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March 2026
Vol. 76 No. 904

model Boats

The Perfect Storm

Tackling Billing Boats' kit for the ill-fated *Andrea Gail*

Your introduction to model yachting

An all-you-need-to-know beginners' guide

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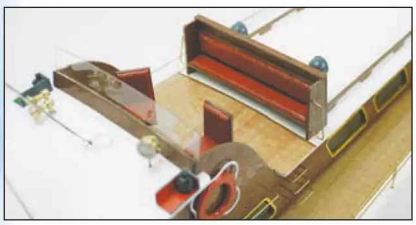

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EDITORIAL
Editor: Lindsey Amrani
Illustrator: Grahame Chambers
Publisher: Tim Hartley

By post: Model Boats, Kelsey Media, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR
Tel: 01507 529529 Fax: 01507 371066
Email: editor@modelboats.co.uk

CUSTOMER SERVICES
General Queries & Back Issues
01507 529529 – Monday-Friday: 8.30am-5pm
Answerphone 24hr
help@classicmagazines.co.uk
www.classicmagazines.co.uk

Archive enquiries: Jane Skayman
01507 529423 jane.skayman@kelsey.co.uk

ADVERTISING
Advertising Sales Executive:
Fiona Leak
fiona.leak@kelsey.co.uk
Tel: 01507 529573

Sue Keily
sue.keily@kelsey.co.uk
01507 529 361

By post: Model Boats Advertising, Kelsey Media Limited, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs, LNP 6JR

PUBLISHING
Sales and Distribution Manager: Carl Smith
Head of Customer Marketing (Subscriptions): Claire Aspinall
Publishing Director: Dan Savage
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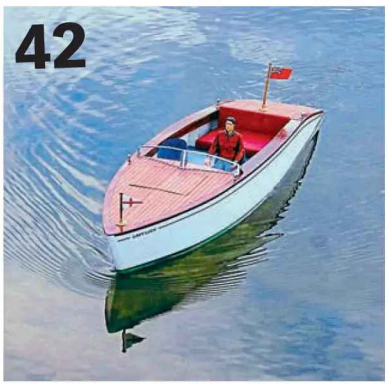

WELCOME TO THE MARCH 2026 ISSUE OF MODEL BOATS

Thematically, this month we're going to be taking the rough with the smooth! The latter can certainly be applied to the model that can be created from the free pull-put plan for Ray Wood's gorgeous gentleman's slipper launch – cue Frank Sinatra and *Luck be a Lady!* At the other end of the spectrum, if you fancy engaging your inner George Clooney in one of his grittier roles, as skipper of the *Andrea Gail* in *The Perfect Storm*, then we have a hands-on build review of the Billing Boats' kit for that ill-fated commercial swordfishing boat. The film dramatizes the final days of vessel and her crew before being lost off the coast of Novia Scotia in 1991 when three major weather systems converged, something meteorologists described, and Hollywood later picked up on, as "*The Perfect Storm*" – a nightmare scenario. The model, however, makes a perfect/dream candidate for those of you who like nothing better than tackling some serious weathering of your own.

Likewise, other content takes us from the tranquil cruising to be had from an exquisitely scratch-built scale replica of the iconic Lake District steam yacht, *Gondola*, and the majestic ocean liner SS *America*, to all the thrills and spills of R/C model yachting. And if the latter has always appealed but up until now you've been a little unsure of what's involved and/or how to get started, John Goodyear provides an all-you-need-to-know beginners' guide. Plus, there's also lots more best practice advice, hints and tips on both operating two models simultaneously and dealing with an apparently seized engine (see Glynn Guest's Double the Fun feature and Richard Simpson's latest instalment of Boiler Room). We haven't forgotten the submariners amongst you either, as the history of the Seehund, along with the options for further scaling down this experimental World War II midget sub – whether as a static display piece or as a working example, is the subject of this month's always surprisingly diverse Flotsam & Jetsam series. There's another trip down Memory Lane for vintage radio gear enthusiasts, too. And finally, you'll find the Your Models/Your Letters section – my favourite pages to work on. Why then are they positioned right at the back? Well, quite simply, as far as I'm concerned, you have more than earned the right to having the last word.

There's already some cracking content lined up for the next edition (on sale Friday, March 20), including an article on the somewhat controversial topic of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and the 'work smarter, not harder' potential it offers us as modellers. Trust me, the long-term ramifications of AI worry me, too – Sarah Connor did try and warn us, after all. Hopefully, however, I'll be back!
In the meantime,
enjoy your read,

Lindsey

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OUT AND ABOUT

South Cheshire Militaire Universal Model Show

The South Cheshire Military Modelling Club will welcome visitors to its Universal Model Show at the Malbank 6th Form College, Welsh Row, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 5HD from 10am to 5pm on Sunday, February 22, 2026. On display will be a wide variety of models, including competition entries, plus there will be live demos, family friendly attractions and refreshments available. Admission will be charged at £5 for adults, £3 for OAPS and £2 for children. For further details visit https://www.scmmc.co.uk

Peterborough Scale Model Show

From 10am to 4pm on Sunday, March 1, 2026, the Peterborough Scale Model Club will be hosting a show at the Stamford Welland Academy in Green Lane, Stamford, Lincolnshire PE9 1HE, sponsored by modelsforsale.com. As well as a wide variety of exhibits, visitors will be able to browse the latest kits and equipment offered for sale on attending trade stands and purchase refreshments in the onsite café. Admission will be priced at £5 (cash only on the door), while accompanied under 16s will be admitted free of charge – profits from the event supporting the charity Models for Heroes. For further information, email PSMC-show-secretary@outlook.co.uk or visit https://peterboroughscalemodelclub.co.uk/events

Wakefield Open Model Show & Competition

From 10am to 4.30pm on March 8, 2026, IMPS Wakefield & District and White Rose FMS will be putting on the Wakefield Open Model Show & Competition at Wakefield Exchange, Union Street, Wakefield WF1 3AD. Visitors will be able to view club stand exhibits, competition entries and trade stands and admission will be charged at £5, with all day parking available for just 50p. For further details, email wakfeildopen@ipmswad.co.uk or call either Geoff on 07879 446554 or Alan on 07811 358555.

West Midlands Blue Lamp Model Expo

From 10am to 4pm on Sunday, March 29, 2026, the West Midlands Police Scale Model Club will be holding its Blue Lamp Model Expo at Woodrush High School, Hollywood, Birmingham, B47 5JW. There will be two halls filled with club and special interest group displays, traders stands and a separate competition room. Admission will be charged at £5 (accompanied under 16s will be admitted free of charge), with free parking and refreshments available to purchase in the onsite café. For further details email bluelampmc@gmail.com

2026 J Class events

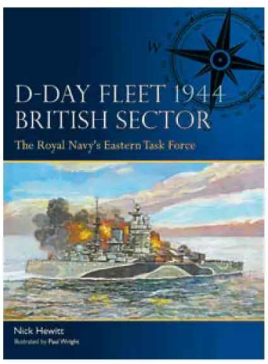
Following on from two very well attended and successful 'J Class' events last year, five more clubs will be hosting J Class yacht events (although those with vintage and other interesting sailing models will also be most welcome to attend/participate) during 2026, the dates for which are as follows:

- Saturday, March 28
  Warminster Model Club, Warminster, Wiltshire
- Sunday, May 10
  West Wilts Model Boat Club, Westbury, Wiltshire
- Sunday, June 14
  Watermead Model Boat Club, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire
- Saturday, July 4
  Whitefriars Sailing Club, Ashton Keynes, Swindon, Wiltshire
- Sunday, September 6
  Poole Model Yacht Club, Longham Lakes, Ferndown, Dorset

Further details of each event will be published on the J Class Radio Yachts' Facebook page.

BUY THE BOOK

D-Day Fleet 1944, British Sector The Royal Navy's Eastern Task Force



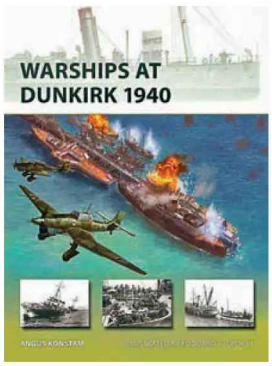
Due for release on April 23, 2026, this new book, penned by naval historian Nick Hewitt and illustrated by Paul Wright, provides an illustrated study of the Royal Navy fleet that secured the British Assault Area from the eve of D-Day until the end of the assault phase of operations on June 30, 1944. While led and dominated by the Royal Navy, this was a multinational effort, including forces from Canada, Norway, and the Free French.

Aside from simply getting soldiers ashore, the operation had many moving parts, and this book explains the minesweeping that allowed the landings to take place, along with the various naval operations that brought British and Canadian troops to the beaches. It also explores how the fleet defended the British Assault Area from counterattacks by enemy destroyers, coastal forces, mining, and special attack units, and how it sustained the build-up that fed resources to the growing Allied forces.

Illustrated with archive photos, original artwork and 3D diagrams and maps, and drawing upon primary documentation that has previously gone largely unused, he author shares with us his fresh exploration of the sea power behind D-Day.

The book, which will be published in paperback format (but also available as a digital download), is now available to pre-order from https://www.ospreypublishing.com/UK/ at a 10% saving on the £15.99 RRP (Recommended Retail Price). Payment will only be taken on despatch. Alternatively, orders can be placed via your local bookstore by quoting ISBN 9781472861306.

Warships at Dunkirk 1940



As the title suggests, this new, illustrated throughout, book from naval historian Angus Konstam focuses on the British and French warships that formed the backbone of the British Expeditionary Force evacuation fleet. Nearly 50 destroyers, an anti-aircraft cruiser, and more than 200 MTBs, minesweepers, trawlers, and other small warships were involved (as many as could be spared without recklessly endangering naval strength). The author explains how the lack of decent anti-aircraft defences available to the Allies in 1940 and how the improvised weaponry had to be used to help fend off the Stukas. Dunkirk was the first naval operation of World War II to be carried out under sustained air attack, and nearly a fifth of the destroyers and a quarter of the smaller vessels were sunk, with more badly damaged.

The title will be published in paperback format and will carry an RRP (Recommended Retail Price) of £12.99 – although those pre-ordering via https://www.ospreypublishing.com/uk/warships-at-dunkirk-1940-9781472872555/ can currently enjoy a 10% discount on that cover price (no money will be taken until your copy is ready for despatch). Alternatively, orders can be placed with local bookstores – please quote ISBN 9781472872555.

The Perfect Storm

Tomasz Klyszynski tackles Billing Boats' 1:60 scale kit for the ill-fated *Andrea Gail*

I think most of us have a favourite movie, actor, or at least a preferred cinema genre. But there are some films you simply can't walk away from with indifference – and as a modeller it's equally difficult to bypass the opportunity to build and display a vessel that's central to a riveting storyline. That was very much the case for me when I saw Billing Boats had produced kits for the *Andrea Gail*, the vessel that featured in the film *The Perfect Storm*, starring George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg.

"The film, based on true events, tells the story of an American Swordfish boat that went missing during the convergence of three massive storm systems in the North Atlantic in late October 1991, an event meterologists described as 'The Perfect Storm'"

In very broad terms, the film, based on true events, tells the story of an American Swordfish boat that went missing during the convergence of three massive storm systems in the North Atlantic in late October 1991, an event meterologists described as 'The Perfect Storm'. The *Andrea Gail (*originally named *Miss Penny)* was built in 1978 in Panama City, Florida. She was a 22-meter swordfishing boat with a six-man crew. Obviously, because the *Andrea Gail* disappeared without a trace and there were no witnesses, a sister ship, the *Lady Grace*, had to be used to portray her, and, of course, some events in the run up to the tragedy were sped up and dramatized.

Kit contents

Billing Boats' offers two different kits for the *Andrea Gail*. The first – in 1:30 scale – has a wooden framework planked with strips and can be equipped with the modeller's own choice of radio control.
The second – in 1:60 scale – is also made of wood but the frames are solid, and the hull is created by gluing two halves together. In short, the first designed for R/C conversion, the second for the shelf.

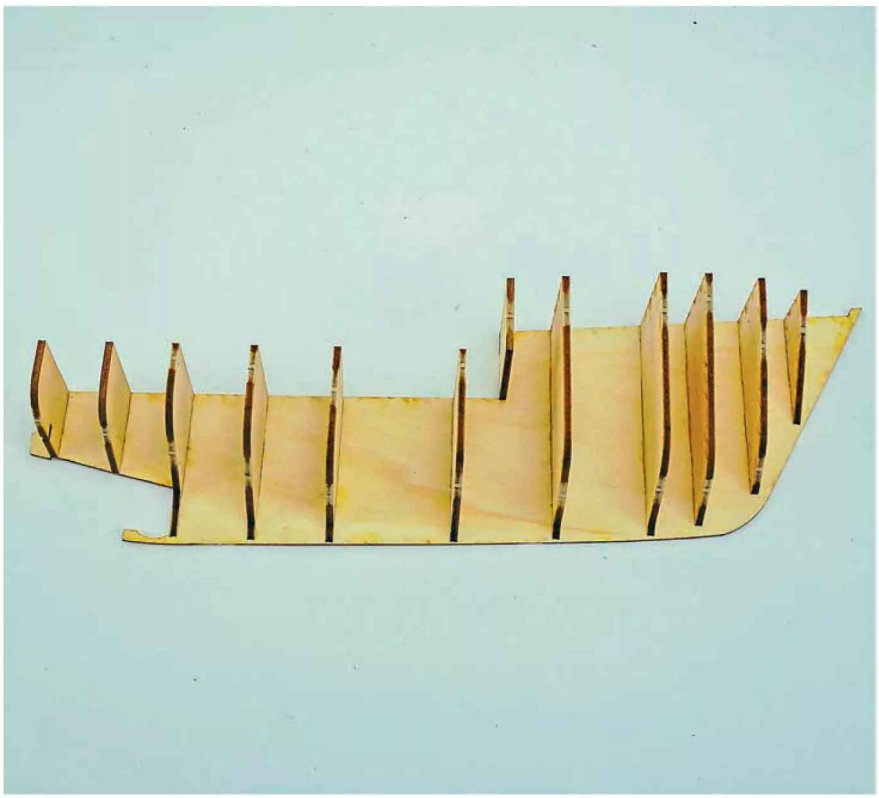
"Billing Boats' offers two different kits for the Andrea Gail… the first designed for R/C conversion, the second for the shelf"

Billing Boats' 1:60 scale Andrea Gail kit.

The deck fittings packaged within the kit's box.

The first kit to land on my desk, and the subject of this build review, was the 1:60 scale version. On opening the box, you will find laser-cut parts in various plywood thicknesses, along with a base made from thick MDF, which serves nicely as a building jig for the hull – this being especially useful for finishing each half separately, as the instructions suggest. Also included is a heavy package of metal, plastic, and wooden parts, including items such as buoys, life rings, lamps, and a dozen or so barrels made of brass.

The black and white build instructions that come with this include both drawn illustrations and photographs. Billing Boats is, however, clearly working on improving its instruction manuals, as not so long ago these would have featured mostly simplified mono tone drawings; today, more and more often, we get expanded, diagrams and lots of colour photos, descriptions and more comprehensive explanations. Why am I mentioning this? Because such instructions are now also available for



Work begins on the two-part hull.

Painting the hull.

the Andrea Gail. True, to get to them you need to visit the manufacturer's website and spend a moment searching, but the effort pays off quickly. These digital instructions truly provide the modeller with step-by-step guide that can save not only time but avoid a few anxious deep breaths at the workbench! At the end we also get a 1:1 scale drawing that turns out to be very helpful – not only when it comes to marking the waterline but also when positioning parts on the deck and the cabin.

The build

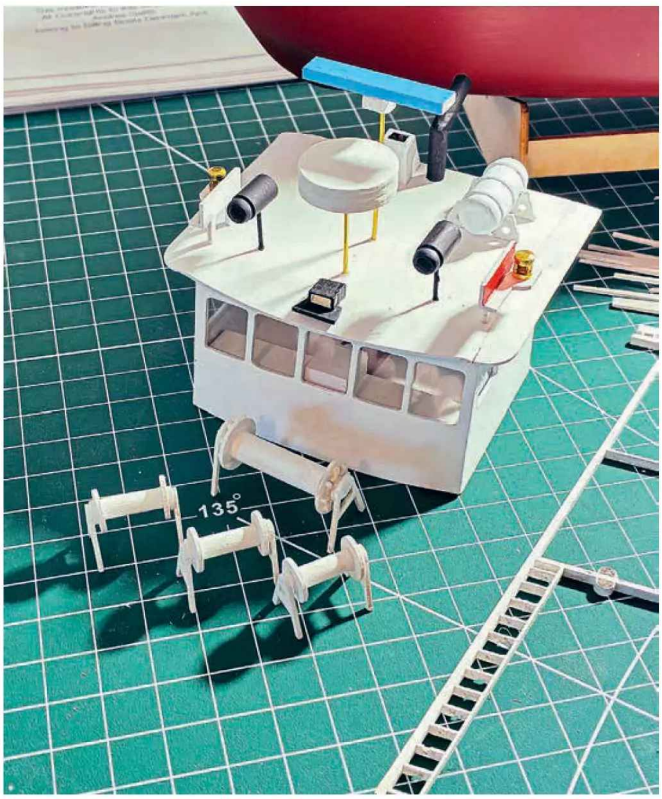
This was the first time I had dealt with a model built from two halves which – according to the instructions – needs to be glued together only *after* the planking is done. Well, that's one possible approach but I can confidently say nothing stands in the way of gluing the framework into one piece and then planking the glued together hull. You simply need to pay close attention to the symmetry and be careful not to press on the frames and lose their angle relative to the keel.

The whole process takes some time, and even though it's a small model that the manufacturer classifies as intended for intermediate builder, this kind of planking is probably better suited to the more experienced modeller. On the other hand, when it comes to learning new skills, we all have to start somewhere and this model will allow you to learn, practice and gain experience. And, if the photos in the instructions still see you struggling to work things out, then, fortunately, there's a popular video platform will come to your rescue.

Because *Andrea Gail* is a so-called 'steel boat', after covering the framework with the strips included in the kit it's time to move on to filling. In my case, automotive body filler worked well – thanks to its strength and flexibility. Following this, you will need to use a filling primer, and then sand. Once you've achieved a smooth surface over the entire hull, the waterline can be marked by referencing the main drawing.

Having reached this stage, we get to a particularly interesting aspect of the model's construction, dressing the hull's tall bow tub.

First up is the small cabin, which includes adding various equipment to its roof and the basic interior fittings that will be visible through its windows (these being glazed with clear film). Behind this cabin sits the entire structure typical to these fishing boats. Prior to assembly, the components for this are defininitely worth taking



Putting together the cabin.

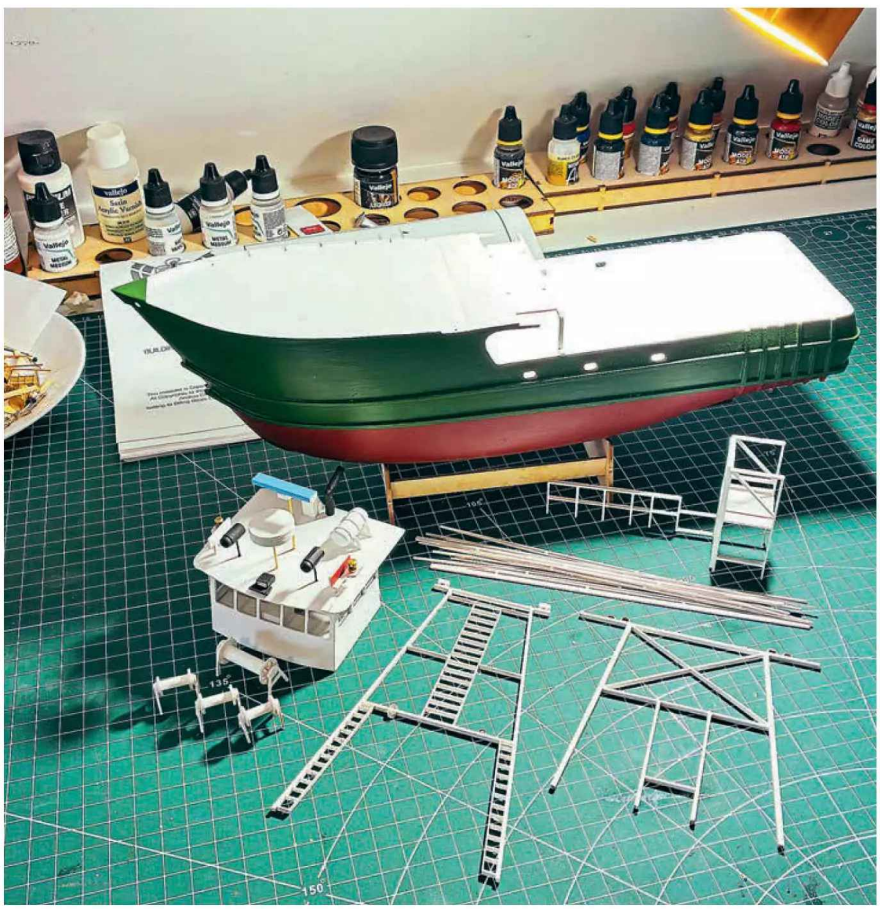
Constructing a section of the multi-component structure that sits behind the cabin.

some time to thoroughly clean up, ensuring there are no remnants of the points from which each individual part has been detached from its sheet. There are quite a lot of these components, but, trust me, the final result will reward all your hard work. You do have to remember, though, that these are very delicate parts and easy to damage. That's why for this part of the build I'd recommend working in a domestic environment/headspace that's somewhat calmer than The Perfect Storm!

The whole 'fishing' structure is made from laser-cut plywood. This needs to be glued to the deck edge-to-edge, so precise fitting matters – with such a tall structure, you don't want it to be wobbly. For a model measuring 28 cm tall, 36 cm long, and 11 cm wide, the manufacturing precision of the kit's substructure is, once in situ, genuinely pleasing to the eye: to the modeller's fingers, however, it's a bit of a challenge, because of the delicate approach required.

A big plus of this kit is the many small extras: little beads for thread, wooden buoy balls, and – worth emphasizing – the brass barrels. There are as many as 16 of the latter included, and they take up a lot of space on deck.

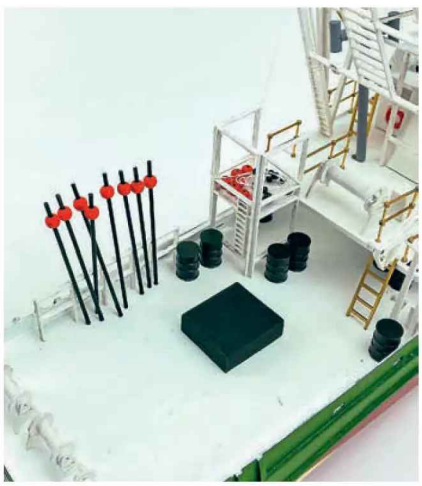
I suspect most fishing boats – and other working vessels – look 'new' only on the first day after leaving the shipyard. Of course, if you want a 'fresh



The finished hull, cabin, and fishing-structure parts.

