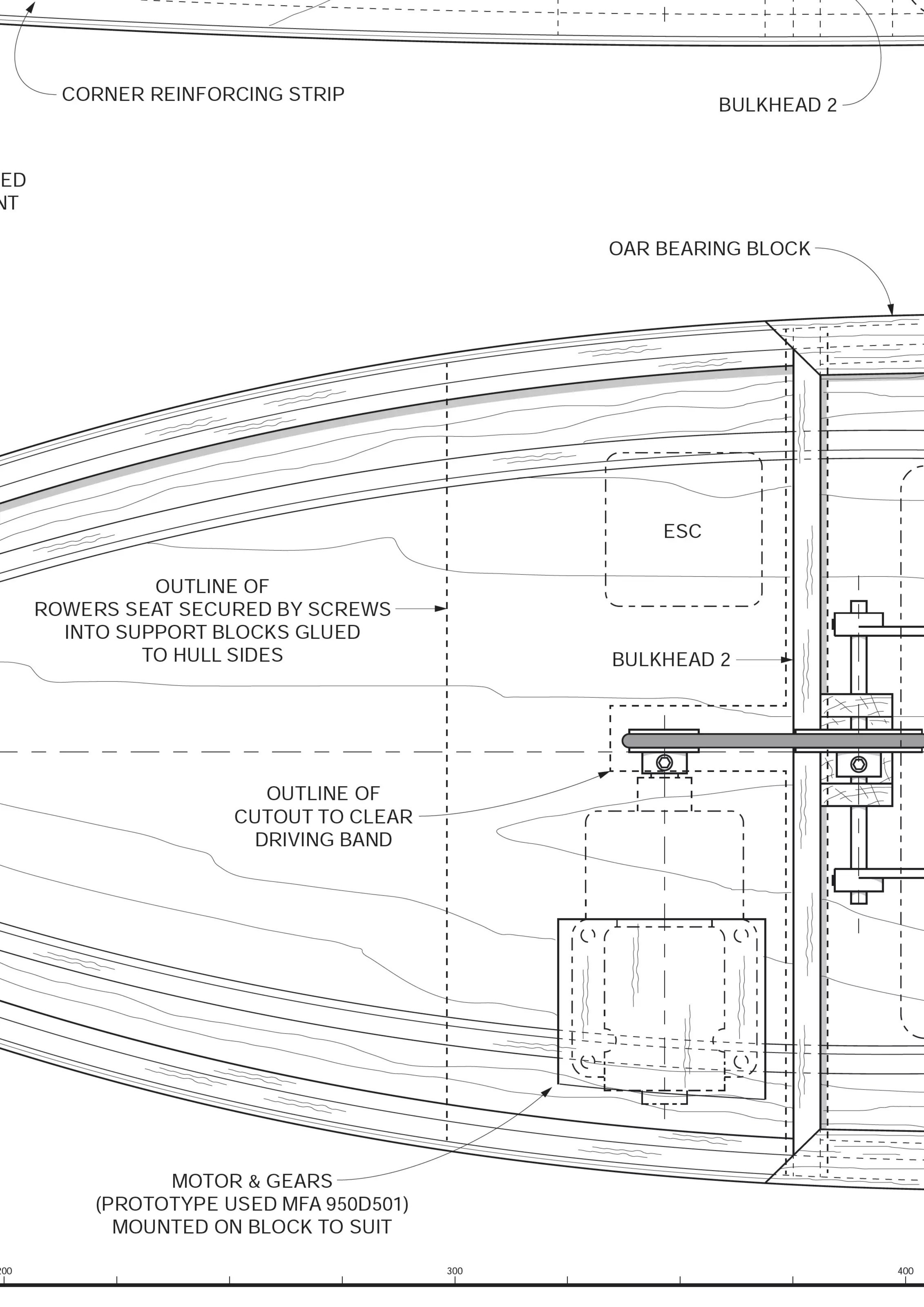
TRANSOM

VO









CORNER REINFORCING STRIP

BULKHEAD 2

OAR BEARING BLOCK

ESC

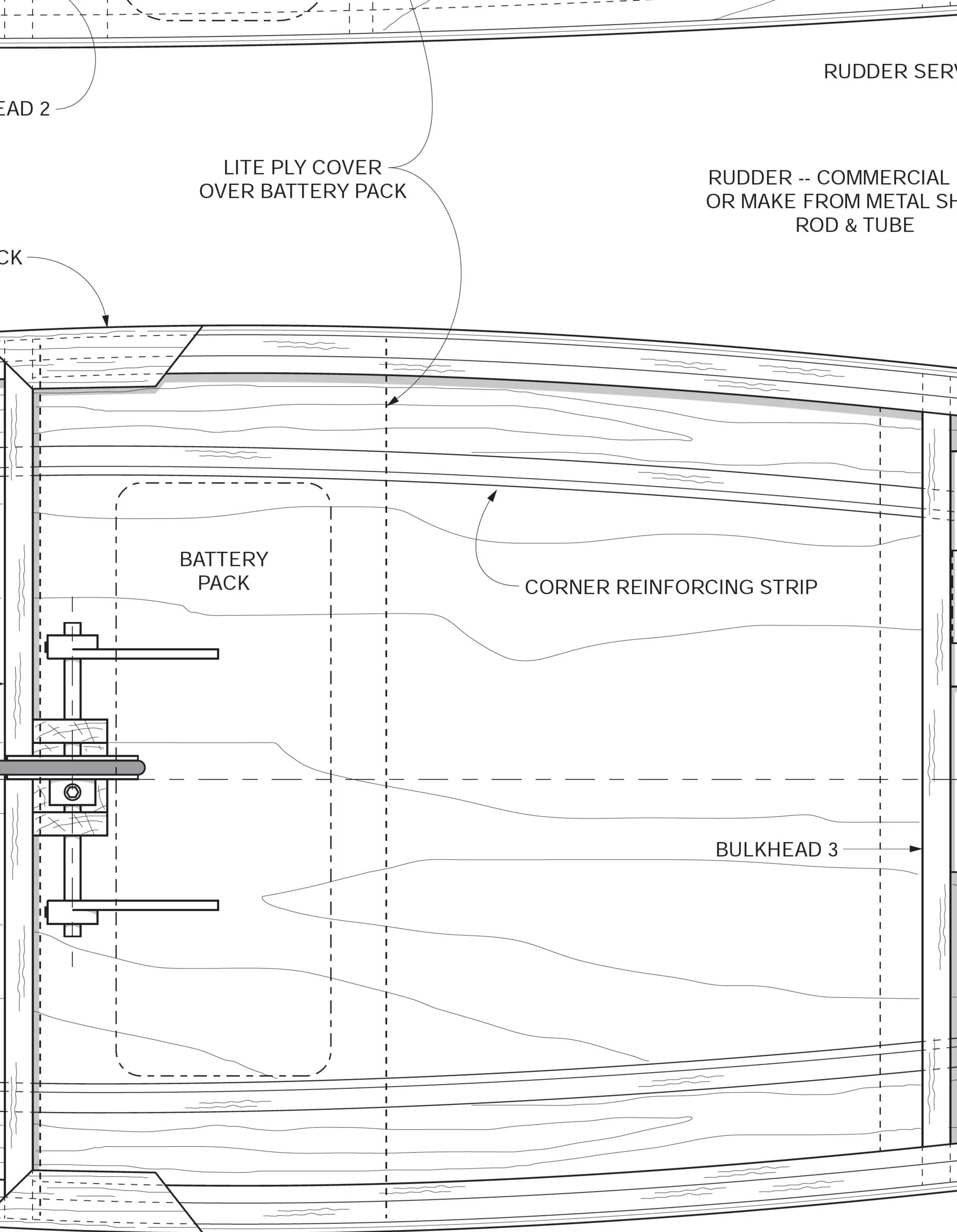
OUTLINE OF  
ROWERS SEAT SECURED BY SCREWS  
INTO SUPPORT BLOCKS GLUED  
TO HULL SIDES