The complex but very impressive looking finished structure so typical of these type of fishing boats now fitted aboard Tomasz's model of the Andrea Gail.

A bow shot of the build, including yet more of the brass barrels supplied.



A big plus with this kit is the many small extras, such as beads for thread, wooden buoy balls, and brass barrels.

as delivered' model on the shelf, you can simply paint the finished build in your own choice of colour scheme to look clean and pristine. However, there's nothing to stop adding more drama, perhaps by replicating the finish and all the markings carried by boat used in the movie.

The final cut?

Once everything was laid out on deck and my build was, as far as the instructions were concerned, finally finished (as per the photos shown here), a question popped into my head, one that so often does with projects like this: what else could be done? Or, more importantly, what could I add to the XL version I intend to tackle next, which I will be equipping for R/C operation.

The most obvious answer, of course, would be to weather everything down and further detail the model to achieve a more 'characterful' and convincing looking working vessel. There's always a ton of stuff such models lend themselves to. Everything from essential tools and deck clutter to evidence of the last catch, in this case swordfish, whether sourced as commercially available items or crafted from scrap, would make achieving a model that even George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg would be impressed with possible. For the most hardcore of detailers, even the smell of a working fishing boat could probably be incorporated – although this may be a step too far unless your only housemate is a cat!

So, *The Perfect Storm* – an alternative script. Over… but not out! ●

The model finished as per kit instructions, although it is, of course, one of those models crying out to be weathered and further accessorised. It could also be further detailed to replicate the vessel as she was portrayed on the silver screen.

Your introduction to R/C Model Yachting

John Goodyear provides an all-you-need-to-know beginners' guide…

Beginners RG65 yachts.

Ever thought of designing, building, buying, sailing or even racing an R/C model yacht?

If so, the best advice that can possibly be given is don't, because getting your hands on any form of model yacht is the first step on a frustrating, long and twisted path aiming (very generally) towards making the thing go faster and better than anyone else. But, of course, temptation will frequently get the better of common sense and good advice, so, to anyone still brave and/or foolish enough to still be reading, here's a brief rundown on what awaits you when money changes hands and you acquire your very own bit of habit-forming sailing joy.

First of all, there is some good news, and it's this: there is a bewildering range of R/C model yachts out there for you, dear reader, to select from. The even better news is that they have all never been less expensive, of higher quality and readily available from a huge variety of sources.

"Sailing waters in many areas are few and far between. So, before committing to anything, go online and search for R/C sailing clubs in your area"

The downside to all this, of course, is that there is also some bad news and it's this:

it's very easy to buy something that is unsuitable for your needs and/or will be incompatible with the place where you intend to sail it. Against this background you need to fight off the urge to get the order placed from the great many glossy and beguiling adverts and reflect on a few 'if's, 'but's and 'maybe's.

Your budget/options

The first question is how much do you want to spend? I'm not going to go into detail but suffice to say that for under £150 you can become the proud owner of one of a whole flotilla of model yachts currently available, the only confusion being which one to pick. Then again, for our millionaire readers you could go the whole hog

IOM Racing yachts at speed.

and spend upwards of £5K on a state-of-the-art carbon-fibre racing missile. (You would, however, still be totally confused on how to get it to sail well, if at all!!)

The alternative path, of course, is to build a yacht yourself from some of the many plans out there. Even rank beginners should be able to construct a yacht that at the very least floats and moves when the wind blows, even if you have to read up on a few articles published in Model Boats first.

If there are any children in the household, building something that actually works and can be enjoyed by all is a great bonding exercise and learning opportunity. Think of the

"Membership (of the MYA) costs the princely sum of £10 per annum, which is a total steal if only for the insurance cover included"

DF65 yachts rounding the mark.

skills to be explored. Grading and selection of wood, the different glues to be deployed, handling (very) sharp implements, cutting, shaping and making fittings, installing R/C gear, painting, waterproofing, sewing sails, *etc.* The list isn't endless, but it can be a long one.

As an aside, a home constructed wooden yacht will invariably attract interest at the water side, mainly, I guess, because nowadays they are something of a rarity. With a bit of flair, forward thinking and the judicious use of veneers over the basic structure they can also be made to appear rather attractive. Another option often overlooked is to build a scale model yacht that will look fabulous on the water and will likely attract a great deal of attention. My Bristol Channel Cutter shown in one of the images supporting this feature is invariably the one lakeside visitors want to learn more about.

"Please re-read all my caveats before parting with your money. It's not nice handing over your hard-earned cash only to acquire something totally inappropriate"

The big alternative to using ancient crafts, of course, is to go high-tech and use a 3D printer to very rapidly make a hull. There are numerous files available which will permit you to design something and for the computer whizzkids out there you could perhaps write your own programs but count me out on this one.

Size wise

The next considerations are how big the model needs to be and how you intend to transfer it to and from the water. Providing you're mobile and the thing does dissemble a bit, then no problem. Taking a one-meter-long model with a 1.5-meter-long mast on public transport, however, might be an issue. My advice would be to aim for something around the 650mm long region, of which more anon.

Finding somewhere to sail

Another important issue to address is where you're going to sail. It's no good having a beautiful little yacht that can only be launched in the bath; don't laugh, because sailing waters in many areas are few and far between. So, before committing to anything, go online and search for R/C sailing clubs in your area or at least find a nearby lake or reservoir where you might obtain access. Even better advice is contact a local club and arrange to drop by when they're sailing. This will short-circuit many of the onward issues and give you a good insight into what you might be getting into.

The Model Yachting Association

If you're still reading at this stage, now might be a good time to introduce you to the governing body associated with model yachting named the MYA or Model Yachting Association, which is represented in numerous forms around the globe. In the UK do look them up at www.mya-uk.org.uk Here you will find a vast range of information about model yachting *per*

Miscellaneous yachts club racing.

International DF65 racing in high winds.

"As an example of how critical rig settings can be, permit me to tell you about one of my experiences…"

se, the various racing classes, major sailing venues, suppliers,, *etc, etc.* For beginners or those contemplating R/C yachting as a hobby it's the place to be. Membership, should you be so inclined, costs the princely sum of £10 per annum, which is a total steal if only for the insurance cover included.

Be aware as well that there are a great many clubs operating across the globe that tend to focus on scale models and remain unassociated with the MYA. You can be sure, however, that amongst the members there will be some who sail yachts. Joining in with them if they sail nearby would be a good start.

Your first yacht

So, having set the scene, so to speak, where best to start? If this is your first tentative step into the hobby and you haven't been successful in discovering a club to guide you, I suggest you look out for a model with a plastic based hull at or around 650mm long that comes completely set-up with the radio-control gear and can (almost) literally be sailed out of the box and go racing perhaps a little later down the line. You may or may not subsequently become 'hooked' but in the worst-case scenario you can sell the model on and walk away satisfied that you didn't lose much money. As an alternate, there is a thriving second-hand market, but do research what you're buying before committing. It's remarkably easy to buy something cheap that needs several tens of pounds spending before you can hit the water!

For those musing on the possibilities of spending a bit more money and fancying maybe having a crack at racing a bit further down the line then there is a certain kit called the DF65 (Dragon-Force) at 650mm long that I, and almost every other model yacht skipper in the UK, can and will recommend. (I have no connection with the sellers other than being a very satisfied user of this kit.) You can pick up a good second-hand one in various places at or around the £125 mark, and with a bit of luck one of the chaps in that club you might have discovered will have one for sale as he/she looks to upgrade.

If you don't fancy this route, as previously noted there is a plethora of other kits on the market that will get you going, but please re-read all my *caveats* before parting with your money. It's not nice handing over your hard-earned cash only to acquire something totally inappropriate.

Critical adjustments

Let's assume, therefore, at this stage you've done all the background work, joined the MYA and a nearby club, know when and where to sail and are ready for the 'off'… Oh dear, you are now on the slippery road of no return and can look forward to a couple of decades of frustration punctuated by seconds of joy while learning how to trim, sail and race your yacht better than any other skippers on the water at the same time! (Remember, two yachts on the same water at the same time equals a race, as you will soon find out!)

Being serious now for a moment, once you reach this stage do apprentice yourself to the local expert to learn how to set your pride and joy up. Of course, you can read all the books, watch what others are doing and experiment till the cows come home. What nobody tells you, however, is that conditions on the water are changing every second and you can only ever set things up to accommodate the average water conditions on the day. This is why you will notice skippers fiddling with settings after (almost) every race as the wind increases or drops.

As an example of how critical rig settings can be, permit me to tell you about one of my experiences. Having been sailing and racing for over ten years and considering myself reasonably competent, I was having a pig of a day at one event and finishing well towards the bottom end of the fleet in every race. To say I was annoyed was something of an understatement. Mercifully, a true expert was there on the day and adjusted the tension of my backstay by no more than 1mm. I won the next race! So, be warned, things really can get critical as you strive for optimum performance.

The bottom line is, don't be despondent if your yacht doesn't appear to be going too well compared with others on the water. Providing they're all the same class of yacht then you can be assured that adjusting the sails will be the key to improved performance. (Easily said; very tricky to achieve!)

Racing rules

Let's assume now that you've served your apprenticeship, know what and what not to do to make your yacht go and are looking around for how best to move forward. Well, there's some really good, if perplexing, news just round the corner, because there are a great many classes of yacht for you to look at. In no particular order of priority, you have International One Meters, DF95, Marblehead, DF65, RG65, 10R, Multihulls and 6M all awaiting your pleasure, plus others I have omitted. There are also several free-sailing classes that run without R/C, but I am in no way capable of commenting on these. Suffice to say they're there and waiting to be explored should the mood take you.

Added to these are the other numerous, not-well-documented localised classes sailed and raced at

DF65 fleet milling at the start of racing.

Home designed and built wooden RG65 yacht, (dig those veneers!).

the many model clubs in existence round the globe. As an example of how these things develop and how you might become involved, one of the clubs I remain delighted to still be associated with elected on a novel approach as follows. After much debate we elected to adopt the 'JIF' design as a class within our club. (Plans are still available, I believe.) To encourage everyone to 'have-a-go' at scratch building, only wood construction could be used, sails had to be home-made to specified dimensions, hull length and width had to accommodate a strictly limited set of criteria, *etc, etc.* The whole concept proved hugely popular and today there must be over 30 such little yachts routinely sailed in our area. (For goodness' sake, I built over seven of them!) I can also confirm that in light winds these little creatures costing less than £45 in materials can and do outperform exotic craft costing some £300 or more. There's a moral there somewhere.

Talking of racing, if you're moving down this path you will soon become aware that there are rules that apply. There are, in fact, rather a lot of them, all designed to ensure safe, competitive racing and to avoid as many collisions as possible. While I would encourage anyone going racing to study them all, please don't get despondent if you can't immediately understand and/or forget how to utilize them while taking part in your initial few races. The other competitors will understand that you are still at the start of a very steep learning curve and are bound to be sympathetic.

There are, however, three particular rules, and one good idea, that are really important to note and be able to apply, and these are as follows: -

1. A yacht on starboard tack ALWAYS has right of way over a yacht on port tack. (Hint, if your yacht is leaning over to port, you are on starboard tack so have right of way.)

2. When rounding a mark, a yacht on the inside generally has right of way, providing both yachts were 'overlapped' within a zone of four-boat lengths away from the mark. (Actually, this is very difficult to ascertain with accuracy at any time and especially so for a beginner. My advice? Unless you're absolutely sure of your position, be willing to give way to avoid a collision and/or complaints from others. You will soon begin to appreciate what you can and cannot do.)

3. When two yachts are sailing very close together on the same tack the yacht to windward must give way to the one to leeward if/when a collision is looming and/or appears inevitable. Again, tricky to observe in practice but you will soon appreciate what is involved. Just a bit further

"In light winds these little creatures costing less than £45 in materials can and do outperform exotic craft costing some £300 or more"

A scale Bristol Channel Cutter, double diagonally planked.

down the line you will also learn all about 'luffing', which can be very mischievous! You have been warned.

4. Not in the rules, BUT, most collisions occur at the start and when buoy rounding. If in doubt and/or if there's a group of yachts vying for position, it can be a very good idea to sail wide (outside the lot of them) of the mark or position yourself on the line some distance from the main 'cluster' – easier said than done! It will cost you time and distance, but you won't finish up joining the throng stuck together with the water equivalent of superglue.

Having noted all that, the first club I joined just sailed without regard to any rules at all and if your yacht got in the way of another you simply got hit. Despite this we all had enormous fun and lots of banter for quite a few years before we elected to compete a wee bit more professionally by adopting the main rules mentioned above. Still very enjoyable racing and it later allowed several of us compete in 'proper' racing, both at home and away, without annoying everyone else on the water (well, maybe some of the time!) As an aside, it also taught us to become very aware of when a collision would occur, so we all became a bit 'nifty' at taking avoiding action.

Let's just return now to some of the previously mentioned classes you might want to reflect on. I think it correct to state that the International One Meter class is accepted as the most popular and widely raced class worldwide. These are a dream to sail, go like the wind and just seem to get better and better. But, and there is a 'but' and rather a big one, they can be expensive, very expensive in fact. I will say no more except to state that owning and sailing one of these craft is arguably the pinnacle of our hobby and for those readers fortunate enough to partake I salute you (with only the merest tint of jealousy!).

Of the other classes, theDF65s and DF95s are hugely popular and look likely to remain so. Why? They are readily available, simple to build up from kit, and sail magnificently even with the kit supplied sails and radio. It's also the case that for what they are they remain remarkably inexpensive. Added to this is the fact that a great many

"There are three particular rules, and one good idea, that are really important to note and be able to apply…"

clubs have adopted them as standard classes to race on a week-by-week basis. There is also a big after-market chain of suppliers offering more flexible R/C gear, different sails, batteries and the like (try www.radiosailing.co.uk for spares and other goodies).

Once more, I can heartily recommend going along to a local club and watching a few races while chatting to the members. It really is the best way to determine how to progress in the hobby.

What comes next is the serious stuff, how to rig and race one for optimum performance. Given that I remain very much still in the beginners' class, as just a glance at my racing results will readily confirm, let us draw a discrete veil over this side of things. Suffice to say that anyone can sail a model yacht with only 30 minutes of tuition from someone a little further up the learning curve. It may very well, however, take a lifetime to join that very small number at the peak of their skills who invariably win all the races no matter what the conditions and where they are racing. Annoying, but you have to admire them. They've earned the right to be at the top through sheer determination, commitment and practice. Fancy joining them? Go for it!

Just want to chill?

There is, of course, still an enormous amount of fun and pleasure in just building and sailing a yacht without going racing. On a summer's evening with just a hint of a breeze, simply watching the world and your yacht go by is such a pleasure, particularly if accompanied with a can or several of your favourite tipple! On this topic my guess is that any passers-by will want to stop and chat while simultaneously be dying to get hold of your tranny and have a bash – your opportunity to snare another recruit to the hobby! ●

Image acknowledgements

I believe the majority of images accompanying this little write-up are my own – save for the one taken by my friend Damien Ackroyd, who has kindly given permission for its use in support of this feature – thanks, Damien! However, it's just possible that a couple from other unknown sources may have slipped into my archive, so please accept my sincerest apologies if I've somehow pinched one of yours!

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Gondola

John Hollis gives us chapter and verse on his exquisitely detailed scratch build of this iconic Lake District steam yacht

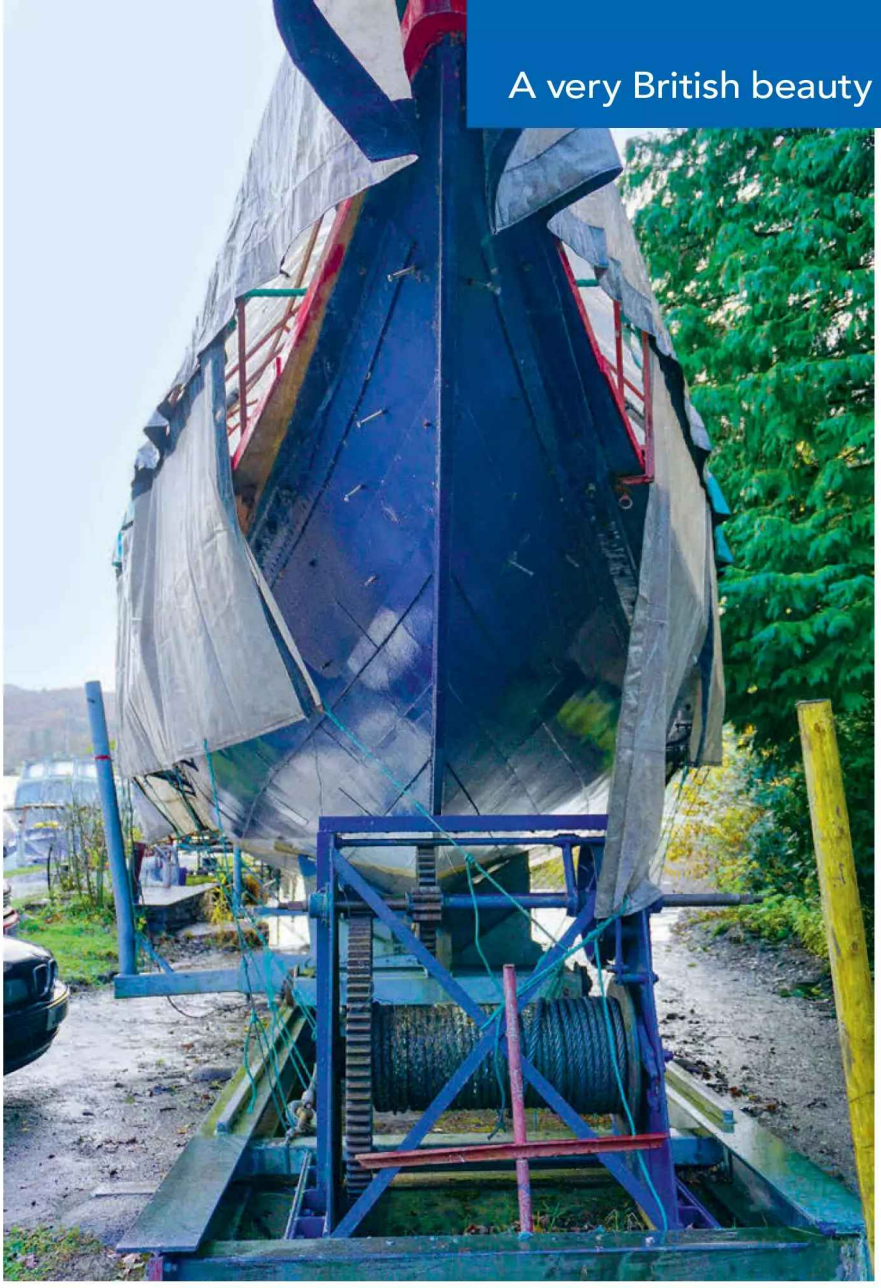
Many will have seen this elegant yacht on Coniston Water in the Lake District and perhaps even have enjoyed a cruise around the lake with a running commentary from the National Trust's onboard guide.

The original vessel was built in 1859 in Liverpool by Jones, Qiggin & Co for the steamer service taking passengers from the Furness Railway and Coniston Railway at the south end of the lake to the more impressive scenery at the north end. While the Victorian's enjoyed their leisure time, *Gondola* carried upwards of 25,000 passengers a year. As roads improved, however, demand went down, so by 1936 she was retired.

In 1944 her boiler and engine were removed, and she became a static houseboat, with the latter spaces being used as a wash house and galley. Moored at the southern end of the lake, she gradually deteriorated until being damaged by a storm in 1963. She was then deliberately sunk to try to slow down any further damage for over ten years.

The National Trust stepped in after a previous attempt to restore her failed. Vickers Shipbuilders at Barrow in Furness undertook a survey, finding the hull plates would not meet the current build standards and would need to be replaced. So, it took the lines of the original hull and made a replacement, giving the work to its apprentices. A new engine was built by Locomotion Enterprises, and a new boiler was sourced from W. Bertram & Sons to a Ffestiniog Railway design, which now burns wood pellets rather than coal and has a maximum pressure of 150psi – this allowing the vessel achieve a speed of 12 knots, although she cruises at 7 knots. Today, very little remains of the original vessel apart from the odd hull bracket.

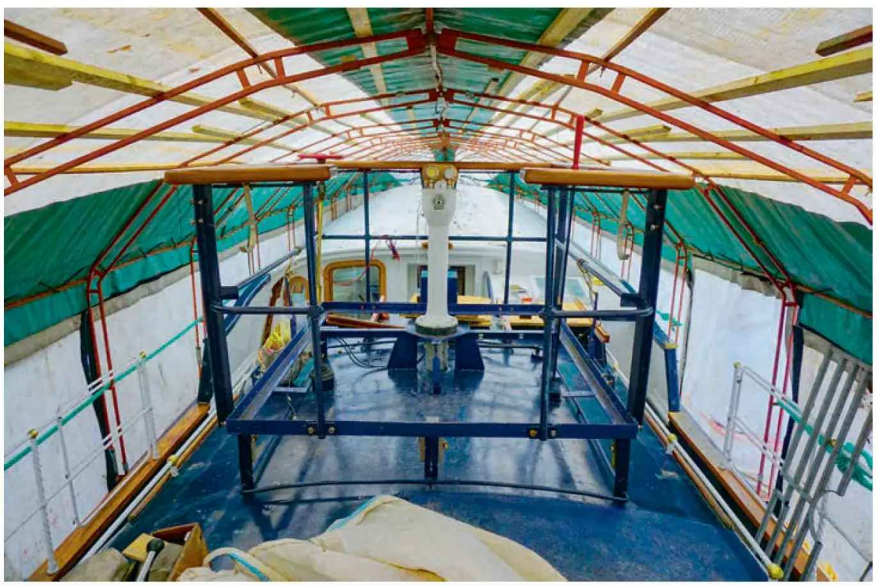
The 7th Duke of Devonshire was the chairman of the Furness Railway, and it is his coat of arms that is depicted on the boards at the bow. Prominently featuring as a figurehead is Sid the Sea Serpent, the family's historic emblem portrayed throughout Chatsworth House and its magnificent gardens in Derbyshire.



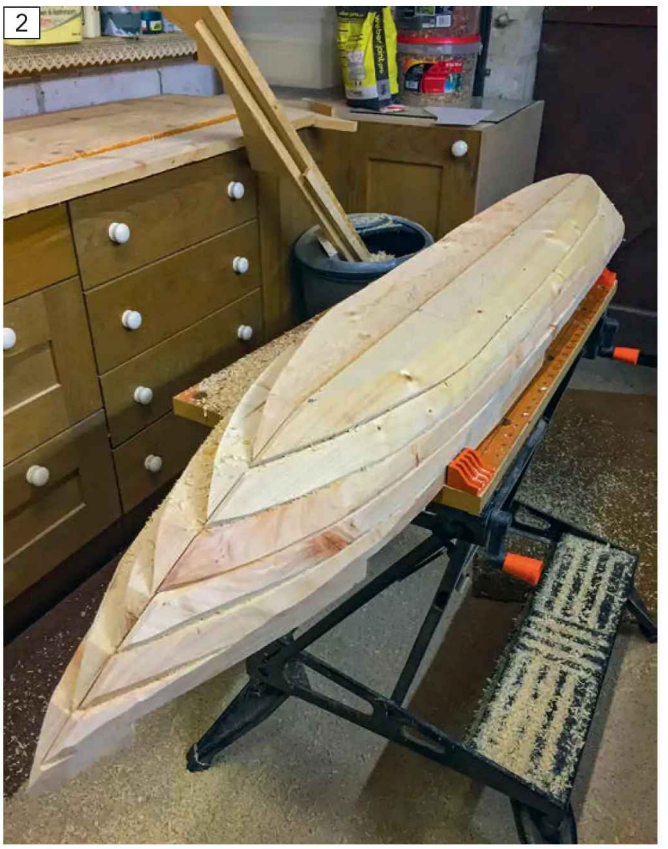
Every year *Gondola* is pulled up a slipway, using a purpose-built carriage, onto a track at Pier Cotttage on Coniston Water. The funnel and wheelhouse, plus soft furnishings, are then removed to allow any maintenance to take place under a temporary shelter.

Making a start on the model

The first challenge I encountered when considering modelling *Gondola* was the apparent lack of plans. The National Trust, through the permanent staff at Pier Cottage, however, very kindly agreed to give me access to the vessel while she was out of the water so that I could take all the necessary measurements and a multitude of photographs for reference purposes. Unfortunately, on my first visit there had been a break in the weather the week before and *Gondola* had once again been launched, so I couldn't



The 1:1 Gondola, having been hauled out of the water and up the slipway at Pier Cottage on Coniston Water on her very own purpose-built carriage for maintenance under cover.



"As I intended to power the model with a steam engine, I wanted to get as much airflow around the engine and boiler as possible"

view the underwater shape of her hull. However, several rough sketches, along with the many measurements and photos taken, allowed me to draw up a deck plan plus elevation from the waterline upwards.

Since it was going to be several months before I could visit again and actually see the underside of the hull, I set to work on making the engine cover and wheelhouse. (Early pictures of the vessel show the wheel to be completely exposed to the elements, no doubt making the helmsman's job very unpleasant on wet, windy days).

The model's engine cover has a wooden frame covered with 1mm ply, which in turn is covered with lithoplate to give the impression of a metal structure, as per the original.

As I intended to power the model with a steam engine, I wanted to get as much airflow around the engine and boiler as possible. Consequently, the two set of double doors on either side of the cover were hinged, the two forward companion ways were made to have sliding covers, and a rear hatch was also hinged, so all can be opened when the model is sailed. The non-slip surface at the bottom of the steps is sandpaper, stuck on top of the cover's roof. A brass frame was made for the wheelhouse, with four sections of grating made for the floor before adding the wooden slatted sides and roof. The six spokes for the ship's wheel were turned on my lathe, together with the central boss and outer rim (see **Photo 1**). The funnel was made from 15mm copper pipe and fits over a flange on the top of the boiler to allow heat, gas fumes and steam from the engine and safety valve to be vented.

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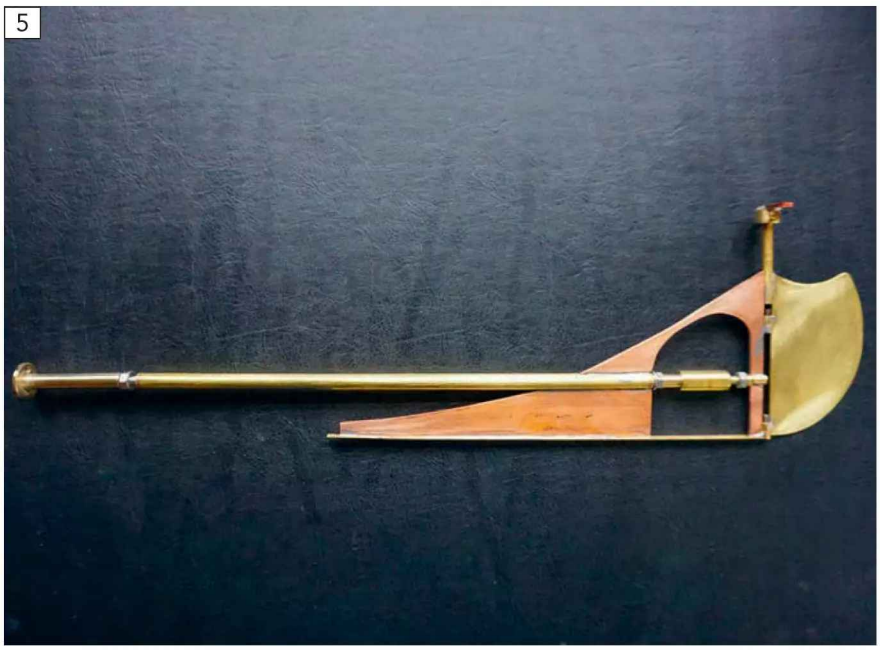

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The hull

After several months I made a return visit to the Lakes while *Gondola* was out of the water. The additional photographs and measurements taken on this occasion then allowed me to complete drawing up plans.

I decided to cast my own fibreglass hull for this model, using a solid block of wood rather than a plank-on-frame mould; I therefore didn't need a line drawing, as a series of cross sections would suffice. The mould was made in bread-and-butter fashion, using these cross sections as a guide to achieve the right shape (see **Photo 2**).

Once happy with the basic hull, the stem and keel were added. Plates were represented by pieces of cardboard stuck individually to the wooden mould in the same pattern as the original.

The second mould from which the final hull would be cast was made in two halves, with the join being down the stem and keel. A cardboard divider was temporarily stuck along the keel, together with one along the deck level (see **Photos 3 and 3a**)

Six coats of car polish were then applied to the cardboard plated hull, followed by one coat of releasing agent. After allowing this releasing agent to dry, I applied a thick coat of gel so that all the hull plate detail would be captured, followed by a coat of fibreglass tissue and two of fibreglass matt. This was then left to cure before the central divider was removed and the whole process of applying releasing agent and fibreglass repeated for the second half of the hull.

After allowing a week for the second half to cure, shown by the mould turning green, holes for locating bolts were drilled along the dividing line where the two halves of the mould would meet.

"I decided to cast my own fibreglass hull for this model"

Then came the nerve-wracking part of inserting a chisel as a wedge to prize the mould out without damaging it. Once free, it was cleaned up, bolted together and the process of applying polish, releasing agent, gel coat and fibreglass was repeated to produce a complete hull (see **Photo 4**).

The rudder and stern post, cut from brass sheet, were then attached to the hull (see **Photo 5**). The propeller was the only commercially sourced item on the model (apart for the engine and boiler), but this was modified to fit on the shaft in a similar manner to the original. Sacrificial anodes were cast from white metal, with various discharge pipes added after painting the hull.

Wooden rails were fibre-glassed to the inside of the hull to allow the ply underdeck to be glued down. On top of the ply, the rear deck was planked. The planks were made by using the bandsaw to cut a 5mm wide strip from a block of lime, giving a piece of wood 300mm x 80mm x 5mm. Black paper was stuck to top of this strip before cutting it into planks of 5mm wide x 5mm deep (see **Photo 6**). The wide margin plank which gives the distinctive shape to the top of the hull was also added. A grating covers the top of the rudder, which has been made removable to allow access to the coupling between the rudder and the servo (see **Photo 7**).

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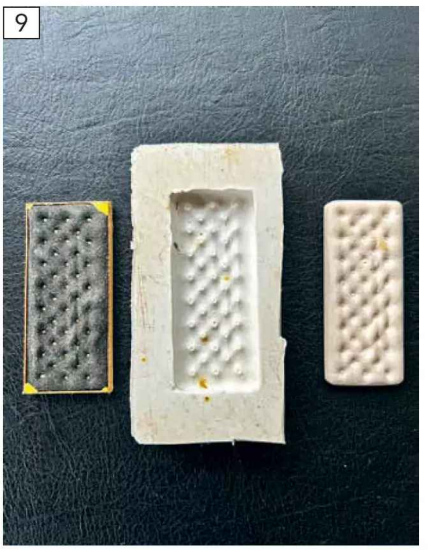

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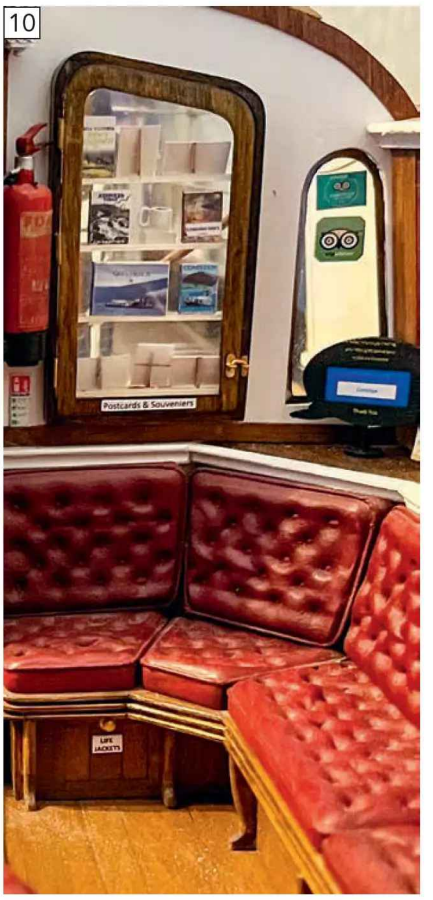

11

Full steam ahead

Now knowing the dimensions of the 'engine room', it quickly became apparent there was no commercially available boiler to fit the space, so one would need to be made specifically for the model. At the same time, room for the gas tank was very limited, so this would need to be made specially as well. Fortunately, Pendle Steam Boilers proved very helpful here and made both a boiler and gas tank custom built to fit. I clad the boiler with wooden planks, both to conserve heat in the boiler and to reduce, as much as possible, heat from the boiler affecting the radio gear that needed to be located in the same area.

I already had an SVS steam engine from a previous model which fitted in nicely. This provides just the right amount of power to drive the hull at a realistic speed (see **Photo 8**).

"Now knowing the dimensions of the 'engine room', it quickly became apparent there was no commercially available boiler to fit the space… Fortunately, Pendle Steam Boilers proved very helpful here and made both a boiler and gas tank custom-built to fit"

The cabin

Work could now start on the main cabin. The rear cabin bulkhead was made from a sandwich of four sheets of 1/64th ply applied over an inner core of 1mm ply. The inner section was cut so the Perspex glazing would fit into its aperture, the next two parts of the 'sandwich' provided a frame, while the outer two parts created a panelling effect.

The rear cabin's planked floor was installed, followed by the seats up to the height of the external deck.

In the rear cabin the seats are faux leather. To represent these, I began by stretching a piece of Lycra over a thin piece of sponge mounted on a wooden board to form a cushion. Pins were pushed through the Lycra so that the pin heads formed buttons, thereby resulting in a quilting effect. Steramould (used for making impressions of ears) was then pressed around thls Lycra cushion to make a mould for the final article. Once set, a fine plaster mix was poured into the Steramould cast. One mould proved sufficient for all the different cushions as the plaster could be easily cut and sanded into shape for the corner and other irregular shaped pieces that form this seating (see **Photos 9 and 10**).

Work then moved to the bow section and the exposed flooring and seating area. All this is removable to allow access to the area under the floor and the small amount of ballast.

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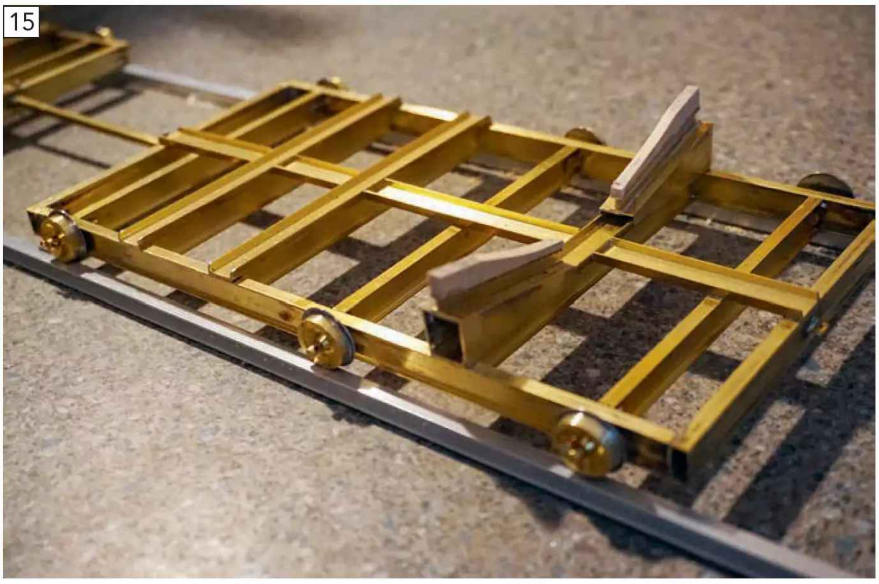


(Once the model had been completed and the boiler filled, only a couple of pounds of lead needed to be added to the bow section to bring the model down to its waterline).

The central bulkhead, together with the front door section, was added using the same ply sandwich method as the rear bulkhead.

The cabin sides have a rise as well as a curve around the front and sloping inwards. A cardboard template was therefore used to achieve the right shape and, again, the five-section ply method was used to create to glazing holders and panel effect.

Further columns were added to the inside to give the ornate look of the original.

The cushions in the fore cabin are of material. Each one was made in the same way as the mould for the cushions in the aft cabin, necessitating 16 individual cushions and seat backs to be made. Carpet material was sourced from a dolls' house website and laid on the cabin floor, with brass strip surrounds for the removable panels in the floor added.

The various maps, pictures and drawings which cover the walls, along with the display case on the rear wall of the aft cabin, are all suitably scaled down copies of the originals seen aboard the 1:1 *Gondola*. The numerous accessories in the cabins, such as fire extinguishers, copper kettle, curtains, *etc*, I made from scrap materials.

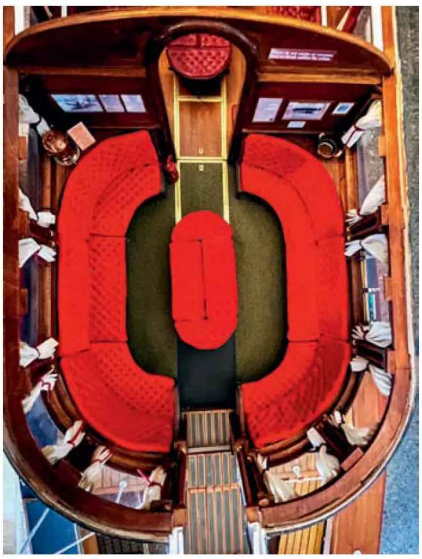
The emergency escape windows have a brass section frame and brass section surrounding the glass. Dummy aluminium handles plus brass hinges were also added together with the emergency exit signs (see **Photo 11**).

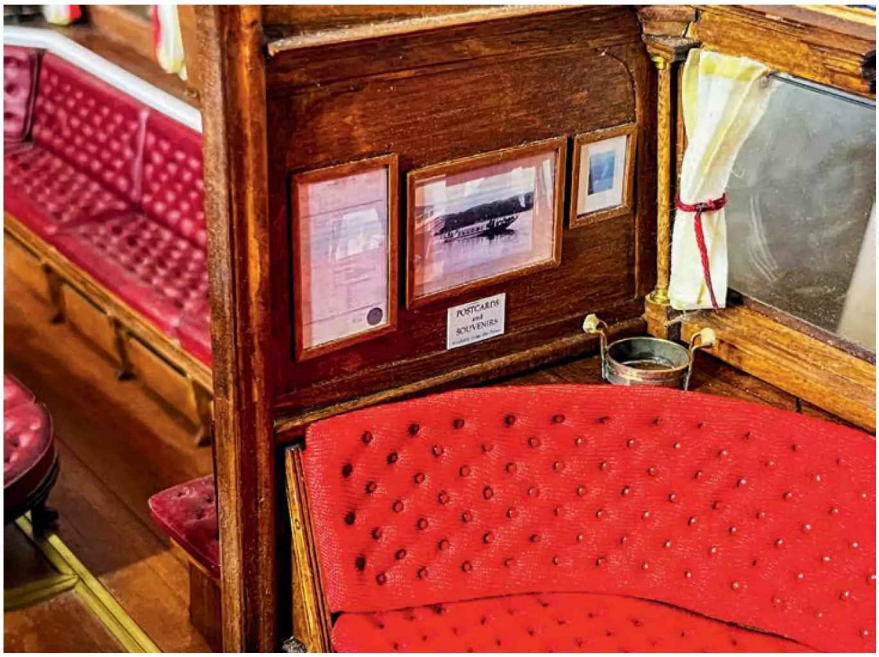
The roof of the cabin, which is removable, has another complex curve at the front. A wooden former was therefore made of the shape of the roof and covered in paper so that any glue from the roof wouldn't stick to it. 1/64th ply was placed over the top of the main area, which just had the curve sloping down to the top of the cabin sides, and pinned in place along the bottom edge. Strips of ply were applied to the front section and held in place with duct tape. A second followed by a third layer of strips were then laid on top of this first layer, but in the opposite direction. Two more layers of 1/64th ply were added to the top of the main body of the roof. The front section had a liberal layer of filler applied before being sanded down to a smooth finish. A separate semicircular roof was added to the front to give the 'porch roof' for the main cabin entrance, made using the same layering technique over a specially created former. The result is a very strong and lightweight structure (see **Photo 12**). Wooden guttering and a skylight completed the outside. The inside has planks applied to the roof of the rear cabin, while the fore cabin's roof has beams to give a vaulted ceiling effect.

The finishing touches

Sid, the twin tailed serpent figurehead, has a wooden carved head. The two tails were made from Milliput, which was rolled out to the right diameter

The completed model.





The beautifully fitted out fore cabin, with no attention to detail spared.

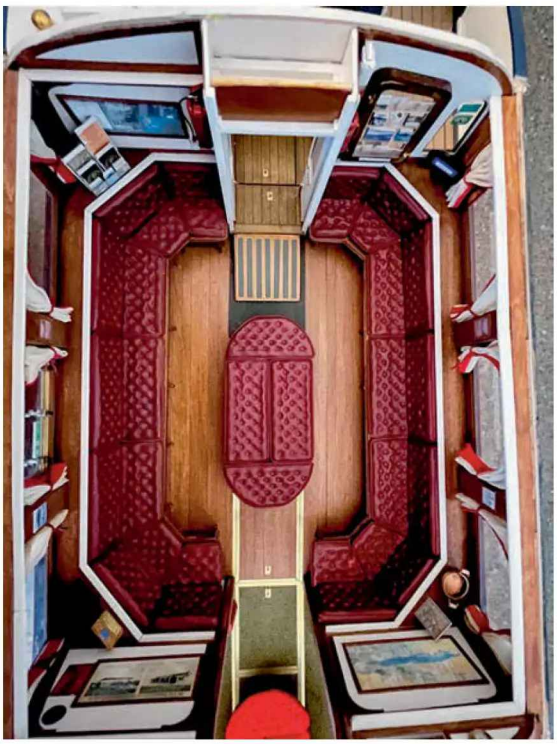
and then twisted to shape before lines were cut into it to represent the snake's skin. Once dry the head was attached before Sid was entirely covered in gold leaf (see **Photo 13**).

The Duke of Devonshire's coat of arms and crest on the prow were created in plaster. First, a blank strip of plaster around 15mm deep and slightly larger than the scroll work was made. Onto this I traced the design of the scroll work, which I then be carved out of the relatively soft plaster with an assortment of gouges and knives to give an initial impression. A thick soap solution was applied to the surface and allowed to dry before more plaster was poured on top (the soap acts a release agent, allowing the two halves of the plaster to be easily separated). Work could then start on the second mould, which had the scroll work in relief. Steramould was, once again, used to take a mould of the final plaster relief mould (see **Photo 14**). Following this, fibreglass resin was brushed into the Steramould and then, once cured, peeled out and mounted on a wooden board before being painted. As Steramould is very flexible and has a waxy surface, nothing sticks to it, so a release agent is not required. The crest under the vessel's bow was made in the same way.

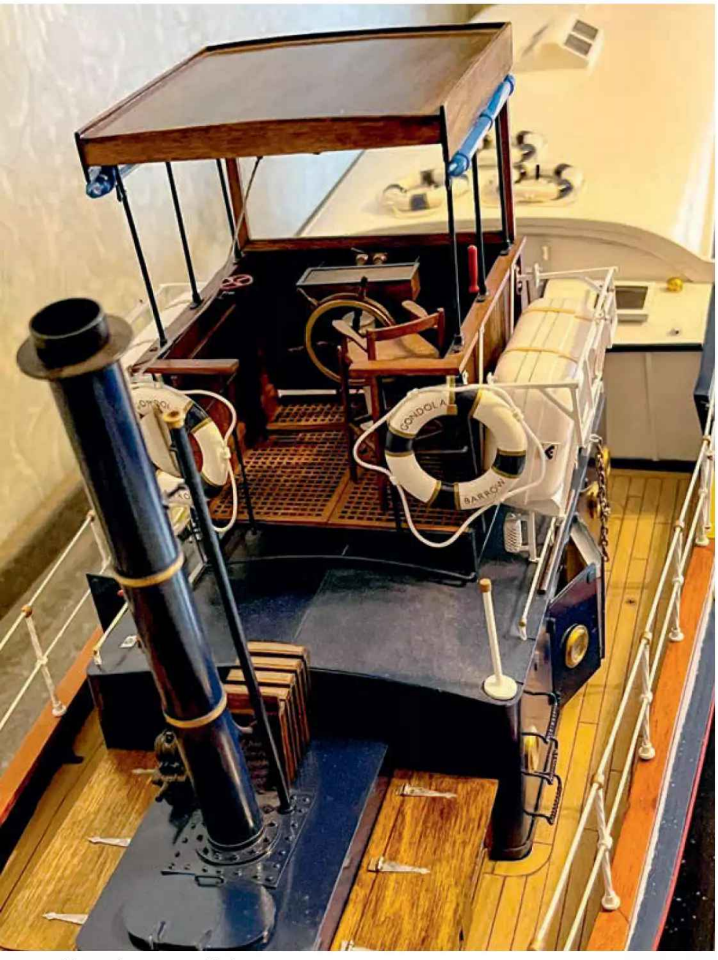
The white items were all painted from a Halfords gloss white rattle can, which I sprayed over a same brand rattle can primer.