BULKHEAD 2

OUTLINE OF  
CUTOUT TO CLEAR  
DRIVING BAND

MOTOR & GEARS  
(PROTOTYPE USED MFA 950D501)  
MOUNTED ON BLOCK TO SUIT





HEAD 2

RUDDER SERV

LITE PLY COVER  
OVER BATTERY PACK

RUDDER -- COMMERCIAL  
OR MAKE FROM METAL SH  
ROD & TUBE

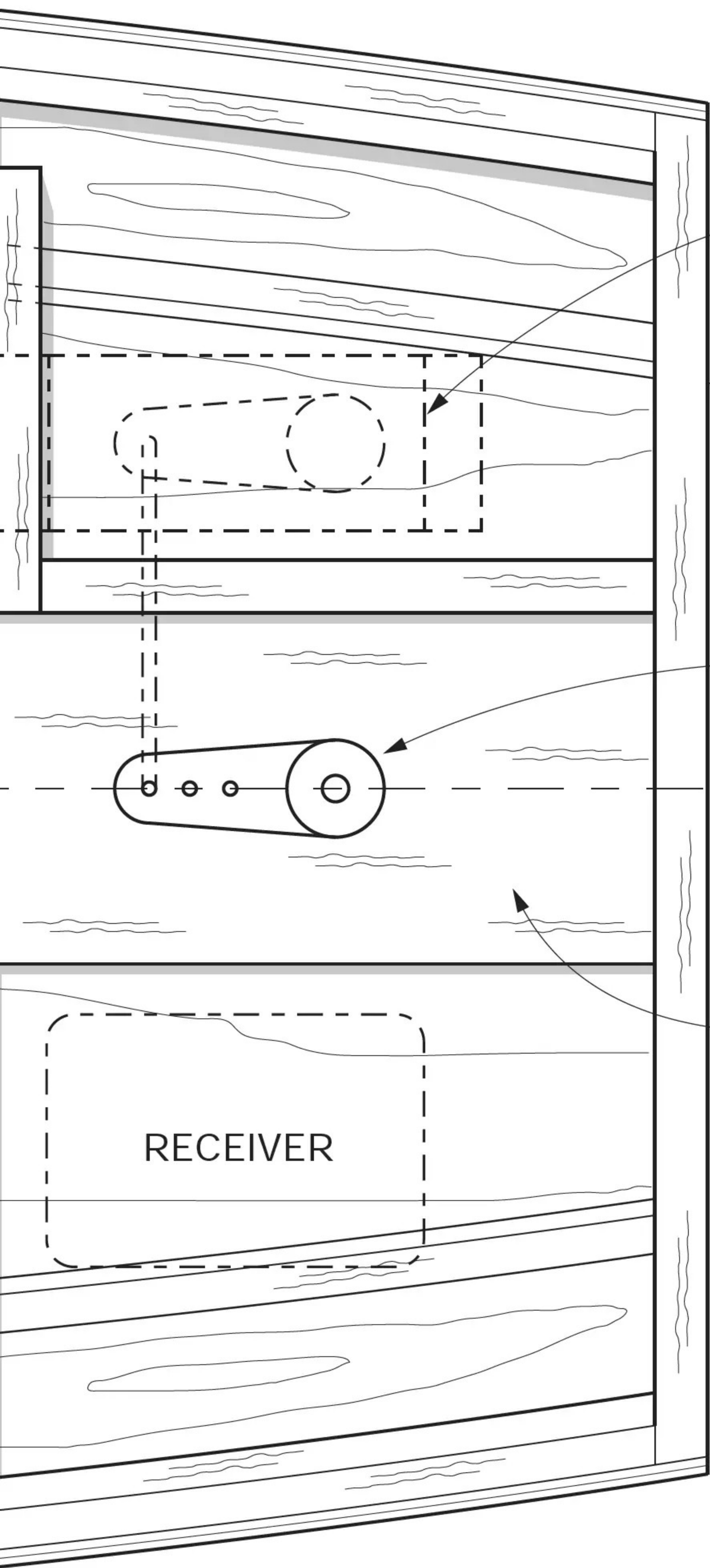
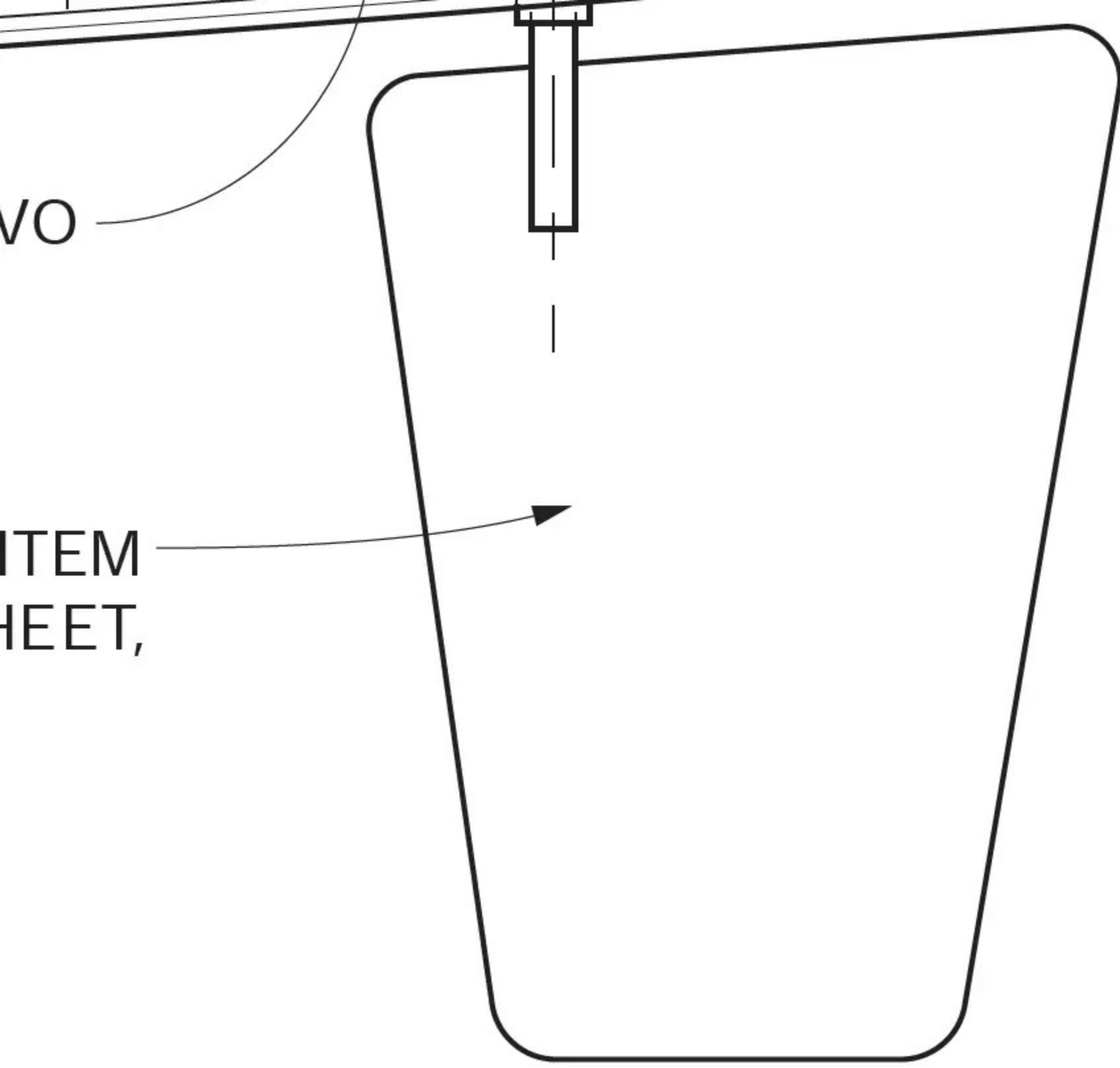
CK

BATTERY  
PACK

CORNER REINFORCING STRIP

BULKHEAD 3





RUDDER SERVO

TRANSOM

RUDDER TILLER

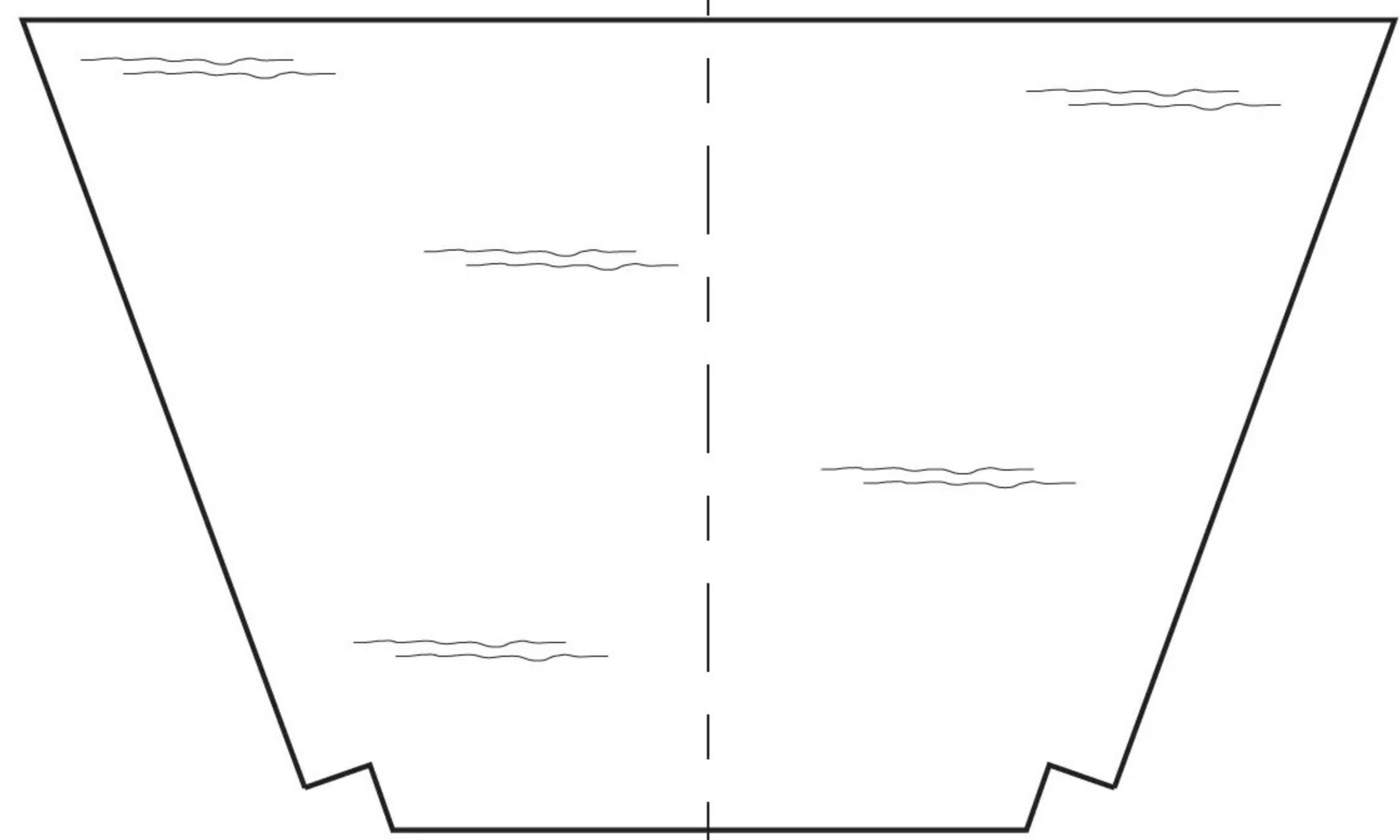
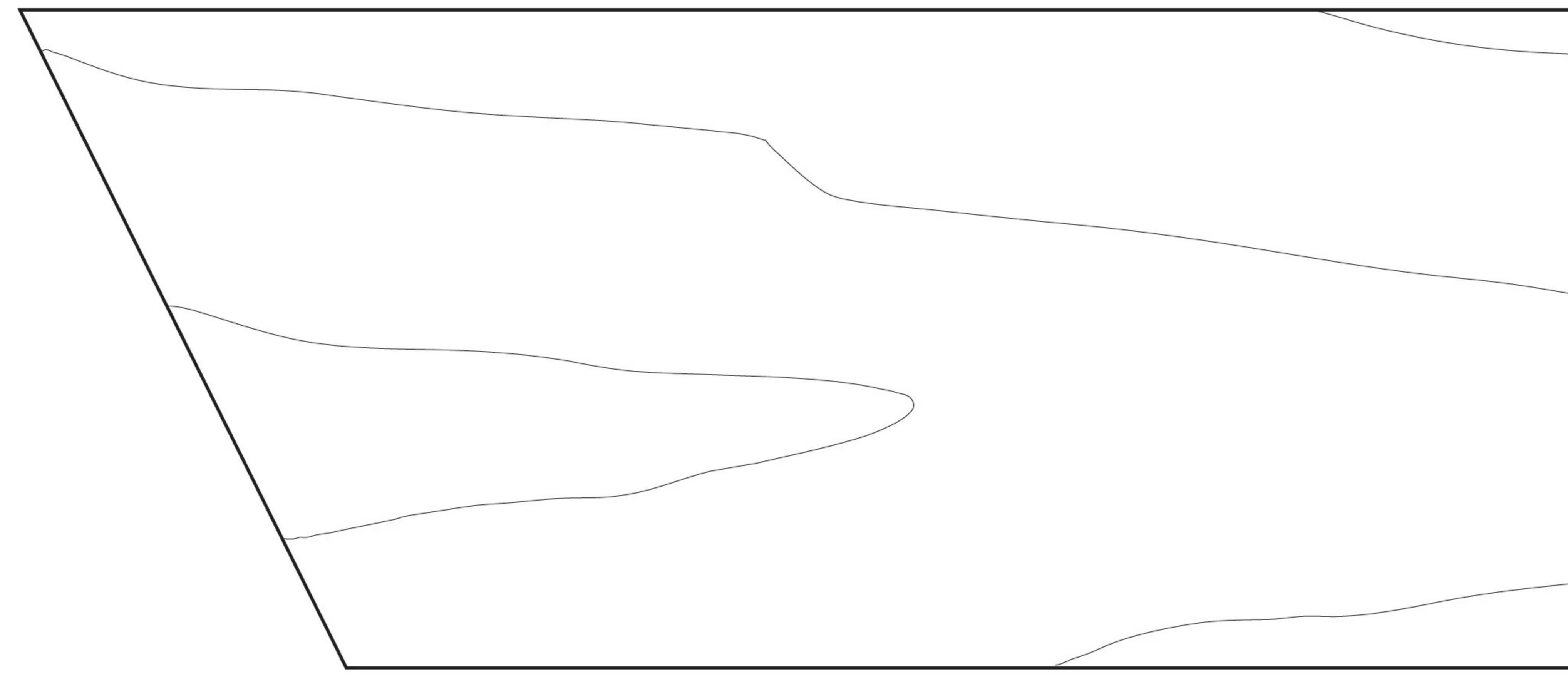
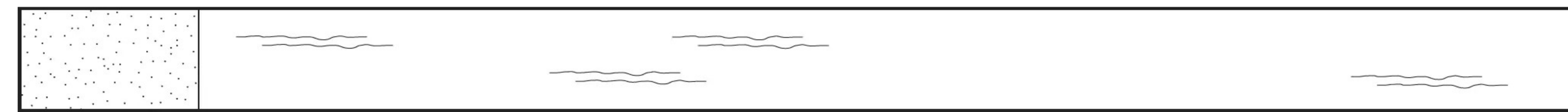
RUDDER TUBE SUPPORT  
FROM 1/8" (3mm) BALSA