The hull itself was spray painted with a suitable Humbrol enamel coloured paint. The aft deck of the 1:1 vessel is naturally dirty, this due to being constantly walked on by so many passengers and having been subjected to years of emissions from the funnel. For the sake of authenticity, therefore, this area of the model has been given that same 'dirty' look. In contrast, the remainder of the woodwork is varnished in satin, which gives a slight sheen rather than an overpowering gloss look.

I made all four of *Gonodola*'s flags myself from tracing linen, suitably recolouring this for the mainly blue National Trust and National Historic Ships flags on the coach roof and the defaced red ensign at the stern with Dylon fabric dye. The outlines of the roundel emblem of the National Historic Ships UK on the ensign and the various details carried by the other flags were drawn onto the dyed linen in pencil, before more detail was then painted in with Setacolor fabric dye (this is fairly stiff in consistency and does not leech into the surrounding fabric).



The cleverly replicated faux leather seats in the rear cabin.



The engine cover and helm.

Gondola's bow, adorned with the Duke of Devonshire's coat of arms and Sid the Sea Serpent figurehead, all skilfully crafted by John.

A bespoke stand/carriage

Rather than show the model on a traditional stand, I have made a representation of the cradle used to haul the original out of the water on a regularly basis at Pier Cottage. The trunnions were turned on my lathe, while various sections of suitable brass section soldered together was used for all metal work (see **Photo 15**, p.31).

On the water

Fitting the radio gear, steam engine and boiler under the engine cover was a bit of a squeeze, and access when the gas bottle needs refilling involves removing the roof to the purser's 'office'. However, once steam is raised, the model sails well – as long as there's not too much wind, which would blow the bow off course, a little like it would the original. ●

John's elegant model of the gorgeous steam yacht Gondola underway.

SS America

Matthew Cox fulfils his American dream

Ever since I discovered the SS *America*, it has always been my dream to see this historic, yet often forgotten, ocean liner return to the water. So, after finally obtaining the necessary skills and knowledge, I was recently able to design and construct a working model within a 10-month period. There were many challenges and obstacles along the way, but, after a lot of thought and planning, I now have the honour of captaining my beloved ship.

A brief history lesson

Of all the proud and majestic ocean liners that once ruled the waves, the SS *America* had one of the wildest and most enduring service careers of any ship of that size and prestige; her 54-year-long story was one of brief glories, heroic war service, wonderful journeys, and a gradual and undignified decline, which resulted in her tragic loss off the Canary Islands.

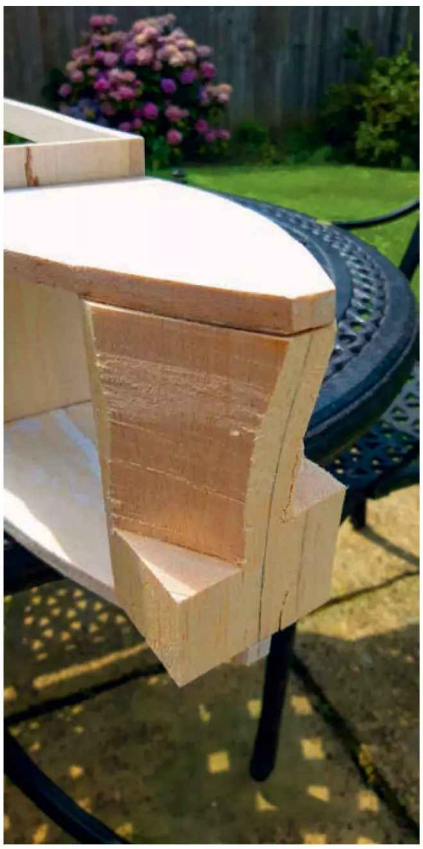
> *"Of all the proud and majestic ocean liners that once ruled the waves, the SS America had one of the wildest and most enduring service careers of any ship of that size and prestige"*

The *America* was launched in 1939 and was christened by Eleanor Roosevelt. At the time, she was the largest American passenger ship yet built.

During World War II, she served as the troopship USS *West Point*, transporting thousands of Allied troops safely to their destinations.

After the war, the *America* served as a transatlantic liner for United States Lines for 18 years. The ship was bought by the Greek company Chandris Lines in the 1960s and used as the Australian migrant liner *Australis*; she completed 61 voyages around the world and

The basic construction of the hull taking shape on the work table.



These two pictures show how Matthew carved the bow and stern blocks. He used a balsa saw to remove the excess balsa in gradual stages.

The stern area before being sheeted. The motor and systems have already been installed.

SS America's hull fully sheeted, with the upper decks starting to take shape.

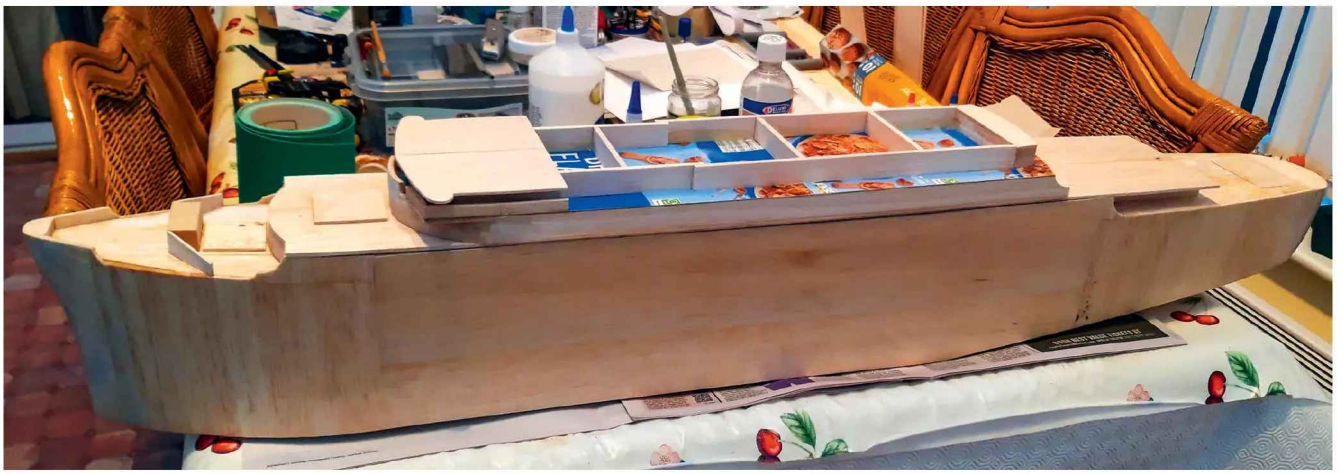
ultimately became the last liner to carry migrants to Australia. From 1978 to 1993, the former *America* changed hands multiple times and sailed under various names, including a short-lived stint as a cruise ship under her original name. For a long period of time, she was laid up in Elefsina Bay, Greece, where she sat idle and neglected until being sold for intended use as a floating hotel. In 1994, while being towed to her new home in Thailand, under the name American Star, she broke free during a storm and ran aground near a remote beach in the Canary Islands; the ship was soon broken in half by the waves and was ultimately abandoned. Today, the remains of the once-proud luxury liner have been completely flattened, and nothing can be seen on the surface.

Discovering the lost ship

I came across the SS *America* while researching shipwrecks in the Canary Islands (because my family and I used to go on holiday over there). While looking around, I stumbled upon a series of pictures showing a colossal ship stranded close to a remote beach. The surreal images of the wrecked liner abandoned so close to shore soon captured my imagination, and I became enchanted by her haunting beauty. I was surprised to discover that the America, once the flagship and pride of her country, had a long and varied career dating back to the late 1930s; my grandfather actually had a waterline model of her as part of a set made by Bassett-Lowke. On three occasions, I was able to visit the beach and see what was left of the ship. It was on my third and final visit that I had the idea to build a model of the *America* that actually sails; this would serve as a working tribute to the ship and the countless people who sailed on her.

Coming up with a plan

With the idea of the model cemented, I began working out how to build it and with what materials. I have built models of the *America* in the past, with realistic lines and proportions, but had no experience with building an R/C model. Since I just wanted a model that looked roughly like the *America*, I wasn't too worried about the finer details and dimensions, *etc.* Even though I'm quite an experienced modeller, I decided to keep the design of the hull as simple as possible; as a starting point, I based the basic design for hull construction on a free plan by Glynn Guest for a freelance ocean liner called the *Empress*. Using the hull of the *Empress* as a guide, I then changed the bow and stern to closely mimic



Construction on the America is going well.

With a combination of balsa and paperboard, the decks are most complete.

The America's two "sampan" funnels are test fitted before being installed.

Now fully assembled and looking sleek, the funnels are similar to the ones on America's running mate – the SS United States.

"The original ship had many different colour schemes throughout her life, but I felt it would be respectful, to a degree, to have the model painted to depict the America in her heyday while serving with the United States Lines"

the design of the *America*. For the upper works, I made approximations by comparing the model with a smaller one that I'd built before; this really came in handy when starting from the ground up. Gradually, I made loads of drawings and tracings of most of the parts to document the design process. It was all trial and error until I was satisfied with the final design.

Making the hull

Construction began on May 16, 2024, with the 'keel' being made out of sheets of 3/8-inch balsa wood glued together with white PVA. To fill any gaps in the joints, I used some DeluxeTM Perfect Plastic Putty, since I discovered that it works just as well on wood as it does on plastic. I then made the three main bulkheads and transom out of the same thickness of balsa as the bottom. Because the bottom of the stern is angled, to allow for the propeller and rudder, I gave some of the parts some chamfer using my sanding block. Once I glued the bulkheads into place, I then added the longerons to strengthen the hull and made the forecastle deck before adding the bow and stern blocks and sheeting the entire hull. I used several thick sheets of balsa glued together to make the bow and stern blocks, which I then gradually carved to get the desired shapes. Before sheeting

A top view of the funnels now fully installed on the model.

Some detail work at the stern. The king posts are detachable, allowing for easy transport.

the hull, I made the stern deck and the mounts for the motor and rudder. I also fitted the propeller shaft by drilling a hole through the bottom. With the mounts and propeller shaft in place, I then used sheets of 1/8-inch balsa to make the sides; they were just the right thickness to bend and were eventually glued into place.

Adding the decks

For the decks and superstructure, I had to design the entire thing from scratch in order to mimic the design of the original *America*. Having previously made smaller static models of the ship, I had a fairly rough idea of the basic dimensions for the upper works. Various thicknesses of balsa wood and sheets of paperboard from cereal boxes were used for construction. To support the flimsy paperboard, I used various pieces of balsa that were glued inside the structure. Eventually, the paint and varnish would act as layers to waterproof the paperboard. One by one, the decks took shape, and the model was starting to come alive. I made the decks as a single separate piece from the hull to allow access to the inner workings.

Funnels and details

Since the original *America* had those distinctive sampan funnels, I had to make sure they were scaled correctly to the model. I used an accurate drawing by my friend to determine the proportions of the stacks. After a couple of design adjustments, I was finally happy to proceed. I was able to fabricate them using various pieces of balsa wood, though the internal structures did have to be strengthened to fully support themselves. Once they were assembled, I glued them onto the uppermost decks. Following their installation, the ship looked mostly complete and truly beautiful. I then added various deck details, such the forward bulwark, breakwater and cargo hatches at the bow. Finally, came the masts and king posts, which were created from bits of dowel cut and sanded to shape; I made these in such a way that they can be detached when not in use. All that was left was sealing and painting.

Waterproofing and painting

To ensure the hull was fully sealed and watertight, I applied several coats of DeluxeTM EzeKote and fibreglass cloth to the main hull until it was completely solid. I found them really easy to work with and definitely worth using on model boats. The inside was also coated for increased protection and strength.

The superstructure didn't need the cloth, since it wasn't going to be bumping into things as easily. I just used the EzeKote for the upper decks and mostly relied on multiple layers of paint to fully seal them.

With the ship fully sealed, I got to work applying several layers of Halfords grey primer to prepare for the main paintwork. The original ship had many different colour schemes

With the black paint sprayed on, it was time to remove the masking tape.

The hull being primed and painted. It required a lot of layers to fully seal the hull.

The hull masked and spray painted black.

Hand painting almost finished, with just the funnels to paint and decals to add.

throughout her life, but I felt it would be respectful, to a degree, to have the model painted to depict the *America* in her heyday while serving with the United States Lines. I preferred her in her original guise because that was the period of her life when she was her happiest. So, using various paints, I recreated her distinctive and bright American colours. The lower part of the hull was masked with masking tape in preparation for the other colours. I used Halfords white spray paint as a base coat and for the superstructure.

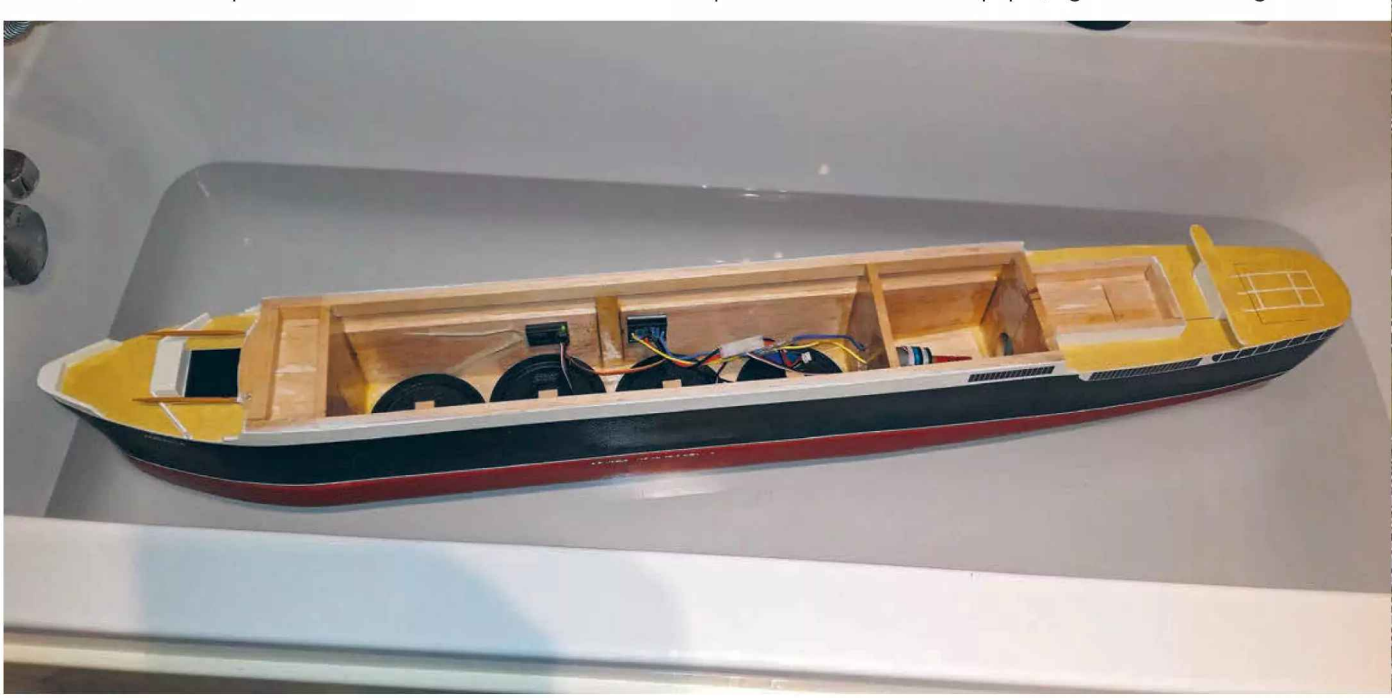
The SS America is ready to sail!

"For good luck, I glued a small piece of rust from the actual ship (which I found when I went to the beach where she was wrecked) inside the bow so, in a sense, the ship herself could finally sail again"

For the black paintwork, I used Halfords Matt Black and used several layers to seal the hull. I then used different Humbrol colours for the other parts. For the majority of the decks, I used Humbrol 103 Cream to replicate the light tan of the wood. Humbrol 60 Scarlet and 15 Midnight Blue were used for the funnels.

Decals and varnish

Just having paint wasn't enough. The model looked bare without windows and the ship's name and port of registry. So, I designed and printed some suitable decals to give the model some character. I used Photoshop to design each of the windows and nameplates, *etc.* Once I'd printed them on some suitable decal paper, I gave them some gloss



Testing the hull before the maiden voyage.

varnish to seal the ink and then just applied them to the model.

With the decals in place, from a distance, the model looked quite convincing when afloat. To seal them and protect the paint, I applied loads of all-weather varnish, which did the job nicely. I had to use several layers to protect both paint and decals and ensure the model fully sealed. The *America* was now almost ready for testing.

Tests and maiden voyage

Once all the electronics were installed, I had to test the model in the bath to see if anything needed adjusting. For ballast, I used five of my brother's 1 kg lifting weights, which was a lot! I glued four centrally mounted tall wooden blocks to hold the weights inside the model; they were then held in place by two pieces of plywood with screws. The tests in the bath showed that the model had excellent stability and maneuverability.

On March 9, 2025, therefore, I took the model to Wardown Park, where she embarked on her maiden voyage. Before this, for good luck, I glued a small piece of rust from the actual ship (which I found when I went to the beach where she was wrecked) inside the bow so, in a sense, the ship herself could finally sail again. I did have a slight fault with the holding nut for the propshaft but, other than that, the ship performed beautifully.

Regarding her maneuverability, she can steer easily and remains stable in the water, even in rough seas. Finally, I have fulfilled my dream of building an R/C model of my beloved ship.

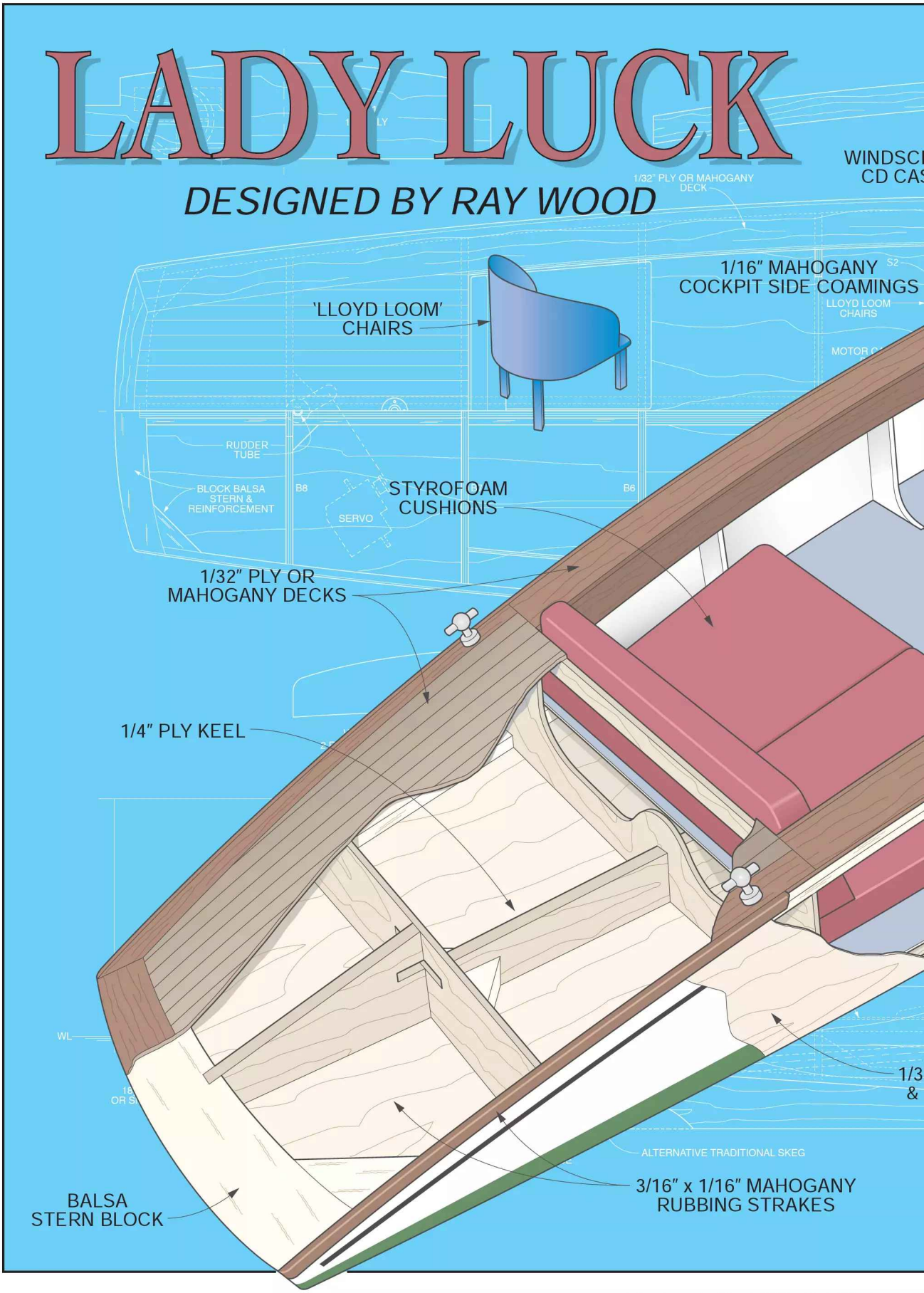
In conclusion

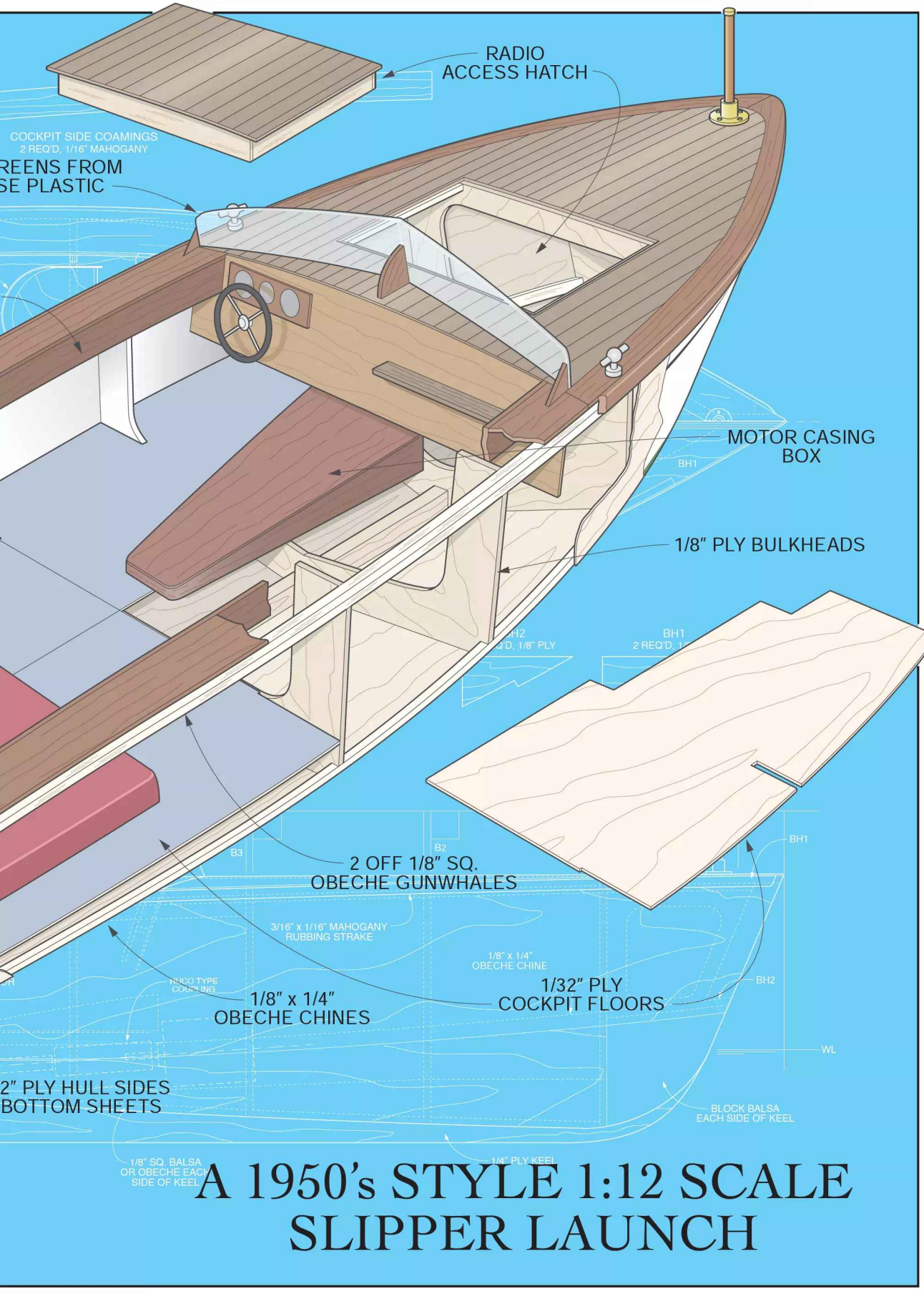
Since her maiden voyage, I have been sailing the America as often as I can, and with every voyage I am creating personal memories of this ship that will last a lifetime. Also, I have now added lifeboats and a audio system that emits the sounds of the horn and ship's band.