RECEIVER

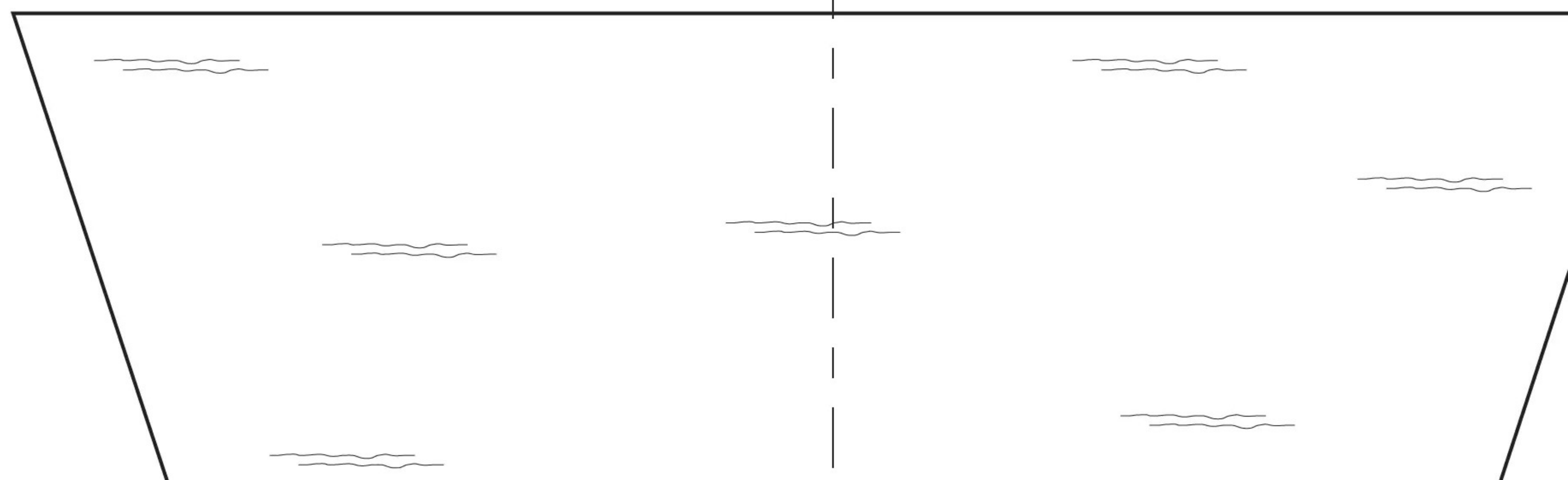




CHAMFER TO MEET FLUSH  
WHEN FORMING BOWS

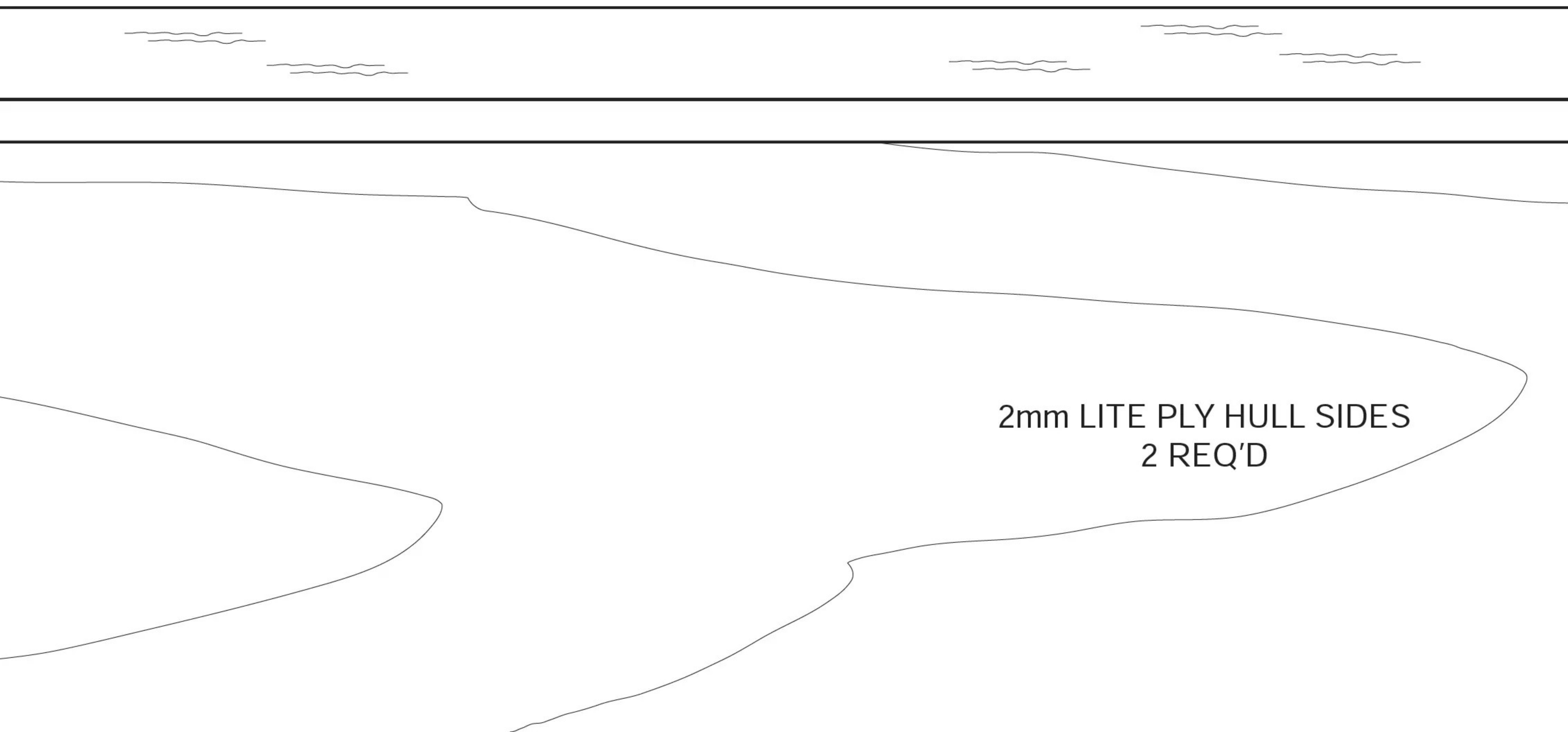


BULKHEAD 1  
1/4" (6mm) BALSA

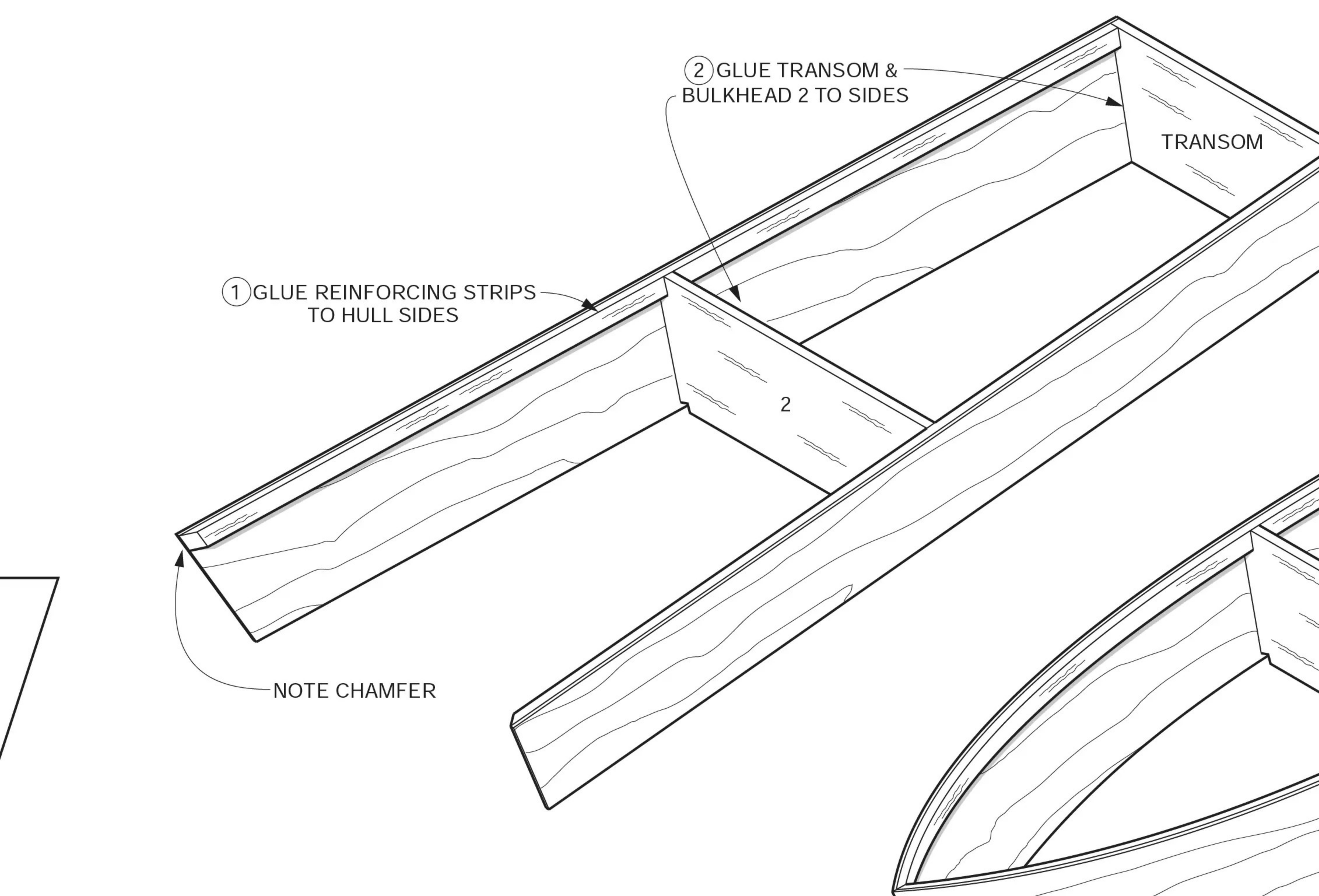




3/16" (5mm) BALSA REINFORCING STRIP ON INSIDE



2mm LITE PLY HULL SIDES  
2 REQ'D