To make the lifeboats and davits, I used my Creality 3D printer to print parts I designed myself on Blender; these certainly made the ship look 'less naked'.

Overall, I am really proud of her, and I hope she will inspire other modellers to build their own interpretations of this classic liner. The SS *America* was truly a unique and distinctive liner, and I'm sure her history will continue to fascinate people as much as it has me.

Without a doubt, even at this scale, the America is truly a sight to behold!


LADY LUCK
DESIGNED BY RAY WOOD
1/32" PLY OR MAHOGANY DECK
1/16" MAHOGANY COCKPIT SIDE COAMINGS
'LLOYD LOOM' CHAIRS
LLOYD LOOM CHAIRS
RUDDER TUBE
BLOCK BALSA STERN & REINFORCEMENT
B8
B6
SERVO
STYROFOAM CUSHIONS
1/32" PLY OR MAHOGANY DECKS
1/4" PLY KEEL
WL
ALTERNATIVE TRADITIONAL SKEG
3/16" x 1/16" MAHOGANY RUBBING STRAKES
BALSA STERN BLOCK



A 1950's STYLE 1:12 SCALE SLIPPER LAUNCH

FREE PLAN

Lady Luck

Ray Wood provides a illustrated guide to building your very own Thames Slipper Launch

The idea for this model was formulated in my sketchbook while on holiday a few years ago – such periods of relaxation I find the best time for letting my imagination run free. She's a 1:12 scale slipper launch designed for simple electric power, based on a small drawing I found in an old publication from the 1950s but enlarged to produce a 26-inch model.

The interesting feature of these launches, which can be found on the upper reaches of the River Thames, especially around the Windsor and Henley-on-Thames areas, is the lack of a traditional transom at the stern, which maximises the boat's length on the waterline, making for an easily driven design.

"The interesting feature of these launches is the lack of a traditional transom at the stern, which maximises the boat's length on the waterline, making for an easily driven design"

I've named my model *Lady Luck* after a T9 Supermarine 2-seater Spitfire that is now owned and operated by Aero Legends and operated in Kent, Essex and Wiltshire during the summer months. My personal connection to this particular aircraft is my granddaughter, who as part of the team providing passenger flights believes she has the best job in the world – and I think she's right!

Construction

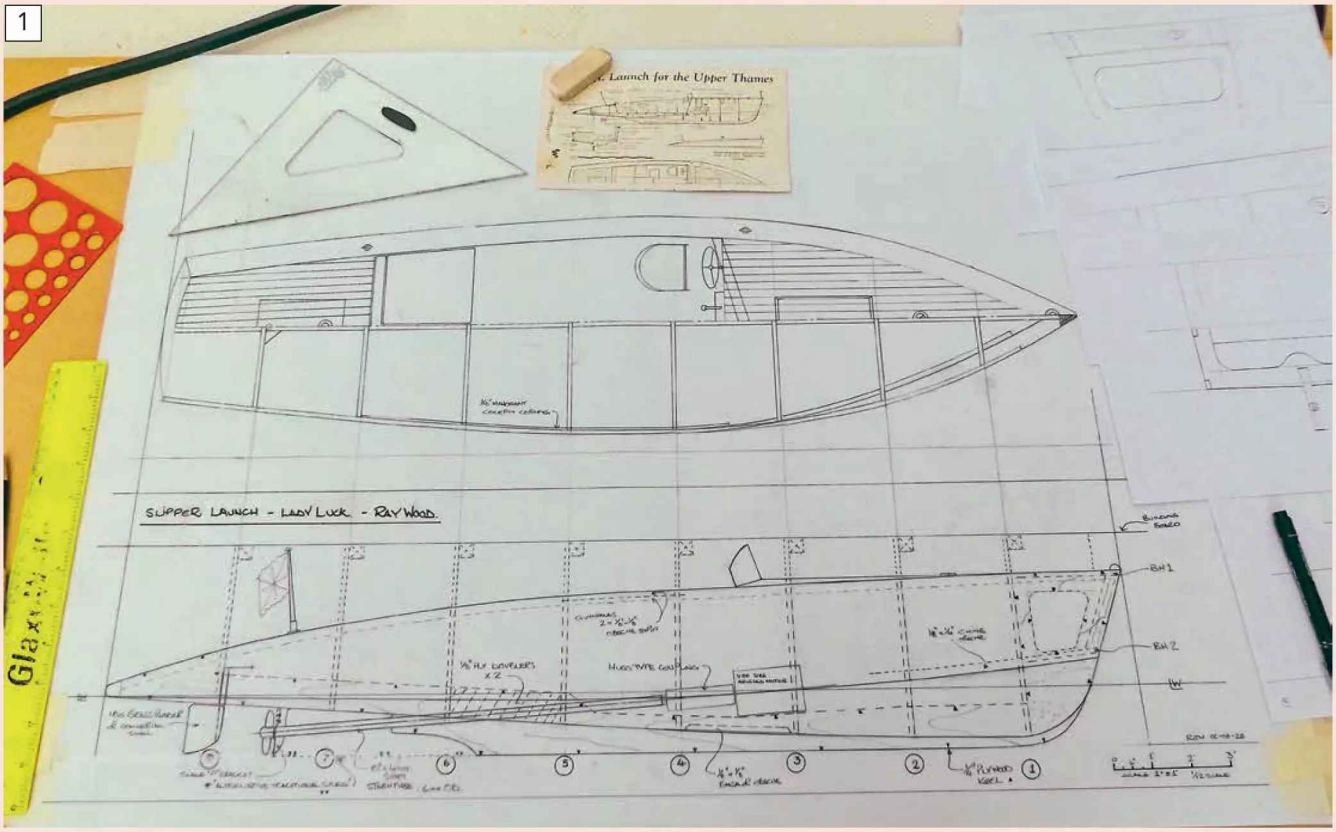
Most readers will be familiar with my preferred method of building, *i.e.*, with the hull inverted on a board. To this end I will present a series of construction stage photos, with captions to explain my *modus operandi.*

On the water

Well, I think I achieved my objective with this little model. The original launches have a certain charm and elegance about them, which I hope I've captured in *Lady Luck*. She's quite straight forward to build, with very little in the way of superstructure to worry about. She sails sweetly and her small rudder is effective both forwards and in reverse – just don't overdo it when going astern!

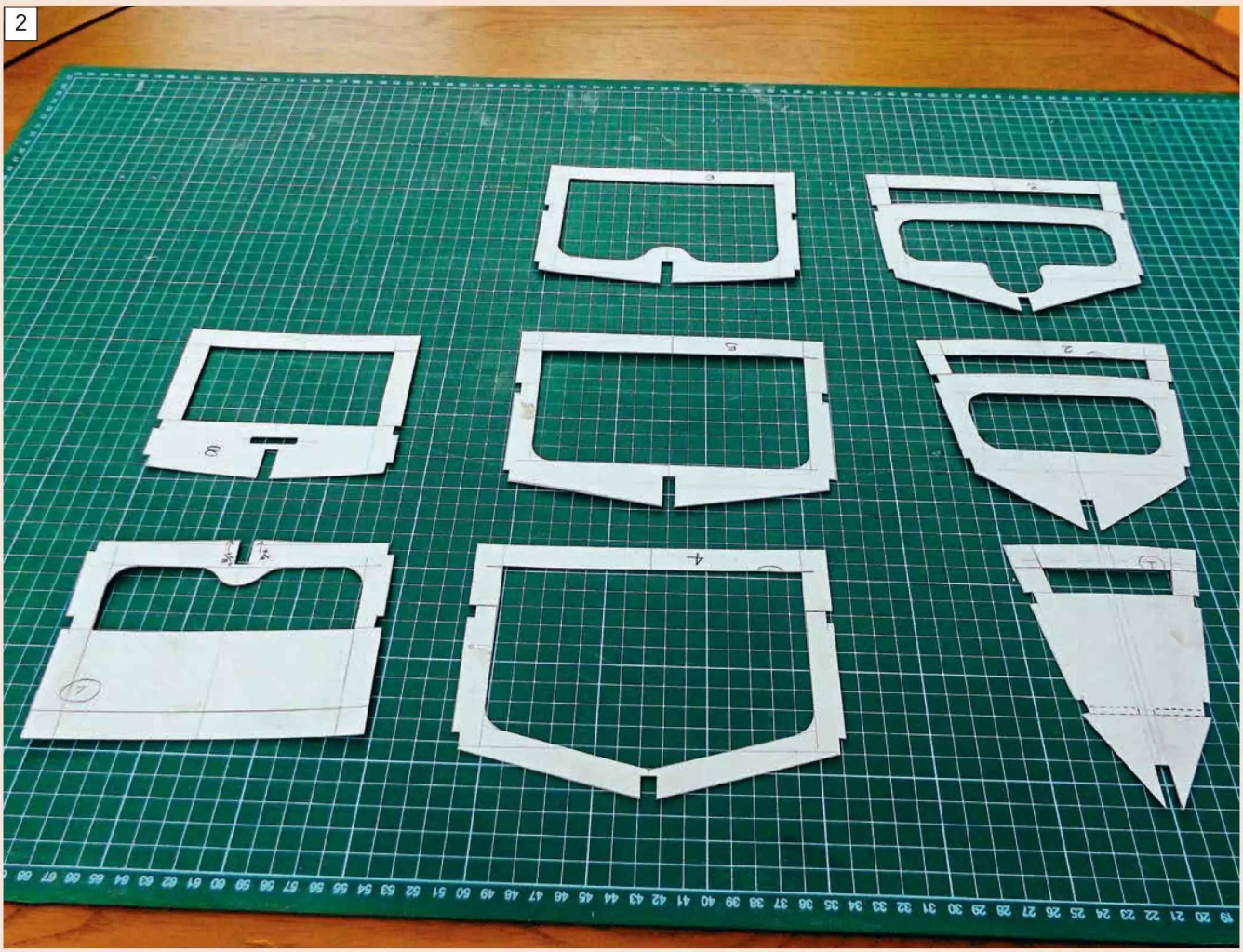
Ray's granddaughter, Emma, and the team at Aero Legends pose with Lady Luck, the Spitfire Ray named his lovely slipper launch for.

1



The Lady Luck draft drawing started on a lazy Saturday morning back in August '25, with the side and plan views enlarged by hand to 1-inch to the foot scale, something my dad taught when I was 8 years old; this has stood me in good stead ever since. On the Sunday I drew out the bulkheads, much easier to work from a plan I find.

2

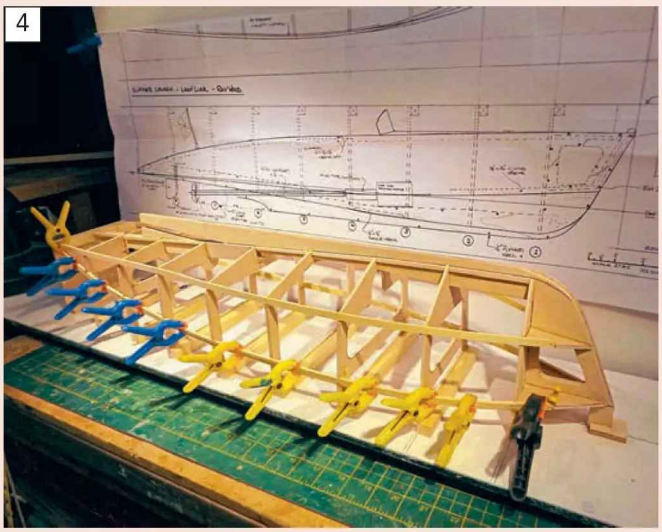


The first stage is to trace the bulkheads and keel and transfer the shapes onto 1/8-inch and ¼-inch plywood. Wickes does a good size sheet at a reasonable price. If money is no object, then Birch plywood is the best (this can be purchased from SLEC at Watton).
I had a print of my draft made and spray mount to card, from which I was able to cut out templates I could easily draw round. I cut out the bulkheads with the extensions to the building board; a length of timber glued across them with a centre line drawn always helps to achieve a good straight boat.

3

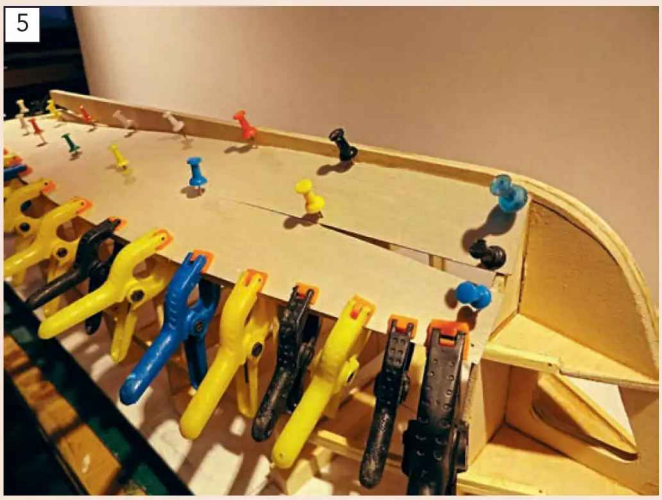
The bulkheads can be tack glued to the board. The keel with doublers can then be assembled and glued into place, followed by the chine stringers and gunwhales – which because of the curve are laminated for 2nr pieces of 1/8-inch x 1/8-inch obeche strip. In this photo, the stern rail across the rear can be seem, again mounted to a temporary ply support. The small wedges hold the first gunwhale stringer in place while the glue sets, after which the second one can be located and glued in.

4



This view shows the framework substantially complete, with the breast hooks at deck and chine level (BH1 & BH2 shown on the plan); this keeps a better bow shape than just attaching the stringers to the stem. As can be evidenced, having a supply of small spring clamps to hand is vital for this process.

5

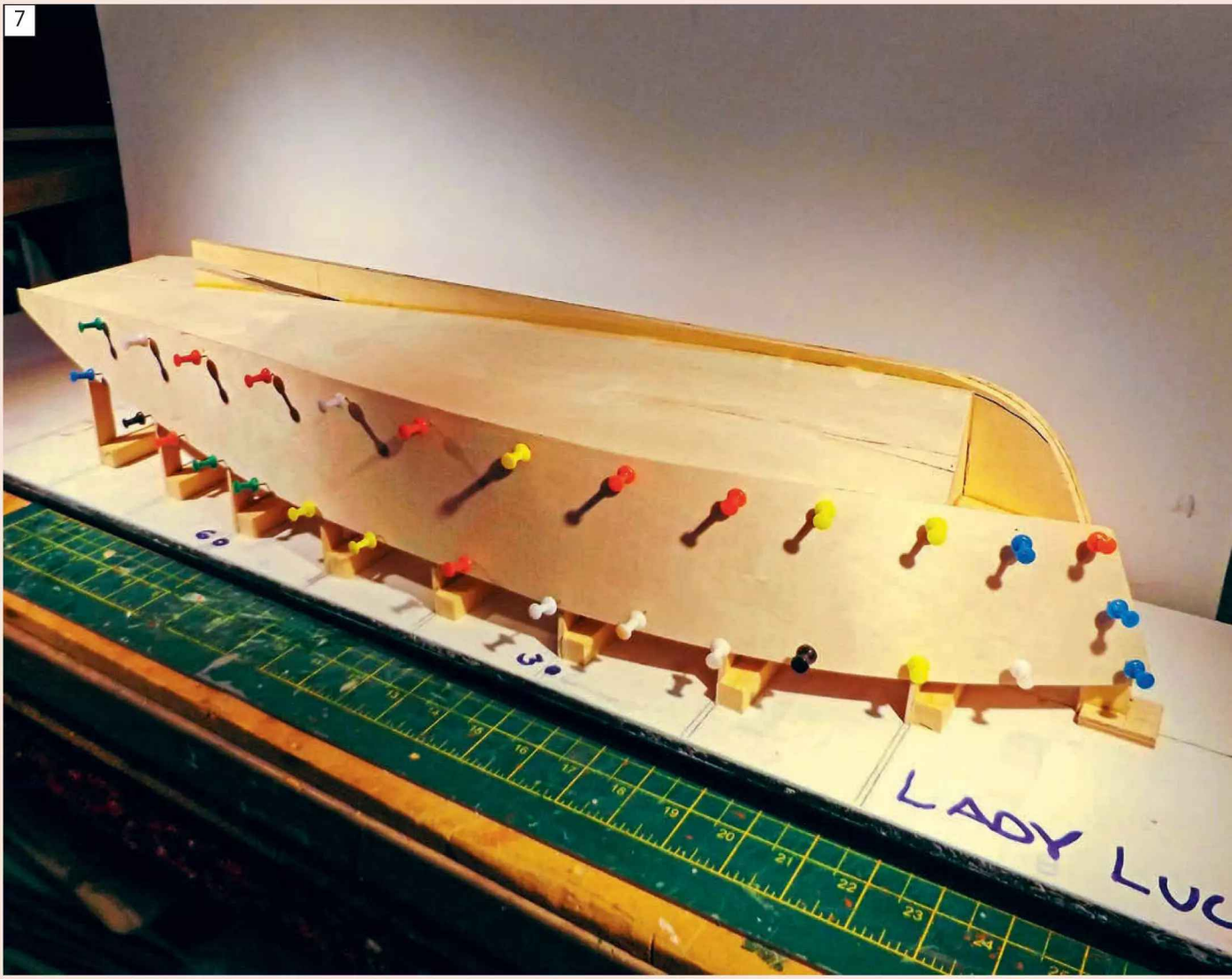


The 1/32-inch ply bottom skins presented a problem I haven't encountered before. Try as I might, the ply just wouldn't sit on Bulkhead No. 1 (this being how the original launches would have been planked). A shallow Vee cut was therefore made (an infill piece would be fitted later) and all was well. Again, clamps and mapping pins will be required here.

6

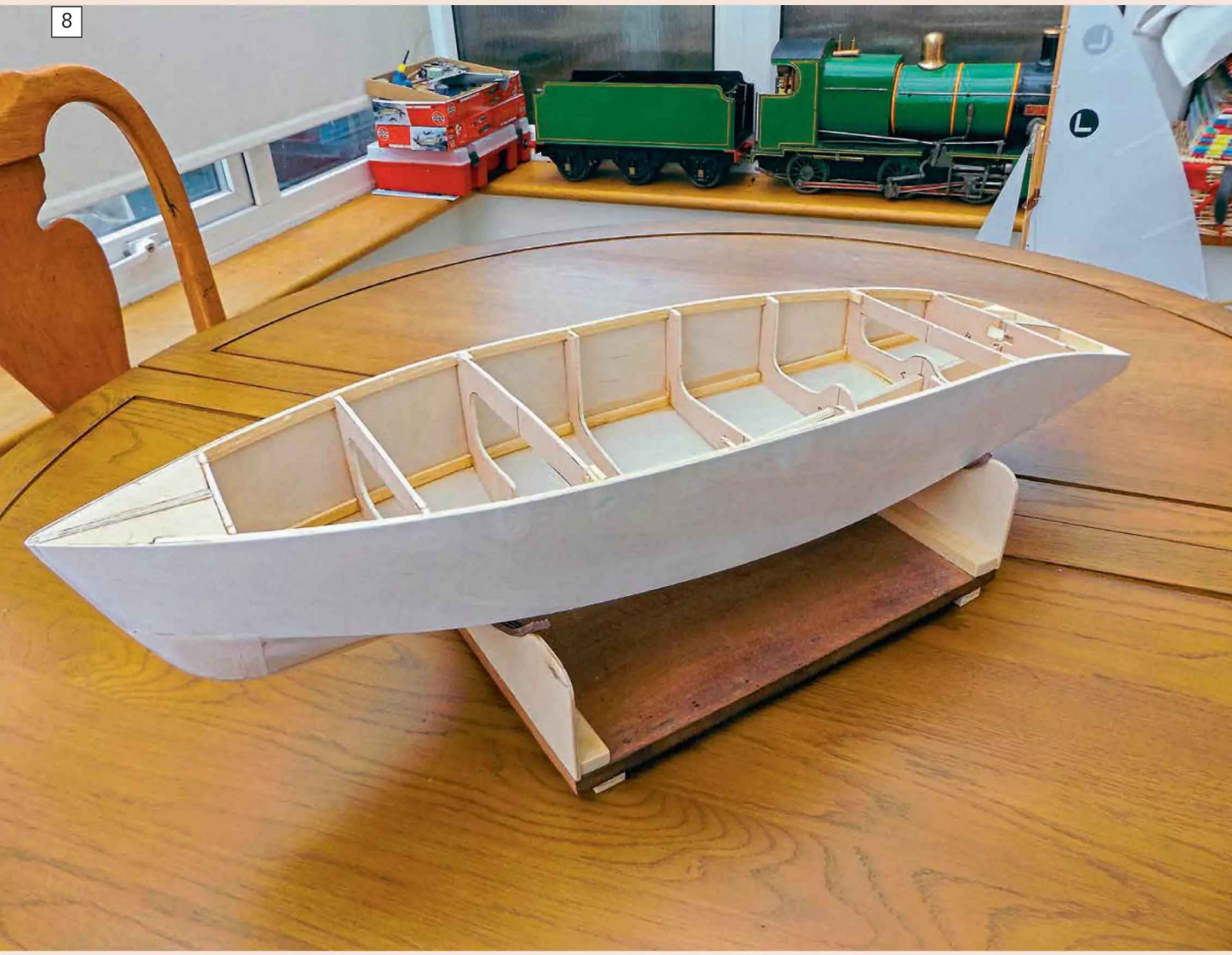
With bow with the pins and clamps removed, the bottom skins can then be trimmed to the chine stringer and the pin holes filled with lightweight filler. The bow blocks of soft balsa allow some flare shape to be carved to improve the entry.

7



The side skins of 1/32-inch ply bend nicely to the curve of the sides. These must be pinned in position until the glue dries, then trimmed down to the chine line. As she is not a speed boat, no external chine rails need to be fitted. Note also that the Vee in the bottom skin has now been infilled with an overlapping doubler on the inside.

8

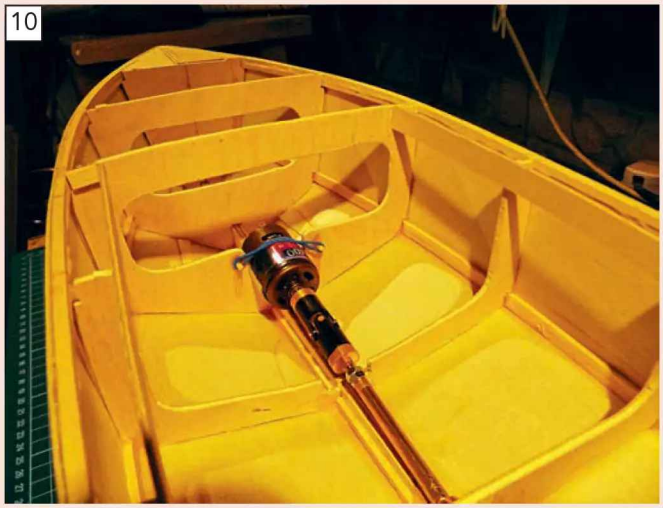


Once the balsa bow blocks are fitted and shaped, the hull is structurally complete so can be cut off its extensions and the side skins trimmed down to the deck line. At this stage a simple cradle should be constructed, using the bulkhead shapes as a guide; this will make working on the deck and internal fitting out that much easier.

9

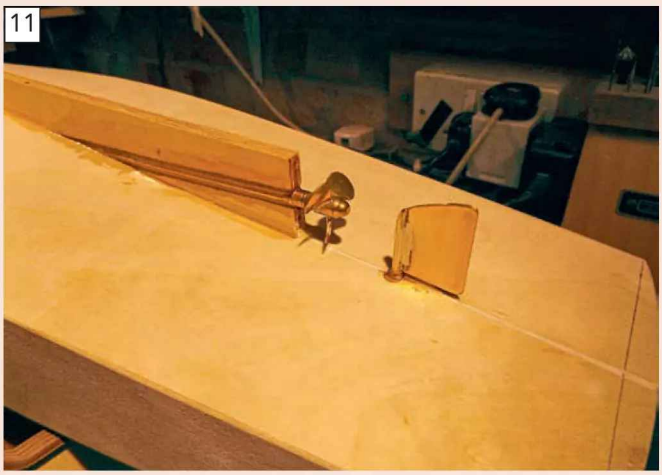
This view from the stern shows the bulkheads trimmed and ready for the motor and steering servo install. Some triangular fillets have been fitted to the stern rail.

10



The brushed 400 size motor sits in the cut out in Bulkhead No. 3. I used a simple rubber band over some dowels solution for holding the motor in position. The HUCO type coupling from Cornwall Model Boats completes my drive train, best done early on an open launch.

11

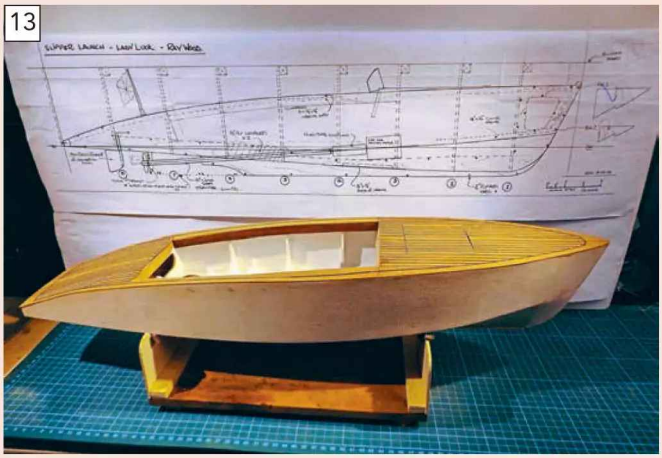


A 25mm diameter brass 3-blade propellor fits the M4 stern shaft, and the fabricated brass rudder of 18g sheet is soldered to the 3mm brass stock – a small commercial unit could, however, be used.

12

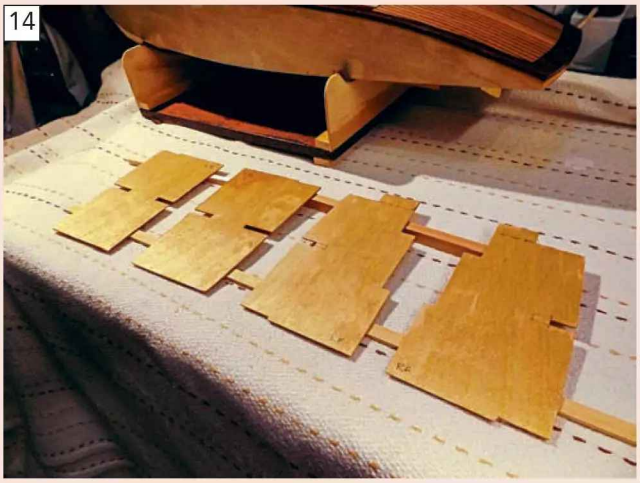
As the internals of this launch will be largely visible, a couple of coats of varnish followed by some white enamel will brighten up the cockpit area. The limited headroom under the rear deck means the servo is mounted on its side with a simple brass rod linkage; Z Bend pliers are a great asset if you don't want to mess about with clevises.

13



The Mahogany deck is the finishing touch and really brings this model to life with its rich colour. This is fitted in four sections: the forward deck with its access hatch to the radio, the side decks complete with coamings, and the rear deck to the stern.

14

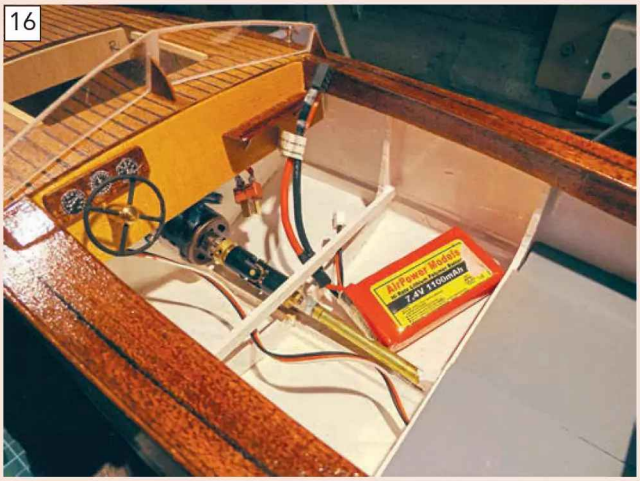


The cockpit floor shapes shown on the drawing are created from 1/32-inch ply. I would advise card templates are made to fit the actual hull before you cut your plywood, as in my experience every build is slightly different.

15

The cockpit floor sections are designed to be removable, as a battery and some ballast is required. Here you will see dashboard has also been cut to fit and varnished. I opted for a walnut varnish. The contrast with the Mahogany colours is an old trick I came across when building White Marlin a few years ago. The plank lines are drawn on with a fine line pen, after which an oil-based varnish is applied to the perimeter strip and cockpit sides before the remainder is coated with water-based varnish. This results in what I like to think looks like a teak deck with black Sika caulked joints.

16



There are a few essentials on the dashboard, such as a steering wheel some gauges on a mahogany panel and a small shelf for gin and tonics! The small 7.4-volt Lipo battery lays on one side of the keel; this requires some ballast on the other side for balance – I used small lead weights to achieve the correct waterline. The Mtronik's speed controller and receiver are located under the foredeck, with access via the hatch.

17

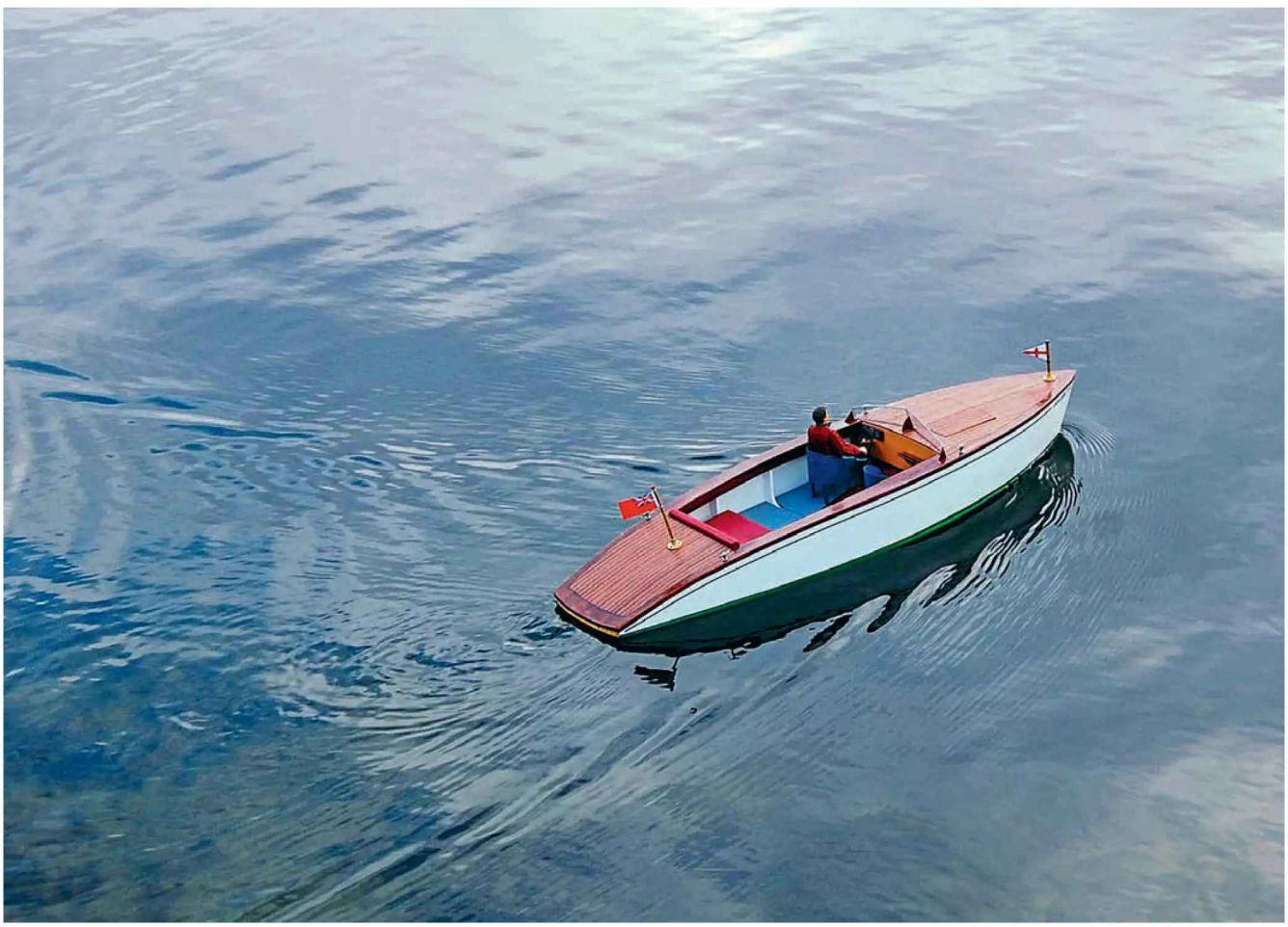
My hull was primed with two coats of cheap Poundland varnish, rubbed down, and finally finished off with Humbrol enamel. A few fittings such as cleats and sockets for the pennant on the front and the flag staff on the rear deck were then added. The rear cushions seen on my model were created using Styro foam and I fitted two Lloyd loom chairs, one of which provides a seat for my helmsman (a Dr Who figure charity shop find) – to assist here, the expanded shape for these chairs (featuring four small legs) is shown on the drawing. The puffer visible in the background was left to me by Jim Hill to finish off after he passed away last year, a good friend I made on the Model Boats forum – RIP Jim.

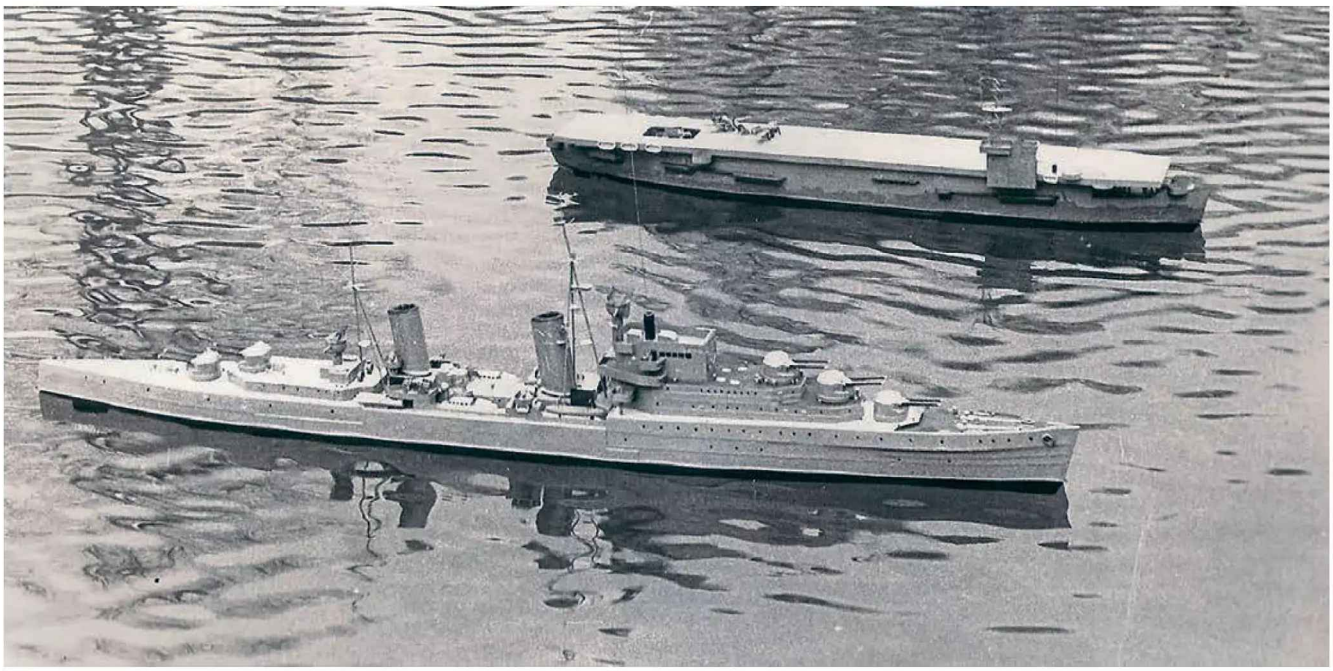
18

This view of the stern shows the transmission tunnel between the seats, which are also clearer in this shot. I sourced my Red Ensign from Cornwall Model Boats, while the St George's pennant and its dowel on the front was homemade.

This view of the port side shows the pin stripe and Lady Luck name which I printed onto transparent tape using my Dymo machine.


LADY LUCK





HMS Dido with Escort Carrier (in black and white because these models were built in the 1970s and photographed for build features to accompany plans published in the August 1980 and December 1977 issues of Model Boats respectively).

Double the fun

Glynn Guest presents the options for those wanting to sail more than one model at a time

Like most readers, I suspect, I usually take two or more R/C models with me on sailing sessions. It makes sense to do this. For a start, if you encounter problems with the first model, the second can be used for its recovery. This can be a safer option than asking any unknown to you fellow sailors who may be around at the time for help; the last thing you want is to have your model damaged or even sunk by an over enthusiastic salvor. The potential to sail two models, especially if they are different, can also add to the pleasure of the outing. Plus, knowing how fickle the weather gods can be, you can confound them by combining a powered model with a yacht. Wind or no wind, something will get sailed, and, even if the yacht becomes becalmed in the middle of the lake, you can push it back with the powered model.

The double struggle

With two models at the lakeside, however, there is always going to be the temptation to think about sailing them together. This can be a particularly attractive proposition if the models would look visually compatible out on the water, *e.g.*, a couple of warships or fishing boats, or a tug escorting a merchant ship. The problem is, how do you operate two R/C models simultaneously?

> ***"The problem is, how do you operate two R/C models simultaneously?"***

An obvious answer, if both models have their own transmitters, is to switch on, launch each model as normal and then try to figure out how to use two transmitters at the same time. This can actually be done if you can set one model to safely cruise along at a modest speed without needing constant input

Two Vosper products: the Type 5 Frigate for Iran and a design for a small 'Harrier Carrier'. The model plan for the Carrier was published in the March 2021 issue of Model Boats

from you and concentrate on keeping the second on station with respect to the first model. Not perhaps as difficult as you might think but it does need the right conditions. Firstly, the water ought to be large and safe enough to allow the first model to sail for a reasonable length of time without needing any attention. The second requirement is that this model should run straight at the speed it is being sailed; if it's a 'wanderer', then you will find this exercise very taxing.

The second model must be fast enough to catch up with the first model in a short time. It will have started this sailing session after the first model has gotten underway, so must be capable of reaching its desired station before the first model needs to be manoeuvred, perhaps because it is about to run out of lake. Having got on station, it, too, needs to be able to cruise safely, since your attention is now divided between the two models.

"The second model must be fast enough to catch up with the first model in a short time. It will have started this sailing session after the first model has gotten underway, so must be capable of reaching its desired station before the first model needs to be manoeuvred"

This might seem to be rather complicated but, with practice (and I'll admit a large lake makes life so much easier), it can be mastered. One tip is to have both transmitters on lanyards looped over your neck but arranged so that the transmitter controls cannot be accidentally moved. Having to put one transmitter down while you pick up the other one up can introduce a short but embarrassing lack of control over both models. Having both transmitters on a table in front of you could possibly work, or the more ingenious could perhaps create a dual transmitter tray that they could wear.

The alternative is to control both models from one transmitter. Unless you are wedded to the steer-wheel style of transmitter, it is likely that you have two dual axis sticks to play with, so why not use one stick for the first model and the other stick for the second? Well, this might remove the challenging gymnastics of grappling with two transmitters, but it replaces that scenario with confusing coordination problems.

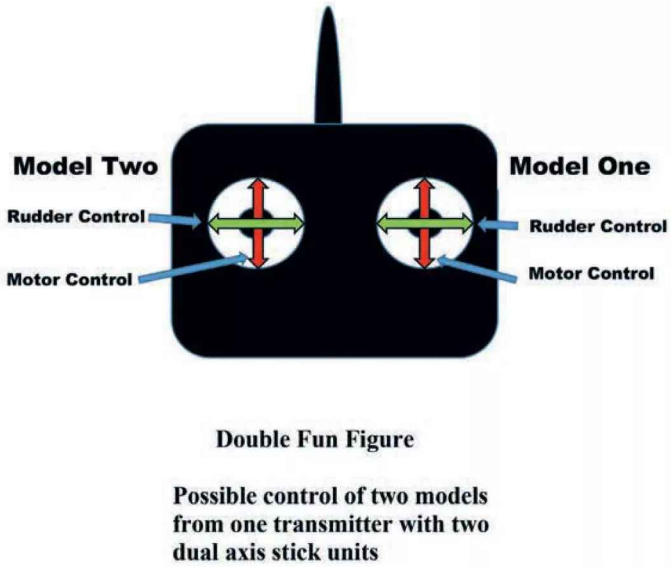
With stick-based transmitters it is usual to control the model's rudder with the side-to-side movement of one stick and the throttle (or sails for our windy brethren) with the up-down movement of the other stick. It would seem most logical to put both these functions onto a single stick, each stick controlling a separate model. I'll admit that this does take some getting used to, but with practice, and starting with slow model speeds, it can be mastered. It also helps if there is no one else sailing and getting in your way while learning.

A transmitter with attached lanyard.

With multifunction transmitters that feature a lever, knob or slider, it's possible to set one of these to control the motor at a fixed speed until moved again. It's a method I've used on my dynamic diving R/C submarine models, where I adjust the speed with the lever until the model is cruising submerged then leave it alone. This could be a way to control a model whose speed you leave fixed for most of the time.

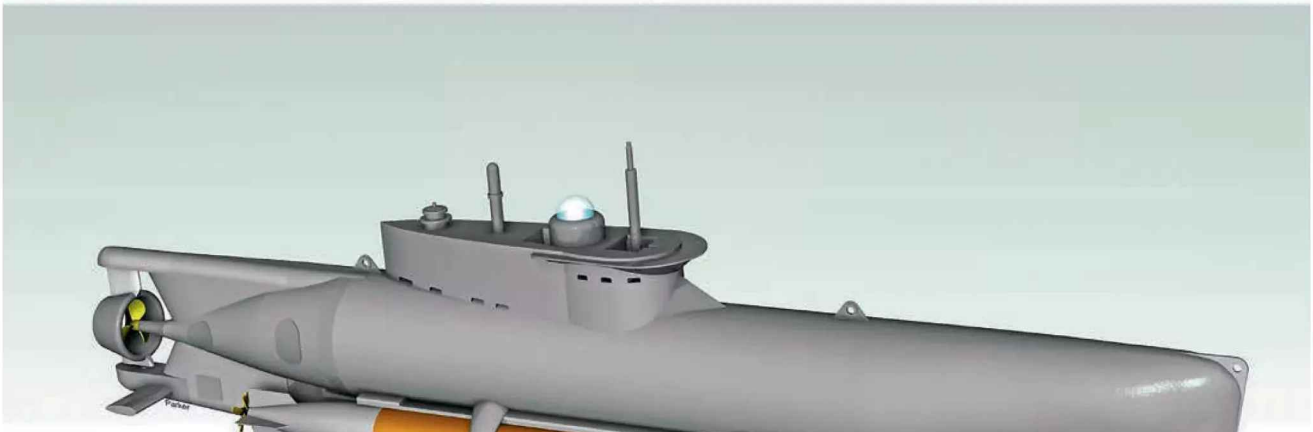
Double down or buddy up

Double sailing is bound to be confusing at first, but, if you start by experimenting at slow speeds, it can eventually become second nature. If not, then you could team up with another modeller to carry out some formation sailing. I tried this some years ago, escorting a fellow modeller's merchantman around the lake with my destroyer model. This worked quite well, looked good, and was certainly better than the usual aimless sailing around the lake. But every now and again I think the 'captain' of the merchantman forgot he had an escort, because suddenly, with no warning, his model would stop or change direction! So, if you sail in formation with another modeller, do talk to each other! ●



A stick arrangement that will allow you to operate two models at once from a single transmitter.