1 GLUE REINFORCING STRIPS  
TO HULL SIDES

2 GLUE TRANSOM &  
BULKHEAD 2 TO SIDES

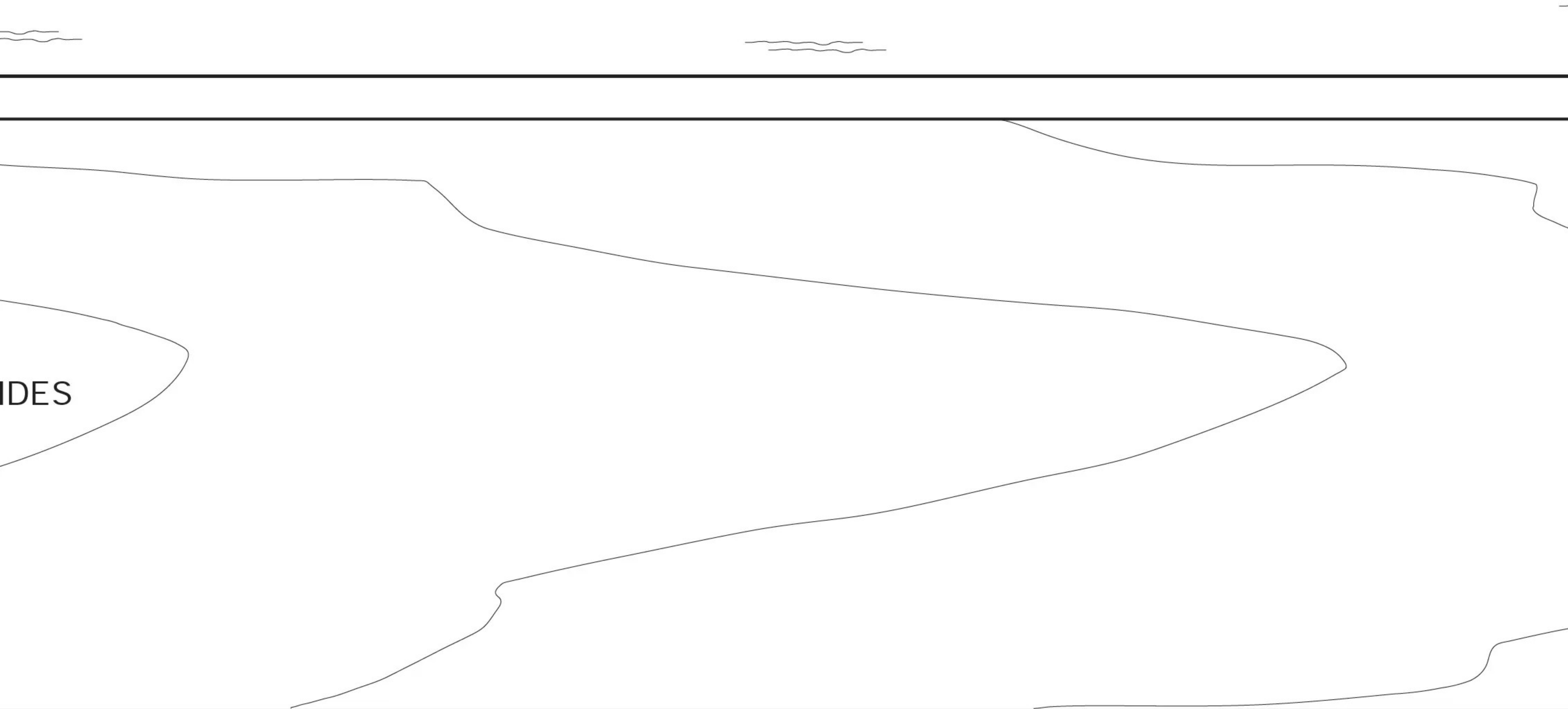
TRANSOM

2

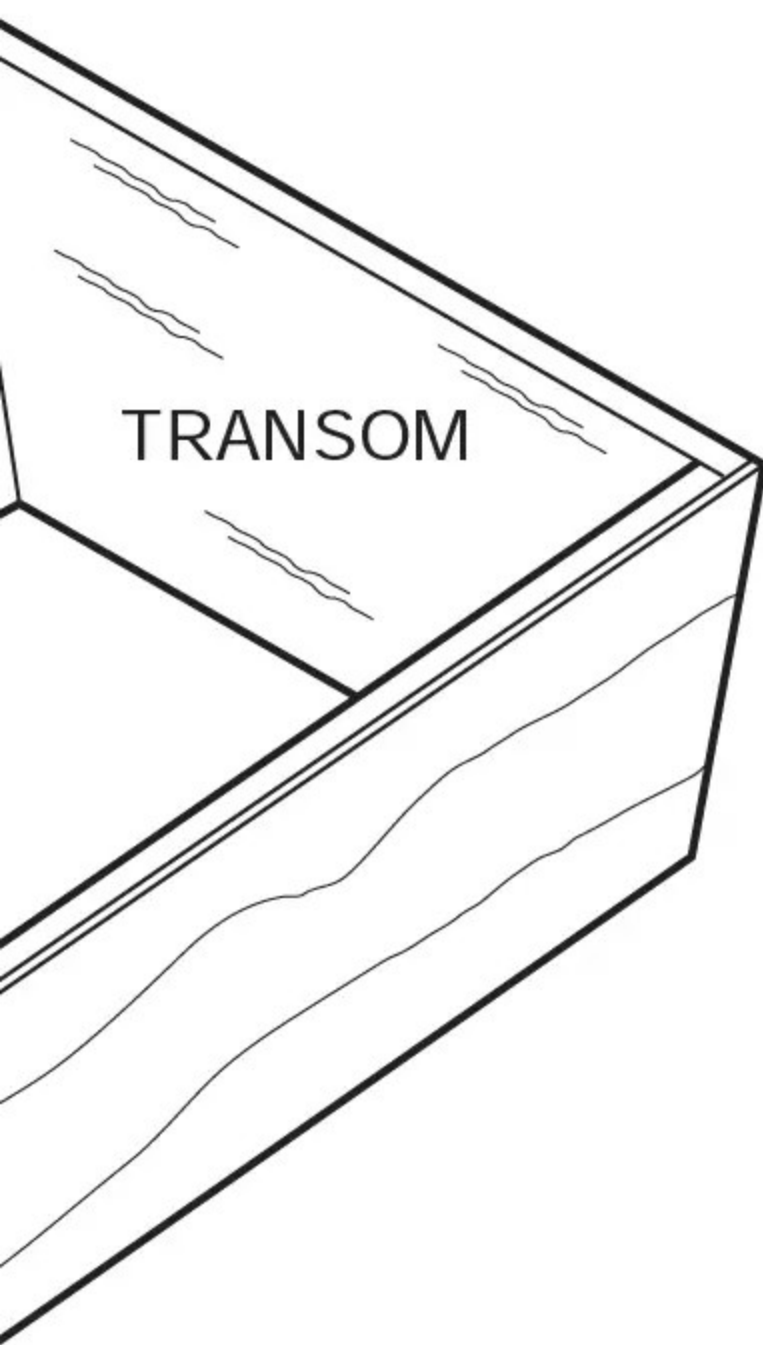
NOTE CHAMFER



TRIP ON INSIDE TOP EDGE OF HULL SIDES

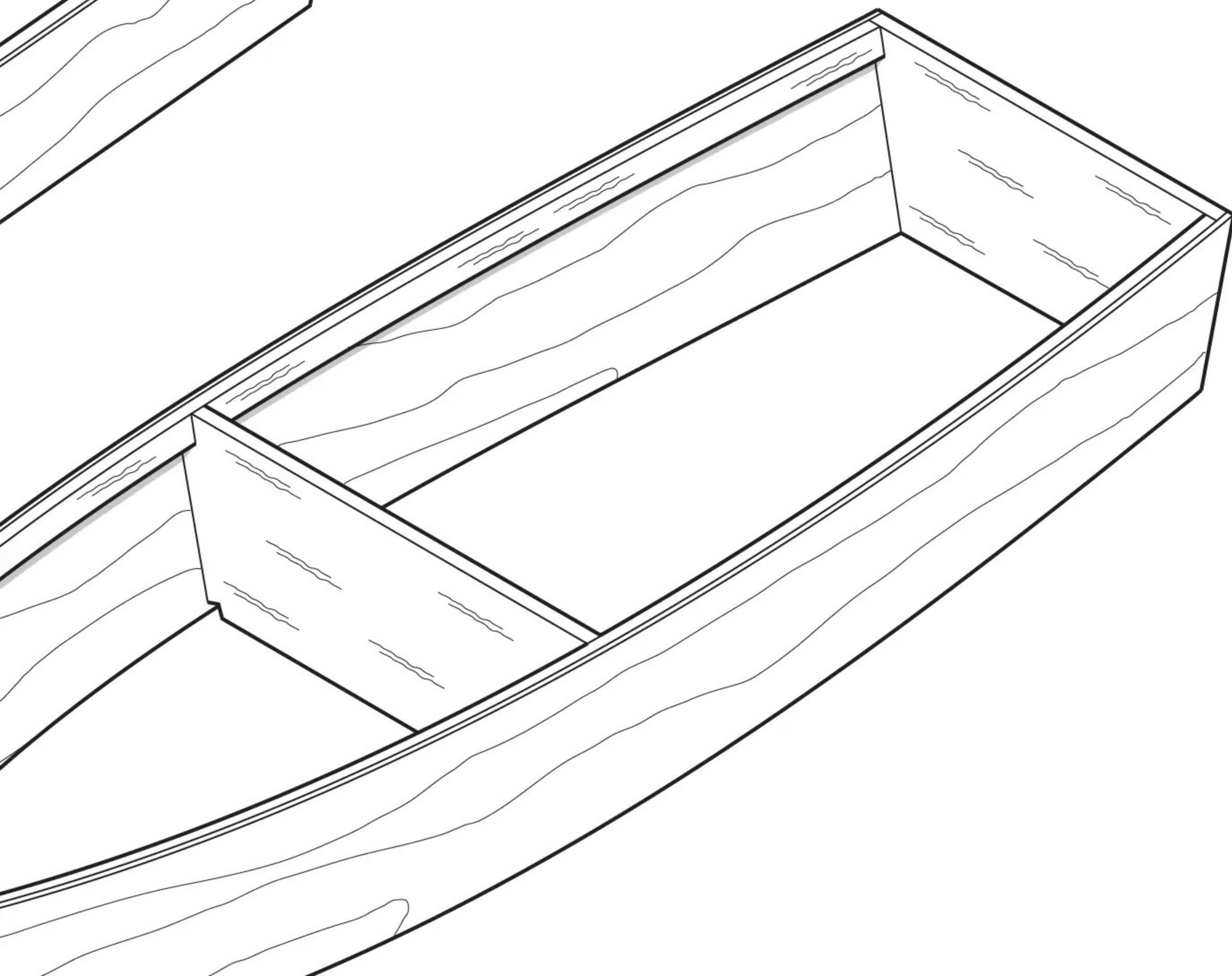


SIDES