Seehund (Type XXVIIB) Midget Submarine Specification



Length:	11.865m	***Propulsion:***	1 x 60hp (44.8kW) diesel engine
Beam:	1.684m		1 x 25hp (18.5kW) electric motor
Displacement:	17 tons (submerged)	***Speed:***	7.7 knots surfaced; 6 knots submerged
Complement:	2 crew	***Range:***	270 n.m. at 7 knots surfaced
Armament:	2 x G7e torpedoes		63 n.m. at 3 knots submerged

SIZING-UP SEEHUND

John Parker dives into the history of, and modelling options for, this World War II midget sub

The Seehund ('Seal') was the best of the midget submarines that Germany developed during World War II. It had dual propulsion and a crew of two, which made it suitable for extended operations; it handled well, had an excellent periscope and was almost undetectable due to its small silhouette and quiet running. But its promise was never fulfilled as it arrived too late, not entering service until 1945. Against the overwhelming Allied forces arrayed against it by that time it could do little to stem the tide.

Origins

The Germans had been working on a two-man midget submarine, the *Hecht* ('Pike') in 1943, influenced by the two British X-class midget submarines that were recovered after their attempt to sink the battleship *Tirpitz*. This was designated as the type XXVIIA and was an electric-only vessel armed with a mine; faced with the need to pass through protection nets, it initially had no protruding hydroplanes but instead a moving weight system to adjust trim. Combined with a lack of ballast tanks this resulted in a completely inadequate means of control.

Modifications were subsequently made to the design, including the ability to mount a torpedo armament, and an order for 52 boats plus the prototype was placed and completed by August 1944. Nagging doubts still remained, however, and these boats were never committed to combat, being used instead to train crews on another one of the *Hecht* variants being considered, known as the Type XXVIIB *Seehund* or, later, Type 127.

Seehund submarines seen at Keil at the end of the war (image sourced via Wikipedia).

Seehund described

The Seehund design, completed in June 1944, was altogether superior to the *Hecht* it evolved from and was the most sophisticated midget submarine fielded by the German

A Seehund on display at the Deustches Marinemuseum, Wilhelmshaven, Germany (image courtesy of Wikipedia).

Seehund operational area (image courtesy of Wikipedia).

U-S622 at the Musée National de la Marine, Brest, France (image courtesy of Wikipedia).

Esty (left) and Verlinden (right) kits.

"The Seehund design, completed in June 1944, was altogether superior to the Hecht it evolved from and was the most sophisticated midget submarine fielded by the German Kriegsmarine"

Kriegsmarine. It adopted a boat-shaped hull form for better sea keeping, and a rearrangement of the internals allowed for the inclusion of a 60hp Büssing truck diesel engine for surface travel. This pushed out the range to 270 nautical miles, or up to 500 nautical miles when fitted with twin saddle tanks. A 25hp AEG electric motor was provided for submerged travel, powered by eight 7 MAL 210 battery troughs, six in the nose and two in the keel. The underwater range was only 63 nautical miles at 3 knots or 19 nautical miles at 6 knots – disappointing figures that were due to the high resistance of the hull and the armament arrangement of two underslung G7e torpedoes.

Atop the deck casing was a squat conning tower with a transparent dome which, along with a 1.5 metre non-retractable but rotating periscope with air-search capability, provided outside vision for the commander sitting amidships. Aft of the dome was the projection compass and air intake valve. The craft was steered and dived by means of a simple joystick, with the option of engaging a gyro-operated automatic steering device to maintain a steady course. Steering nevertheless was never fully satisfactory. The first profile rudder design did not provide an adequate turning circle so a

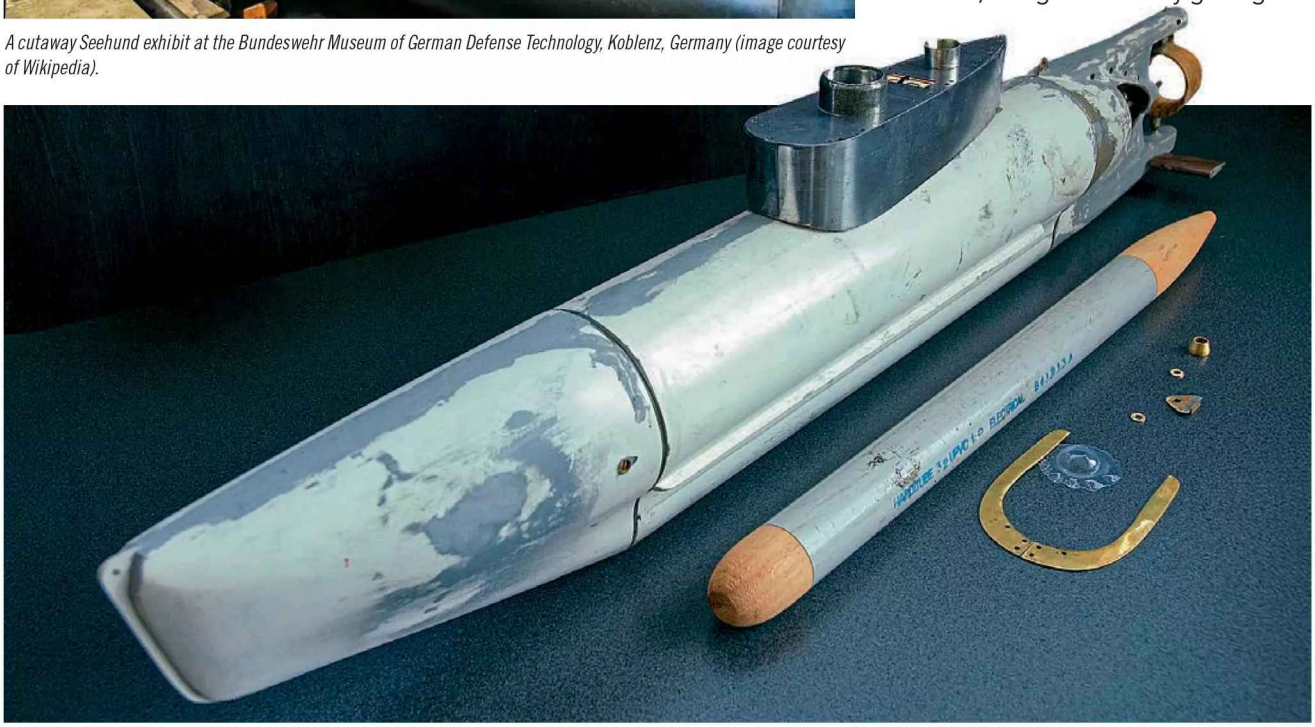
ICM kits of late (left) and early (right) versions of the Seehund.

Revell (left) and Bronco Seehund kits.

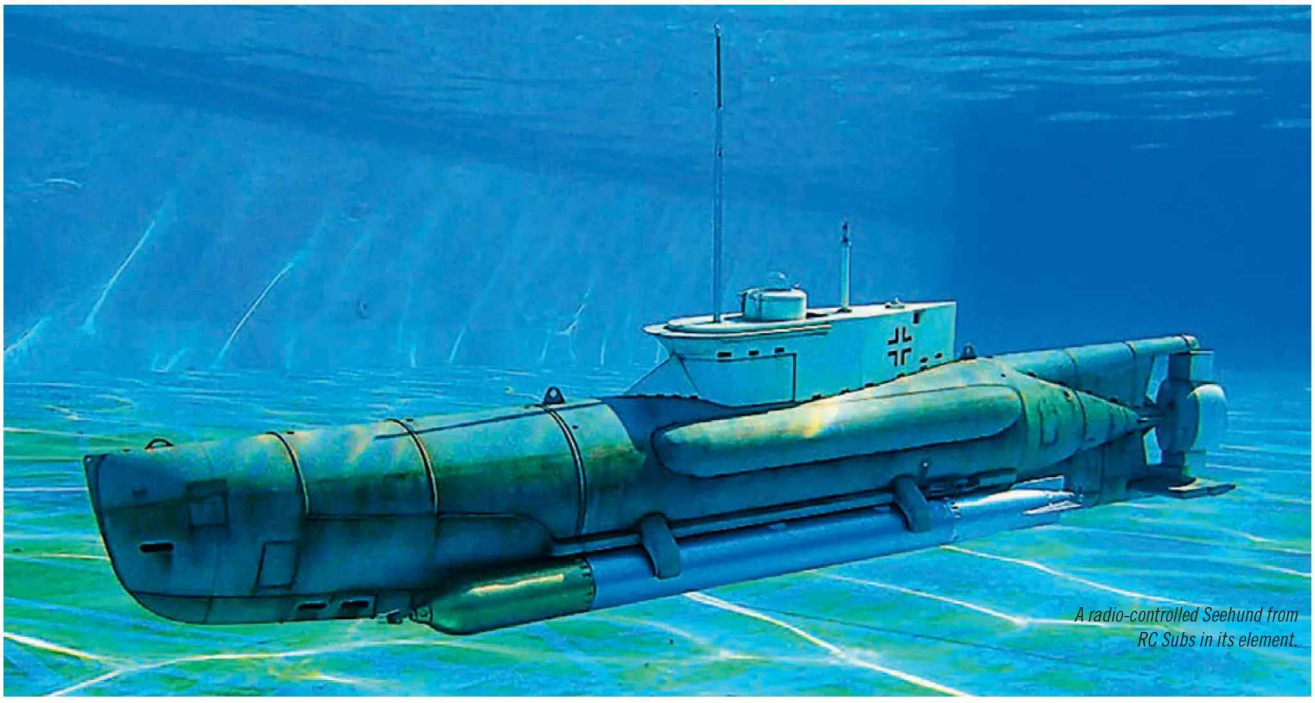
A cutaway Seehund exhibit at the Bundeswehr Museum of German Defense Technology, Koblenz, Germany (image courtesy of Wikipedia).

steerable kort nozzle was tried, but this too was found to be unsatisfactory, requiring too much effort to move. The third type tried was a box rudder with a blade each side of the propeller, and this was found to be prone to flutter.

Behind the commander and immediately in front of the diesel engine sat the engineer, who operated the various systems and fired the torpedoes on command. The *Seehund* had adequate ballast and trim tanks and could submerge in as little as two or three seconds. Its 5mm thick steel pressure hull was rated for a 30-metre maximum diving depth, though showed no signs of distress when taken to 50 metres or more. The craft's small surface silhouette made it hard to spot visually, while ASDIC (Anti-Submarine Detection Investigation Committee – an early form of sonar) had great difficulty getting a



A scratch-built Seehund under construction by L. Jewell.



A radio-controlled Seehund from RC Subs in its element.

"The Seehund is well catered for in most categories of modelling"

return off its tiny hull and hydrophones were often not sensitive enough to pick up the sound of its passage at silent creep speed.

Production

1,000 Seehund were ordered in June 1944, but conflicting priorities and the deteriorating war situation meant that by May 1945 when Germany surrendered only 385 had been completed. Remaining on the drawing board was an air-independent or closed-cycle version of the Seehund, the Type 227, which made use of liquid oxygen to run its engine underwater to achieve greater performance.

In service

Seehund operations commenced on January 1, 1945, after a very hurried training program for the crews. The operational area was principally the North Sea and English Channel as far as the Thames estuary, deploying from *Ijmuiden* on the Dutch coast and engaging any Allied shipping in the area. This entailed long transit times to the target area, and the two-man crews had to endure great hardships for days on end in the cramped space of the *Seehund* hull, especially when under depth charge attack, which could continue for several hours. The main hazard was enemy aircraft and motor gun boats, though weather conditions, particularly ice, was a factor in the failure of many boats to return from an operation.

The overall score card for the Seehunds over the period January 1 to April 28, 1945, was 142 sorties, accounting for nine Allied merchant ships, totalling about 19,000 tons sunk and a further three ships damaged, for the loss of 35 of their own number. It had to be reckoned a disappointing return for the size of the program and heroism of its crews, but on the other hand something like 1,000 Allied aircraft and 500 ships that could have been deployed elsewhere were kept engaged to counter the German midget submarine menace.

Numerous Seehund survivors may be seen in German museums and elsewhere as far afield as the United States. Four were given to France as reparations at the end of the war and these served until 1953, proving that the design was a well-thought-out service submarine and not just a desperate stop-gap measure.

Modelling a Seehund

The Seehund is well catered for in most categories of modelling and makes a fascinating display piece or working model. In papercraft, Kit No.266 by GPM measures 360mm long at 1:25 scale, and from Etsy (www.etsy.com) one of unknown scale that comes as downloadable digital files for under £5. Verlinden make resin kits to 1:35 and 1:72 scale, about 356mm and 165mm long respectively, with photo-etched parts. From ICM comes two plastic moulded kits in 1:72 scale, covering the early (Kit No. S006) and late (Kit No. S007) versions of the *Seehund,* with the latter incorporating the saddle tanks and box rudder. Bronco's plastic moulded kit, No. CB35053, is to 1:35 scale, while the Revell kit, No. 05125, is to 1:72.

For scratch-builders, plans for the Seehund can be found quite readily online. The book *Midget Submarines of the Second World War* by Paul Kemp includes a fold-out plan to 1:25 scale and will be found useful for the technical details and service history.

A working R/C model brings the tantalising prospect of working torpedoes to mind in a compact, easy to manage model. Until recently OTW produced a complete R/C kit to 1:9 scale, but sadly this looks to be no longer available as it does not appear on the manufacturer's website.

Currently, the most promising source for a working *Seehund* appears to be RC Subs (www.rcsubs.cz). Its offering is based on a 3D printed kit that is available in various scales, 1:10, 1:12 and 1:16 for a working model, and 1:144, 1:72 and 1:48 for a static display model. The working kits utilise a PVC tube for the hull centre section and are highly detailed with many etched parts, but do not include the diving system. The only proviso is the need to protect the model from direct sunlight as the 3D printing filament tends to degrade in the sun. ●

BOILER ROOM

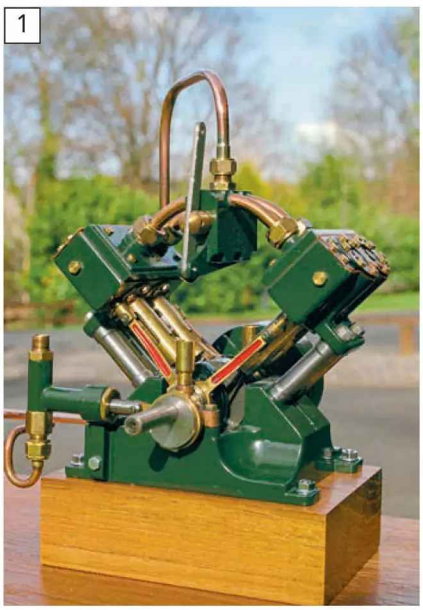
Richard Simpson offers some practical advice on how to deal with an apparently seized engine

While undertaking a bit of remedial and upgrade work on a model recently, during which I replaced an enameled tin feed tank with a 3D printed one (see the Jan 2026 instalment of Boiler Room), I also took the opportunity to have a look at a couple of things that I knew required attention on the engine. As everything had to come out anyway so I could access the feed tank, the engine was already on the workbench. A couple of fails in the past had been identified as being due to a grub screw on one of the main piston connecting rods unscrewing itself when running and locking up inside the crosshead guide. It was, therefore, my intention to remove all of them, clean and degrease them and apply a small spot of Loctite threadlock to ensure they didn't come loose again. While it was out of the model I tried to rotate the engine and was a little bit surprised to feel just how tight it was to rotate. Being something I've previously encountered, it wasn't entirely unexpected, but what it did make me realise was how concerning this could be to someone who hadn't experienced such an issue before. Consequently, I feel it merits discussing here in Boiler Room.

If you remember, we looked at lubricating oils in the Oct '25 edition, where one thing I mentioned was the use of what many consider as suitable Steam Cylinder Oil, or SCO. Traditionally this would mostly likely have been in the form of an oil with an ISO rating of 1000, which translates to an oil of a similar viscosity to treacle at room temperature. Before I knew any better, I fell into the trap of using this, as it was frequently described and sold as suitable for model engines of the size you might find in a model boat. Now, being that bit older and wiser, I know it's more suited to larger engines of higher temperature and pressure ratings than our miniature versions, so I prefer to use either the Universal Steam Engine Oil from Morris lubricants, as sold by Heritage Steam Supplies or, an even slightly lower viscosity oil such as the ISO 460 variety supplied by oil manufacturers and Miniature Steam Models.

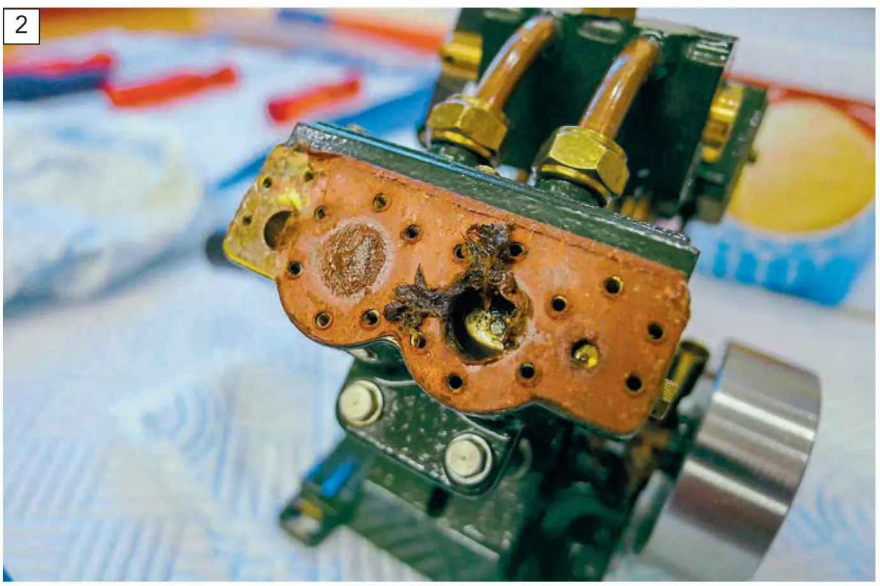
The engine in question was a Hemmens 'V' four Caton engine (see **Photo 1**), which I had originally purchased about 20 years ago and, as with so many of these type of projects it then sat on a shelf for around 18 years! It was hardly surprising then that, when it initially became time to fit the engine into the model it was destined for, a top end strip down and a thorough clean was necessary. This uncovered the remains of old oil that has solidified over the intervening years to the point of it looking like grease (see **Photo 2**). In fact, that's basically what it was. This was all cleaned out (see **Photo 3**), the engine was oiled and reassembled with new

1



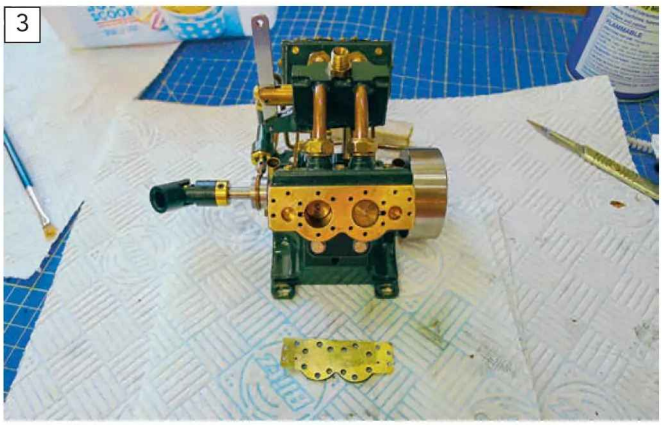
Richard's beautiful 'V' Four Caton engine as bought. It had been run by the previous owner but not very much, and Richard had no idea what kind of oil had been used internally or externally.

2



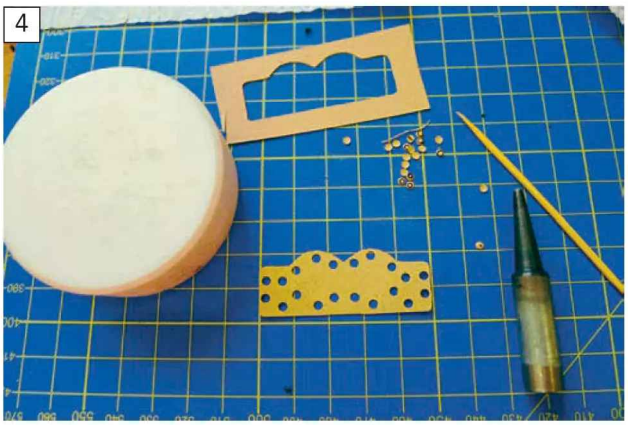
The first time Richard tried to run the engine, he found it to be quite stiff, so removed the cylinder heads for a look. What he found was basically 'grease' – the remains of old steam cylinder oil, long since congealed.

3



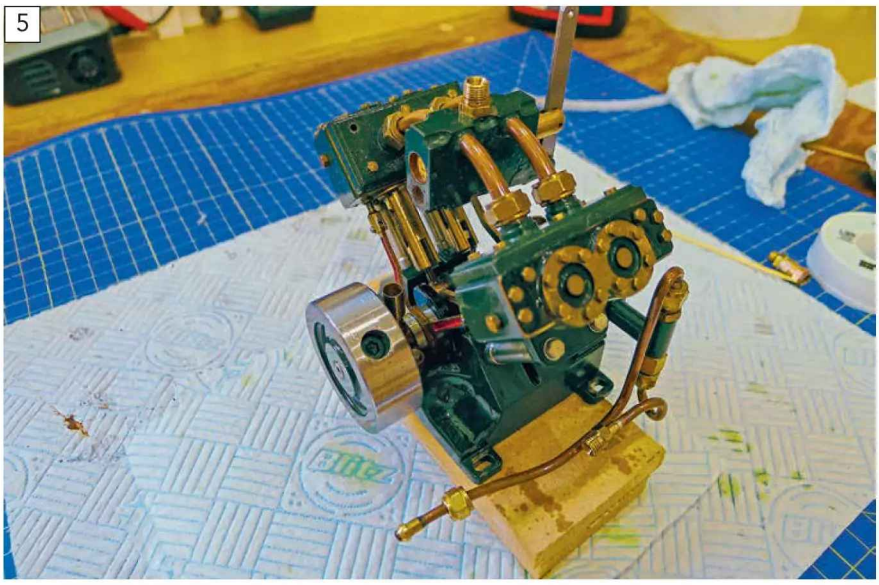
Richard gave the engine a good clean, but while this included the above piston spaces, he decided not to do a similar job below the pistons as that would have meant completely dismantling the engine.