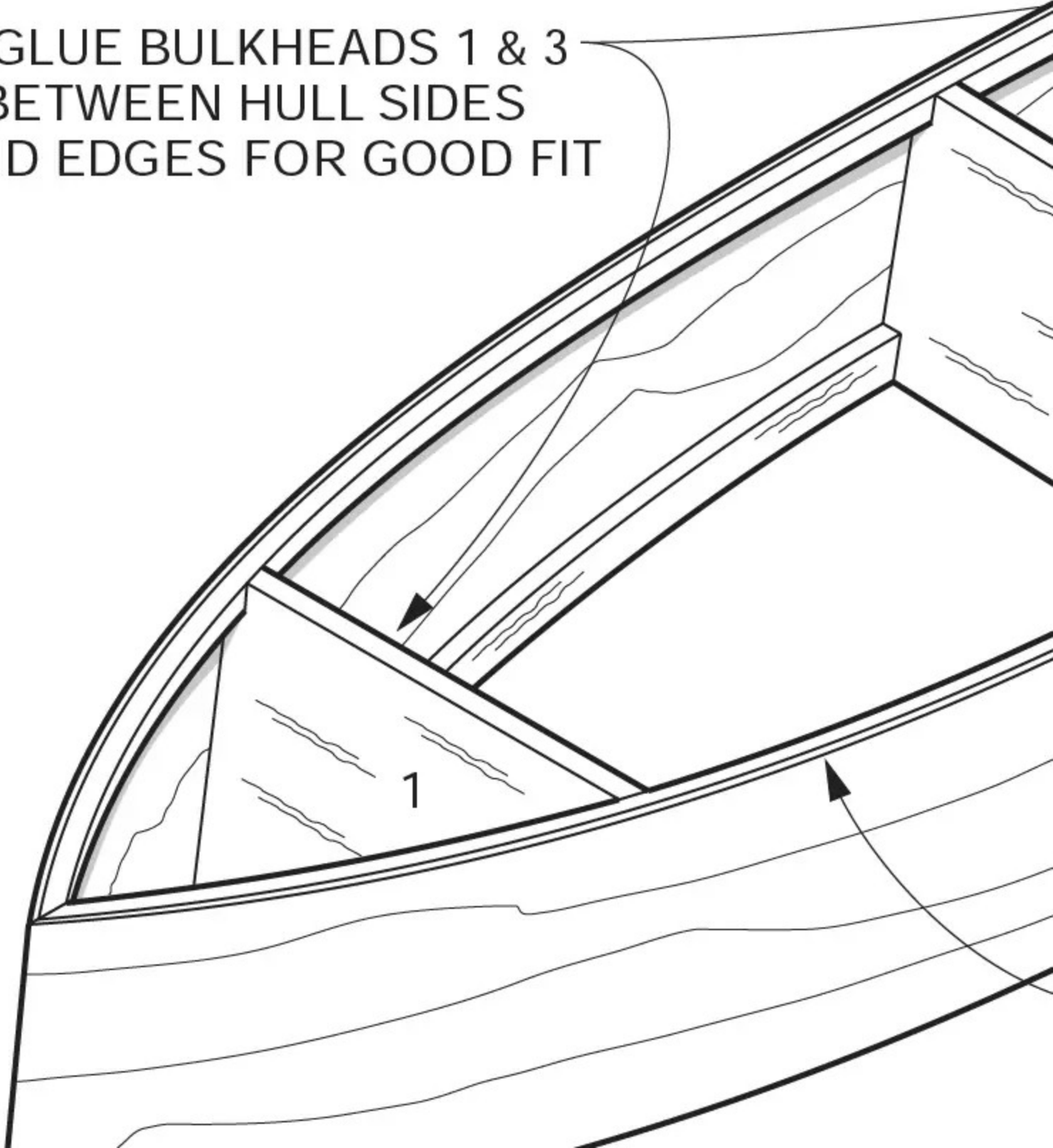
TRANSOM

HULL CONSTRUCTION SEQUENCE



④ GLUE REINFORCING STRIPS  
ALONG LOWER EDGES OF  
HULL SIDES

⑤ GLUE BULKHEADS 1 & 3  
BETWEEN HULL SIDES  
SAND EDGES FOR GOOD FIT





# Boats

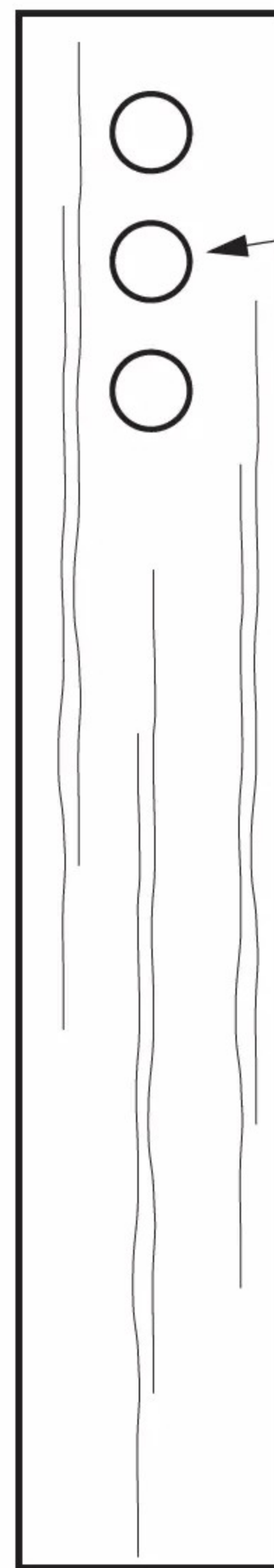
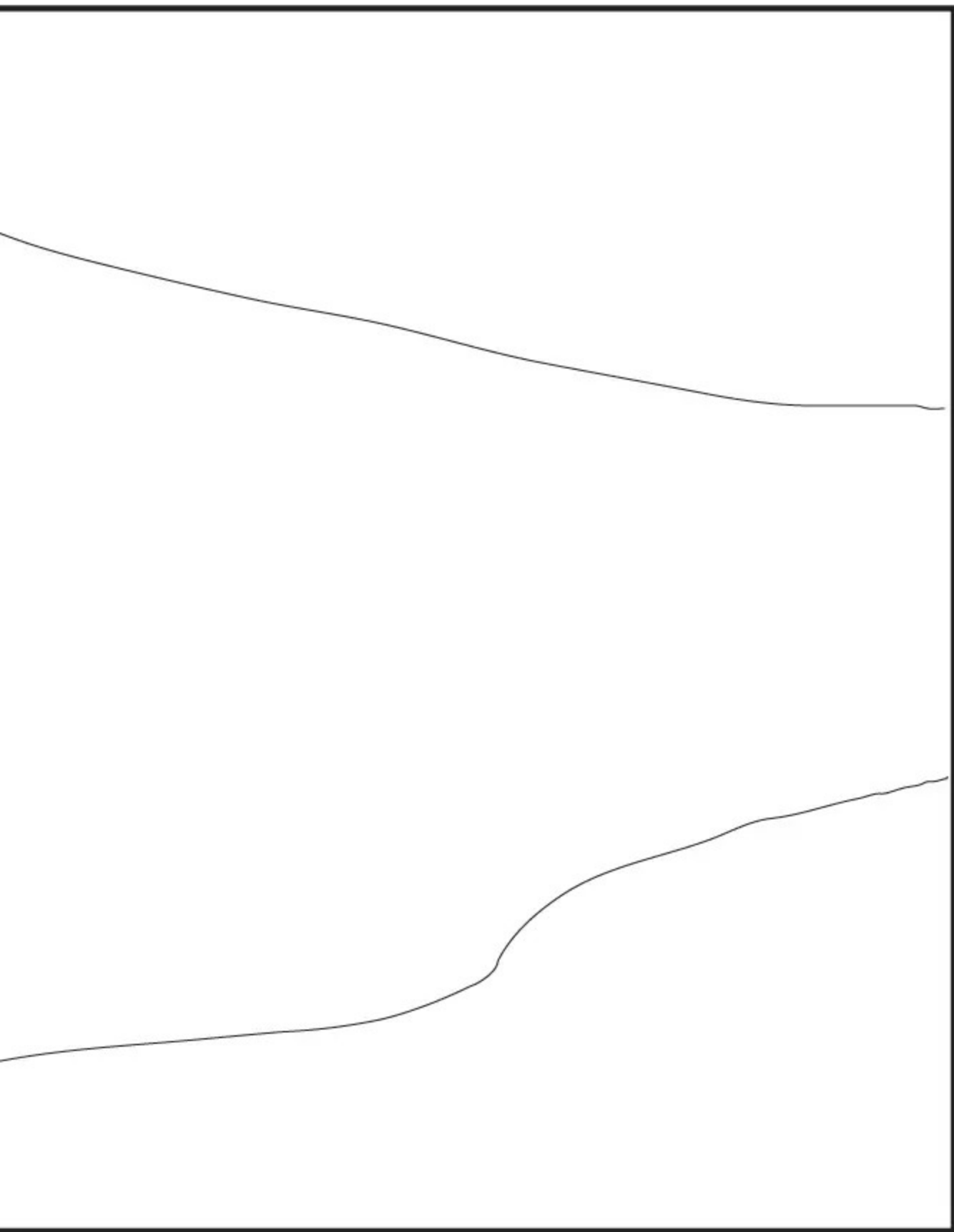
## ROWVER

BY GLYNN GUEST

PLAN No: MM2184

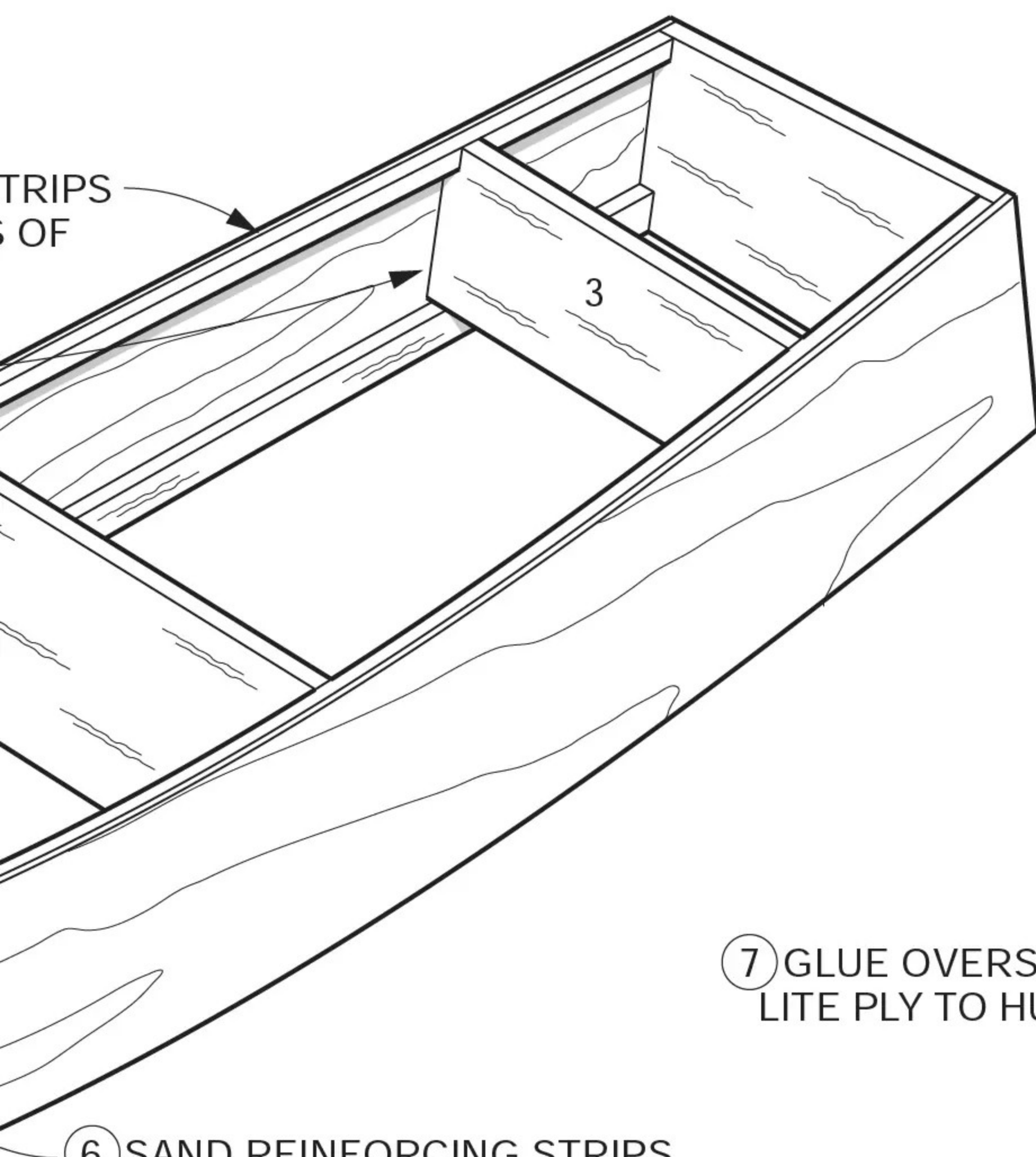
No. OF SHEETS: 1 OF 2

First published in  
Model Boats January 2026



HOLES TO  
MATCH SHAFT

PULLEY SUPPORT ARMS  
3/16" - 1/4" (5 - 6mm) HARDWOOD  
2 REQ'D

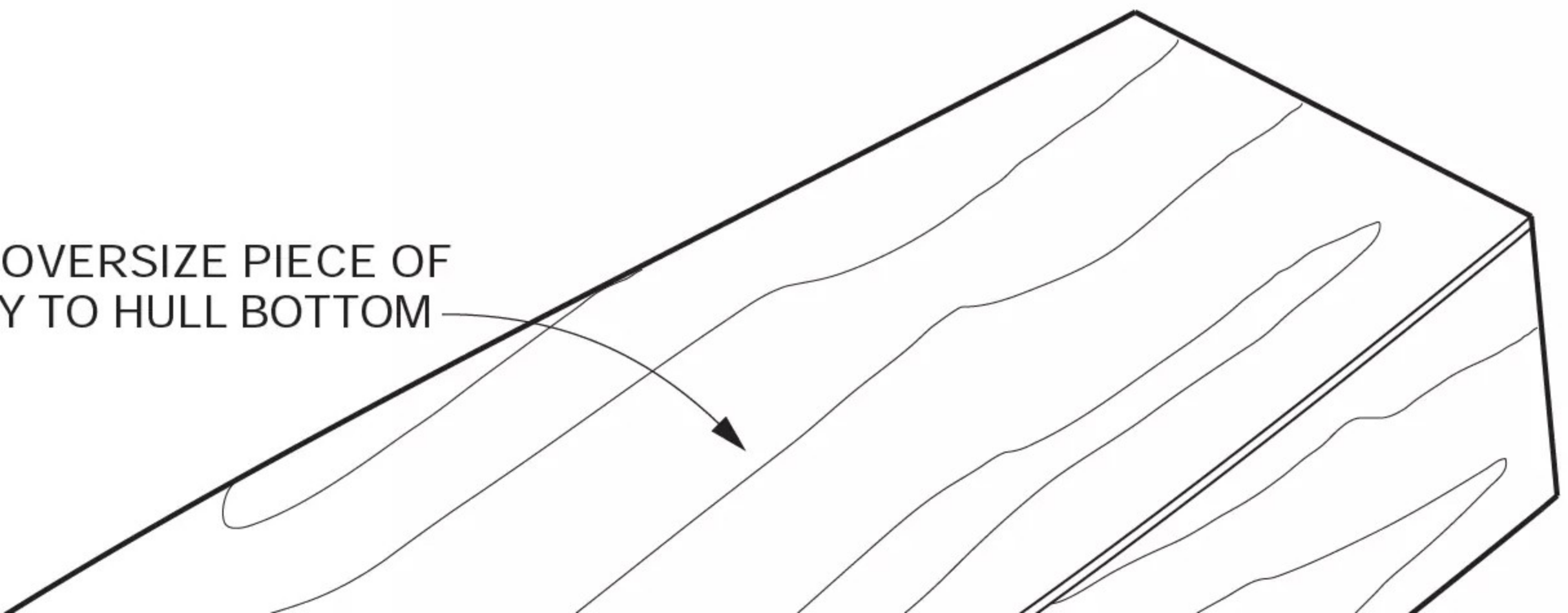


STRIPS  
OF

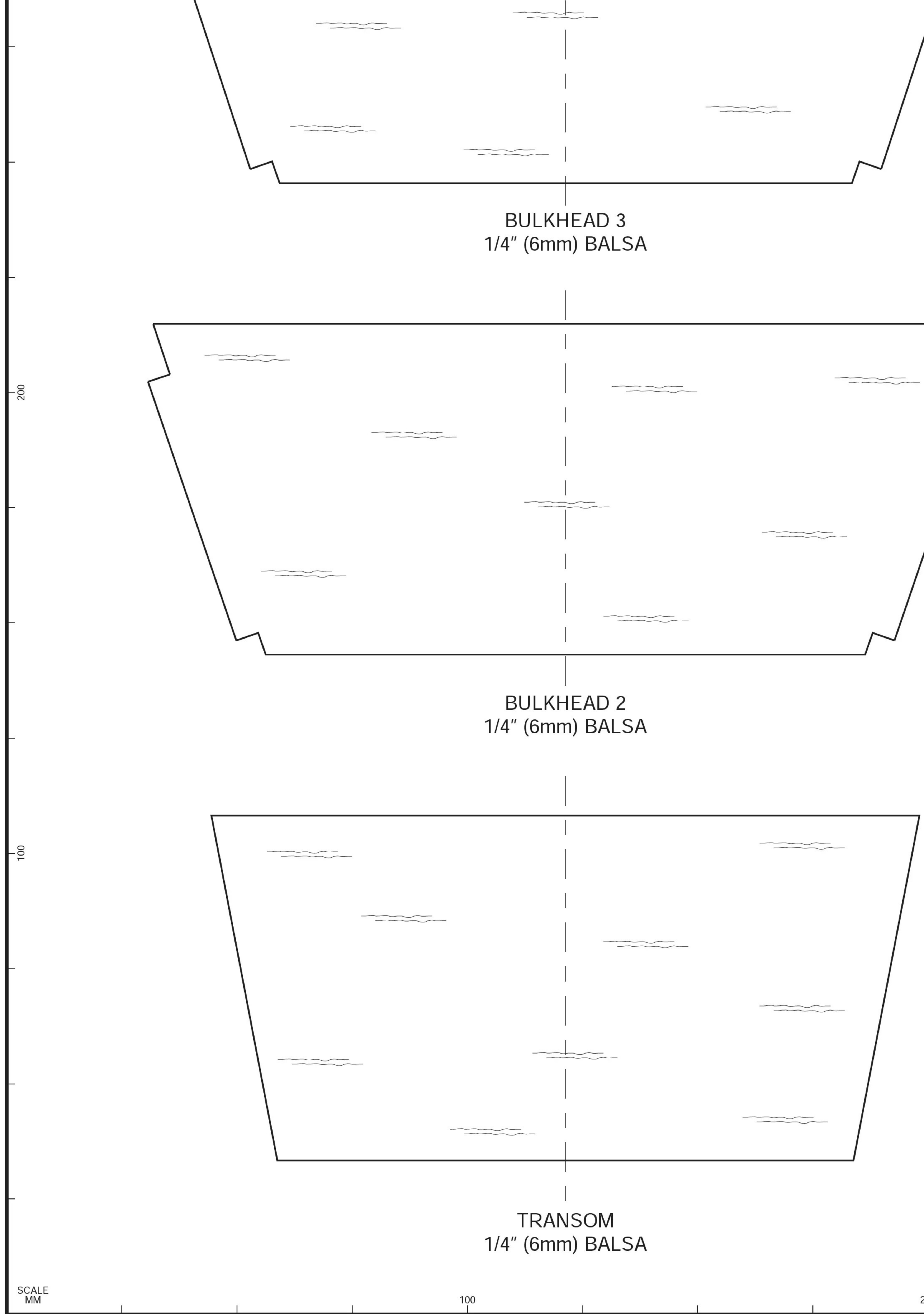
3

⑦ GLUE OVERSIZE PIECE OF  
LITE PLY TO HULL BOTTOM

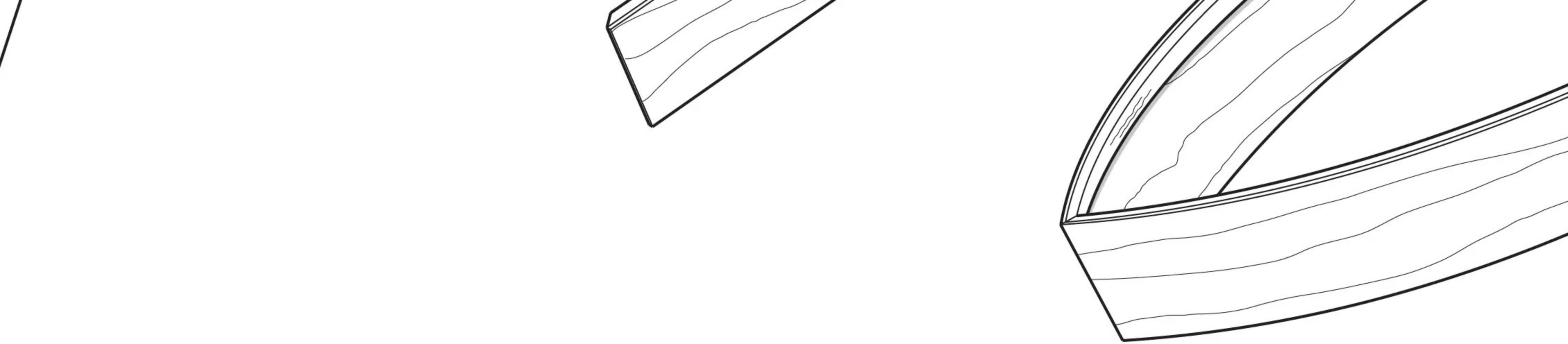
⑥ SAND REINFORCING STRIPS  
TO LIE FLUSH WITH SIDES



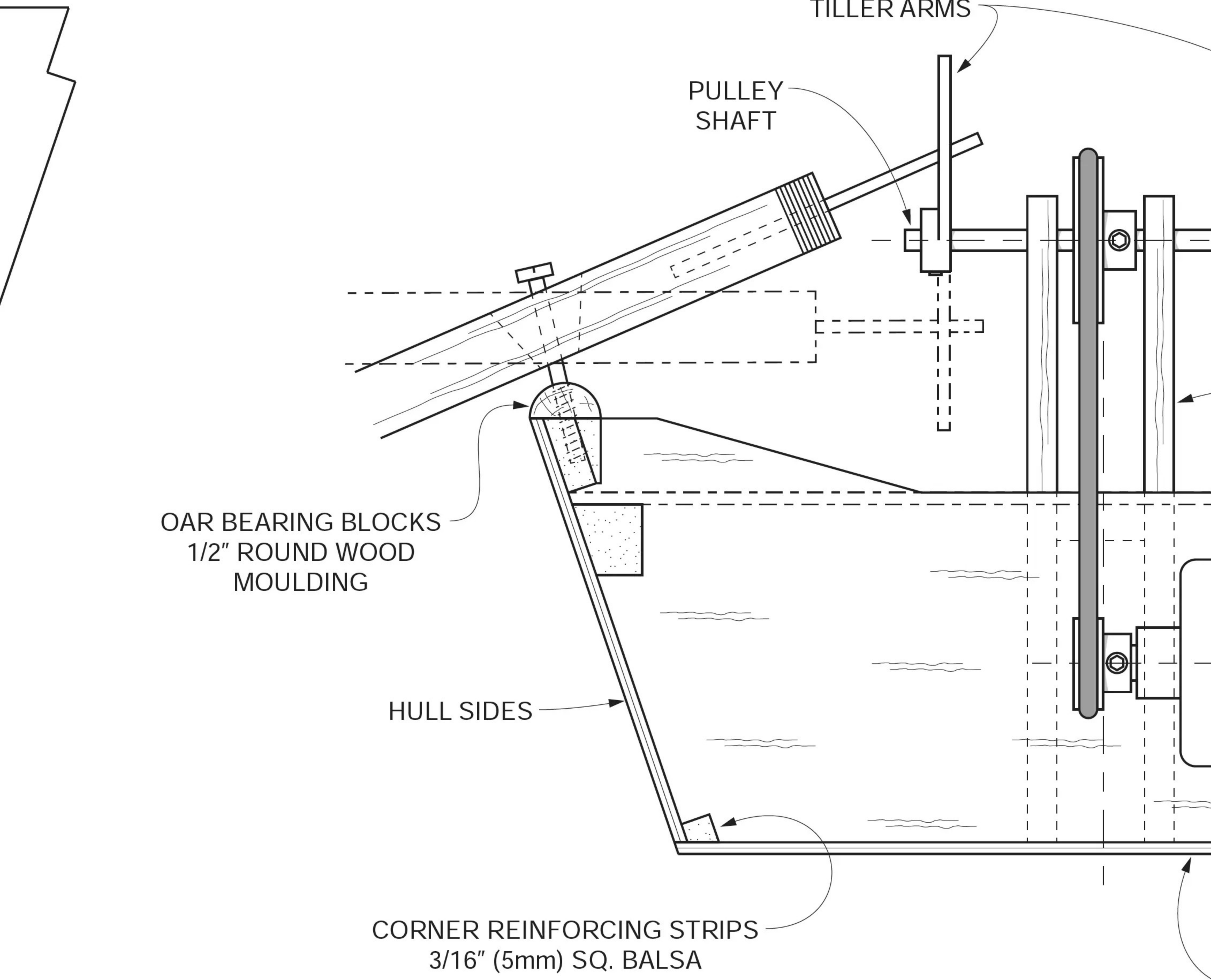




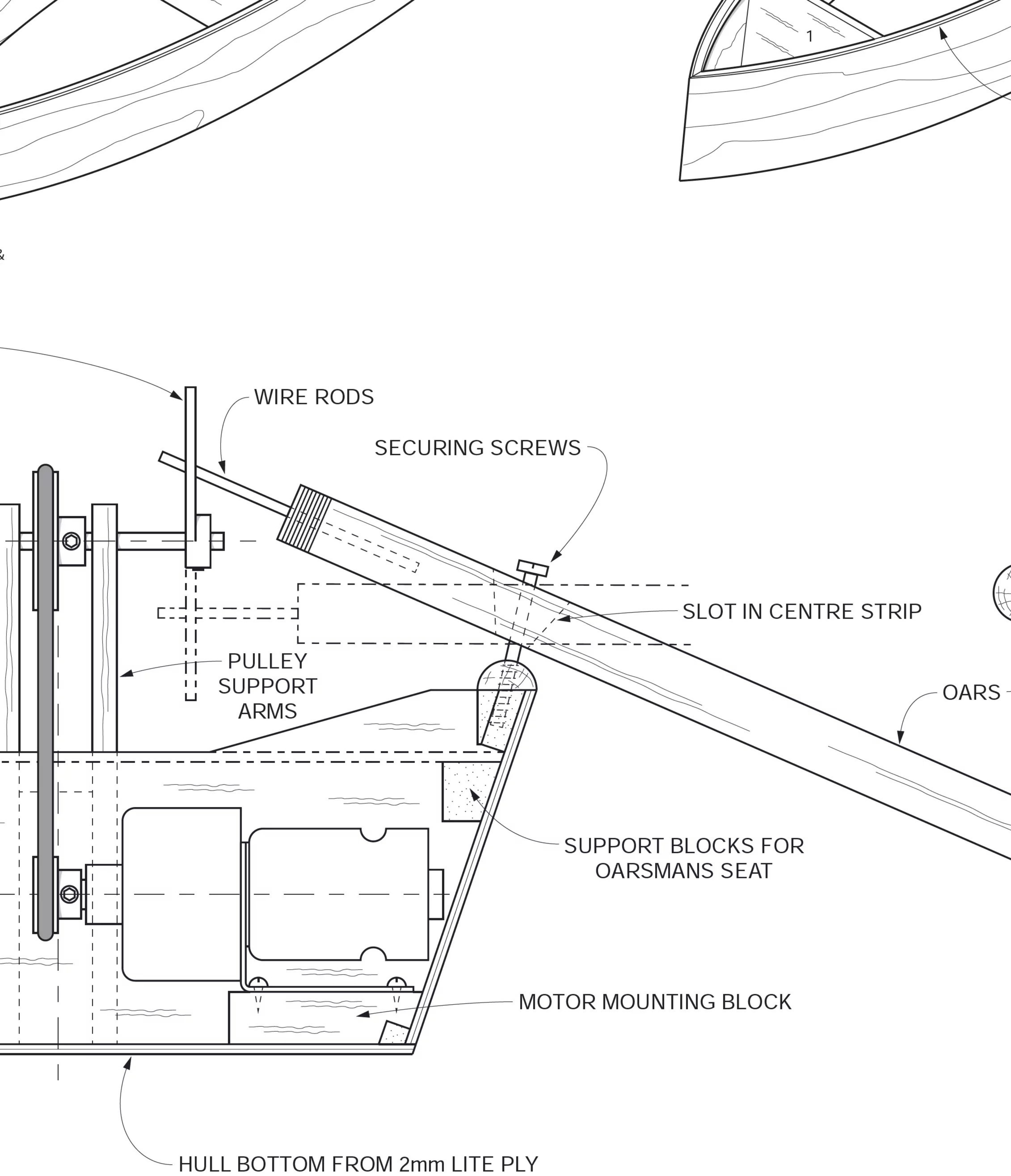




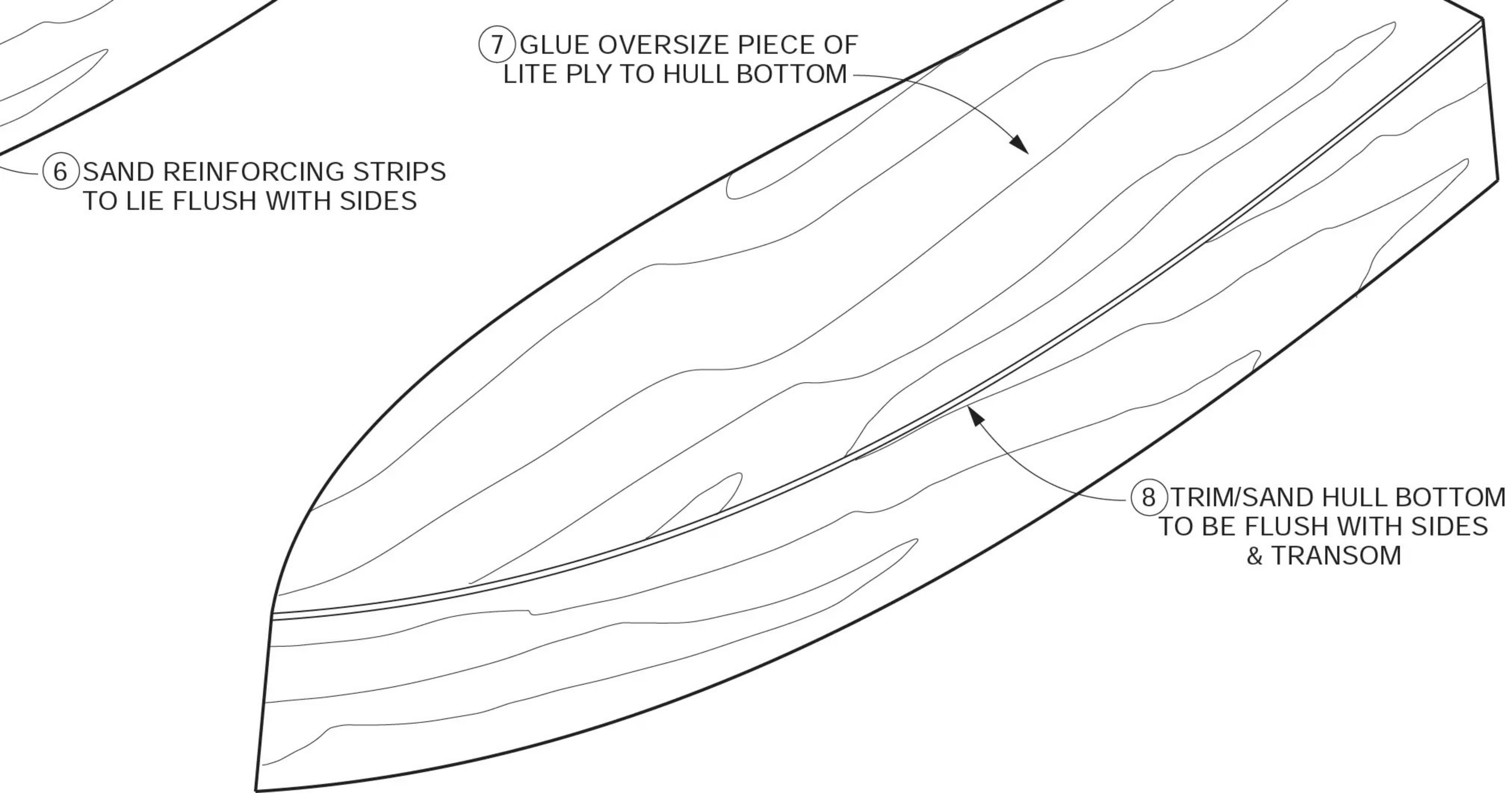
③ PULL SIDES INWARDS & GLUE BOWS TOGETHER











7 GLUE OVERSIZE PIECE OF  
LITE PLY TO HULL BOTTOM

6 SAND REINFORCING STRIPS  
TO LIE FLUSH WITH SIDES

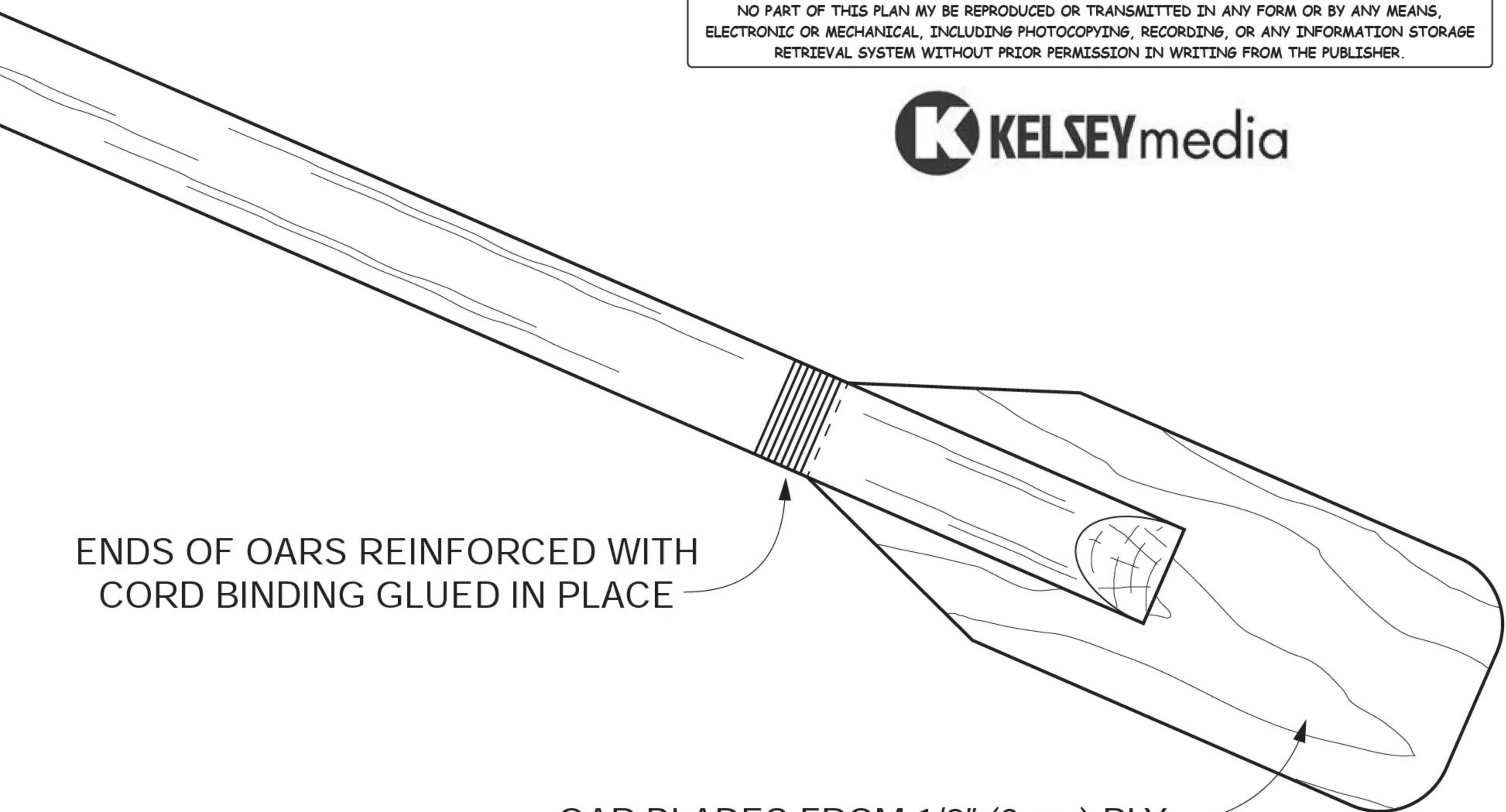
8 TRIM/SAND HULL BOTTOM  
TO BE FLUSH WITH SIDES  
& TRANSOM



MAKE OARS FROM HALF ROUND  
WOOD MOULDING GLUED  
AROUND 1/8" (3mm) STRIP

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ENDS OF OARS REINFORCED WITH  
CORD BINDING GLUED IN PLACE

OAR BLADES FROM 1/8" (3mm) PLY  
GLUED INTO SLOT