4



Luckily his homemade gasket hole punch was a good size for the cylinder head screws, so a piece of gasket paper was cut into a suitable shape and punched out to make a new head gasket.

5



The engine was reassembled and run on air reasonably successfully. Richard admits that looking back now he should perhaps have been more critical of the engine's performance, because, while it did run smoothly, he had always felt it used a bit more air than he would have expected.

gaskets (see **Photo 4**) and following that it ran successfully a number of times two years ago.

Fast forward to present day

Since those initial runs the model has again sat on the shelf for, this time, just a couple of years, so I was expecting the engine to turn over OK. However, the more I thought about it, the more I realised what was happening.

The first point to consider was the fact that the engine was run 20 years ago using ISO 1000 steam cylinder oil. This oil had liberally coated both the inside and the outside surfaces of the engine, pipework and lubricator, so while I had changed to a lower ISO oil there was still plenty of ISO 1000 oil around.

I then started to give some serious thought to the engine itself…

Many of us use oscillating engines in our models, with one significant advantage being that of simplicity. There are relatively very few moving parts in an oscillator, even a double acting twin cylinder version, so resistance to turning is not so much of an issue.

Turning our attention to the Caton though, just starting with the crankshaft, we have four bottom end bearings, four valve eccentric straps, two crankshaft main bearings and an additional eccentric for the water pump, and then add to that four piston rod glands, four top end piston bearings, four valve rod glands, four valve rod top end bearings, four pistons, four valves and a water pump piston! When you think about it, there are a huge number of moving parts (see **Photo 5**). When every single one of those moving parts is restricted from turning due to being coated with treacle, it all starts to make sense.

"Instinctively, we might reach for the strongest solvent we have to hand and start liberally applying it to the engine. However, …"

So, while the initial reaction might be to think there's something mechanically wrong with an engine, the first thing to do is to give it a thorough clean up, both internally and externally.

The clean up

Before the very thought of completely dismantling such a complex engine as the 'V' four Caton gives anyone palpitations, let me assure you that I did take a very sensible approach. All I wanted to do was completely wash away all residues of oil (whether that be the original ISO 1000 oil or the later oils) and get back to a nice, clean engine.

Instinctively, we might reach for the strongest solvent we have to hand and start liberally applying it to the engine. However, the challenge with this is that A) you will remove *all* traces of any form of lubricant, so rotating the engine runs the risk of causing damage and B) strong solvents can potentially soak into the surface of rubber components, such as joints and seals, causing them to swell or crack and fail. Strong solvents also have a habit of damaging paintwork. Either way solvents are not a good idea.

So, what I wanted was something that would dissolve oil effectively while still providing a degree of lubrication and protection. The perfect product for this is WD 40 (see **Photo 6**). This is actually designed as a very thin penetrating lubricant that gets into every little nook and cranny, dissolves any muck, grease and old oil and replaces it with a protective lubricating film. This isn't to say I'm advocating running our engines for any length

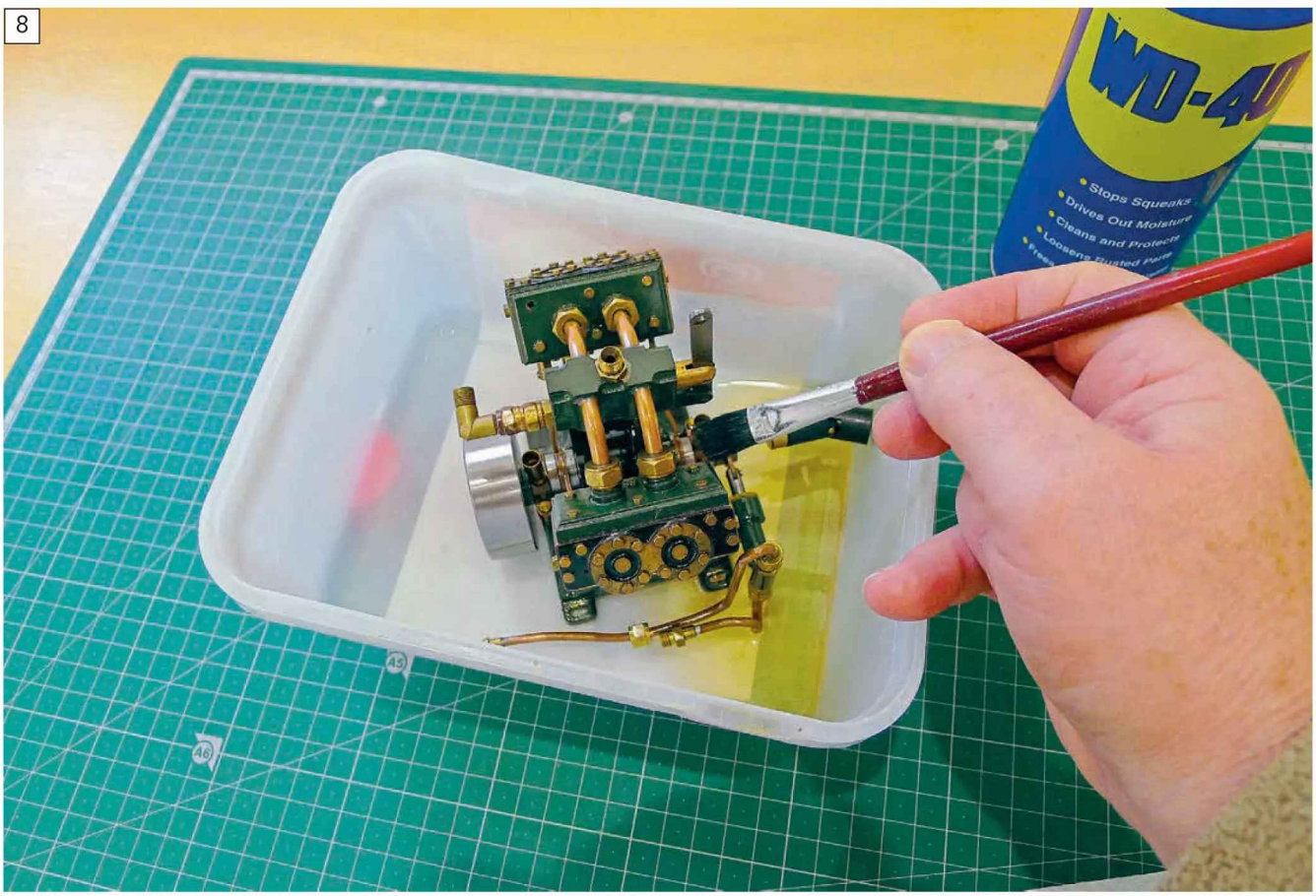
6

One of the most useful and versatile products ever created for engineering and electrical applications, in Richard's opinion! He feels it is often overlooked when considering an effective solvent that still leaves a suitable protective lubricating film. While he wouldn't run a model steam engine for a prolonged period of time with just WD 40 on it, it is, he points out, fine for light, brief use.

7

Some people may have access to the WD 40 bulk 5-litre tins but most of us will rely on the handy aerosol cans. To decant the product, fit the red nozzle and simply spray it into an ice cream tub, or something similar, using a rough cover to prevent it splashing everywhere.

8



Tilt the container to give a 'deep end' and simply paint the WD 40 all over the moving parts while frequently rotating the engine. After a while, the engine can be left to soak before repeating the brushing until you are happy that all external surfaces had been thoroughly cleaned.

For internal surfaces, either a small syringe or a plastic pipette can be used to draw up some of the WD 40 from the tub.

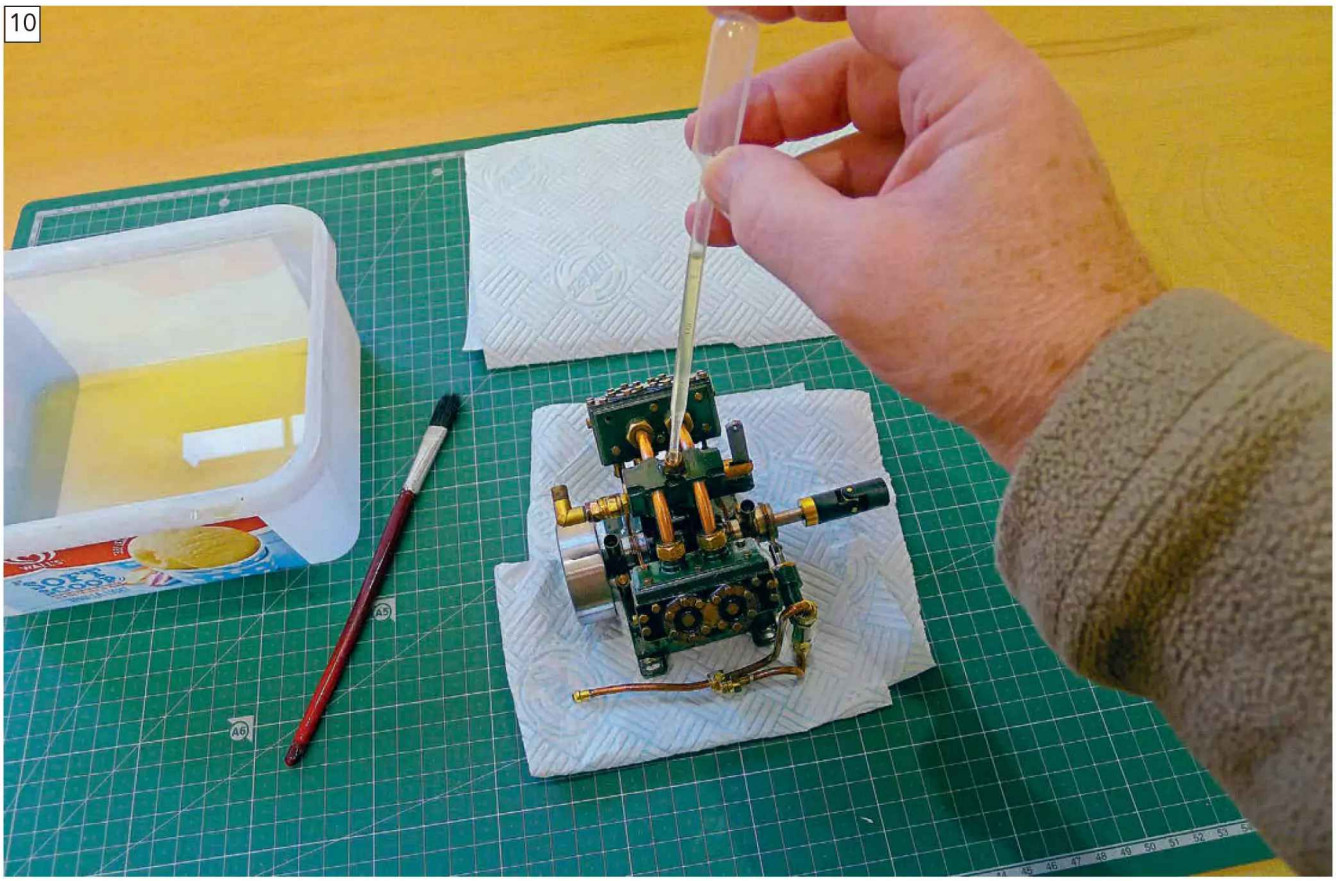
of time on WD 40, but it does allow us to thoroughly clean up a gunged up engine without having to resort to dismantling it. So, this is how I did it… First of all, I decanted a quantity of WD 40 from an aerosol can into an old ice cream tub. I decanted a fairly liberal amount as I was anticipating the WD 40 would quickly become contaminated and get to the point where I was then simply redistributing the gunge.

If you haven't done this before I suggest fitting the little red tube that you normally get with an aerosol can of WD 40, pointing it into the ice cream tub, covering the tub with either its lid or a cloth/plastic sheet/piece of paper, and carefully pressing the nozzle (see **Photo 7**). You should get a reasonable flow of liquid that doesn't create too much vapour, if any at all. Before anyone mentions it, I know you can also buy WD40 in liquid form in large 5-litre cans, but they are pretty expensive and not many of us have the need for such quantities.

"This is actually designed as a very thin penetrating lubricant that gets into every little nook and cranny, dissolves any muck, grease and old oil and replaces it with a protective lubricating film"

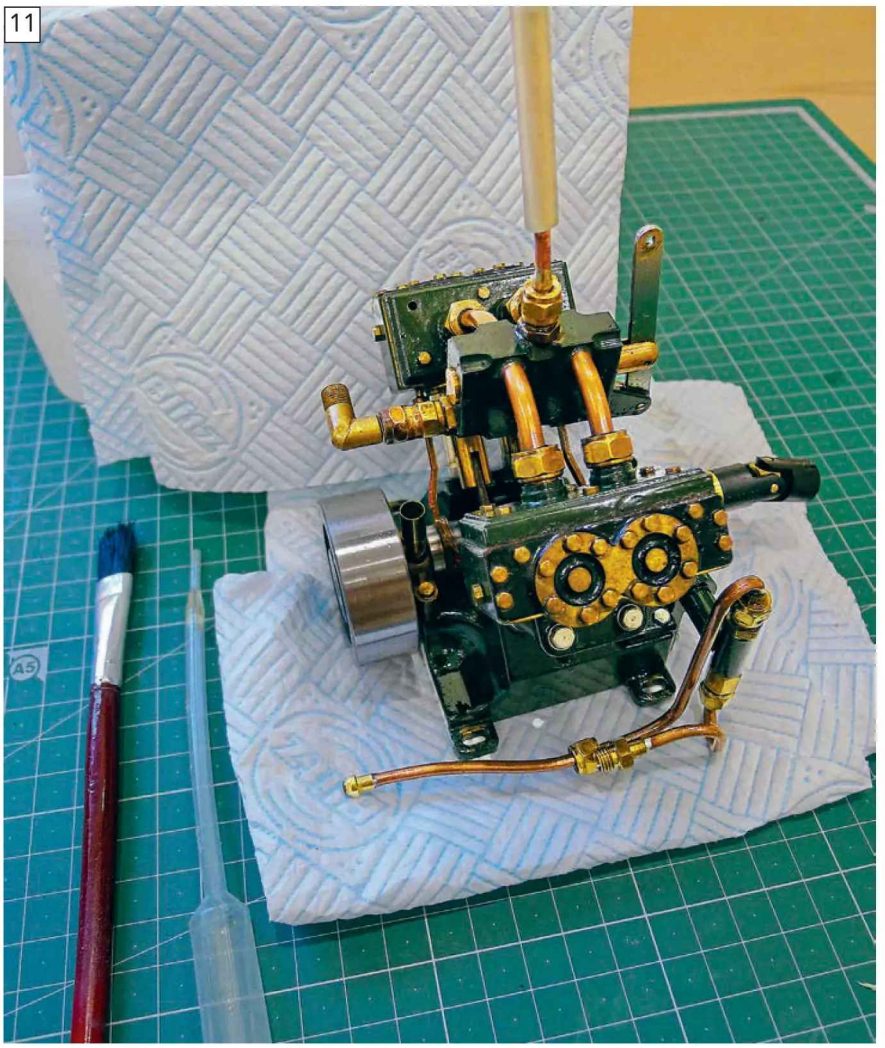
Confident I had enough WD 40 in the bottom of the tub, I placed the engine into it, tilted the tub to give a 'deep end' and started to apply the WD 40 to all parts of the engine with a small stiff paint brush. The WD40 was worked into all the bearings and external moving parts, while the engine was constantly being rotated by hand (see **Photo 8**). This was repeated a number of times over the course of the day, with the engine simply left to soak in in between sessions.

It was then time to turn my attention to the internal surfaces. First, using a



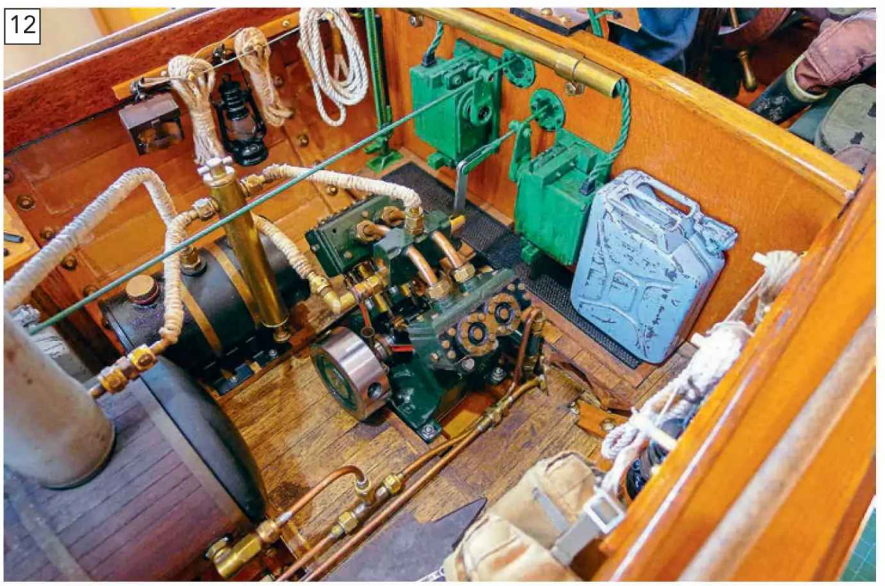
This is then injected into the engine slowly while rotating the engine by hand and moving the regulating valve. This ensures that there is as much WD 40 on the internal surfaces as possible.

11



The engine can then be turned over slowly on air as it ejects the WD 40 and cleans up all the internal surfaces. Once the exhaust has dried out, the process can be repeated until you're happy that all the old oil and collected muck hiding in the internals has been removed. The engine should by now be significantly easier to turn over by hand.

12



Following Richard's clean up, this particular engine, now refitted in the model and run on steam is a completely different animal. It ticks over on almost no steam pressure and runs up smoothly to a brisk top speed once the boiler is at working pressure.

pipette, I drew some WD40 from the tub (see **Photo 9**), and forced some into the engine inlet (see **Photo 10),** again while turning the engine and operating the regulating valve. Next, I connected an airline to the inlet and, with the minimum pressure possible, I just turned the engine over slowly on air. The air obviously quickly ejects the WD 40, so the process simply involves running the engine for a few minutes then stopping, injecting some more WD 40 and then running it again for a few minutes (see **Photo 11**). Very quickly, as the hardened old oil was removed internally and externally, the engine freed up. I kept leaving it to soak then going back to it for another brush and run session throughout most of the day, before finally taking the engine out and giving it a thorough wipe down with a rag. The engine now ticked over beautifully, with almost no pressure reading on the compressor reducer.

Finishing off

After I was happy that all traces of the old oil had been removed, I thoroughly oiled all external surfaces with a light machine oil from an oiling pen and injected some ISO 460 Steam Cylinder Oil into the steam inlet. The engine rotated very easily and turned over perfectly smoothly by hand.

Since this clean up the engine has been replaced into the model and run on steam (see **Photo 12**), I've decided that, considering it's an engine with so many moving parts, I will continue to run it on ISO 460 oil internally and a very light machine oil externally. Every time I run it on steam, I use the engine to run the boiler pressure down at the end of each session and I am quite surprised, and delighted, at how it still turns over on almost no discernable pressure.

Conclusion

In the past when I'd picked up engines and felt how stiff they'd become with age I had, usually, still got away with running them for a bit on steam. I 'd never come across one that felt quite as tight as the Caton did though. The number of moving parts and the remains of very old ISO 1000 oil had obviously tightening things up considerably.

So, if you pick up an engine that has been sat for a long time and appears to have seized, just think about what might be going on before deciding to pull everything apart. A good clean up internally and externally with a product such as WD 40 might be all you need to return the engine to smooth reliable performance. ●

WWII Rescue Tug Assurance Class

Built in 1940/3 by Cochrane & Sons shipbuilders Ltd (Selby. UK) the 21 tugs in the class were designed for escort / rescue work and sported a variety of unique names.

After the war the vessels were sold out of navy service.

The kit is to the usual high standards and includes building manual, GRP hull, GRP funnel, other materials; CNC cut styrene decks and superstructure, full size plan, resin, and white metal fittings.

Best of British

PART 2

Dave Wiggins reflects on RCS Ltd's transition from analogue to digital systems

Following up on last month's introductory feature on British firm RCS Ltd, this month the story continues with the firm's transition from analogue to digital systems, made possible only by the invention of the semiconductor transistor during the 1950s and its development into integrated circuitry techniques during the late '60s and early '70s.

RCS proportional gear

The dawn of much more realistic proportional control was a huge deal for R/C modellers. All the early effort went, understandably, into developing aircraft control systems, where finer control was more desirable and the financial rewards for manufacturers could be maximised. Only once the high development costs had been recovered did manufacturers begin to offer simplified (2- and 3-channel) sets for marine use. This becomes evident when you look at the RCS advertisement featured in this article; a 3-channel option *is* listed but is very obviously targeted at glider pilots. A 2-channel boat radio was also sometimes seen listed but I've never actually encountered one.

The very first model 'Digifive' and 'Digithree' sets were quite bulky radios, akin to all the first proportionals, whether built in the USA or in Britain. Large transmitters with simple control sticks, mechanical trimmers and heavy servos typified such sets. When looking at the September 1969 issue of our companion title *RCM&E* one can easily see the publicity angle of the RCS *''No Transistors"* and *''No IF transformers'* advertising promoting the integrated electronics in these sets. Quite where the *''Integrated circuitry RX gives reliability 60 times greater than old type transistors"* claim came from I've no idea, though - dreamland possibly!

Our featured radio

That said, the 2nd generation RCS digital range was a lot smaller and lighter all round, and my lead item this month is one such set – the then very popular four function RCS 'Digifour' outfit.

Like the firm's first 'Digifive' set, the first run of 'Digifour' transmitters retained old style control sticks (I think those fitted on my own example are from British Remcon rather than the more popular American Bonner sticks used on the very first RCS proportional radios). The mechanical trimmers, fitted on both, are pretty horrible things to use, as they offset the main control column from neutral whenever they are adjusted. Clearly, buyers must have shared my own dislike of such sticks as RCS soon substituted better bought-in items from Orbit in the USA. Featuring electo-mechanical trimmers and being very smooth in action, Orbit sticks are still very usable items even today. On electo-mech' sticks, the trim levers are attached to the potentiometer body, while the stick itself operates the potentiometer spindle. Physical neutral is thus static.

Servos supplied with the Digifour/ Digisix duo were also from Orbit and featured that famous firm's third generation servo mechanism, the very popular imported model PS3-D offering (which, like the earlier PS2D, had both linear and rotary output arms, with internal amplifiers fitted).

An interesting aspect (today) of the radio is that these servos continued to be supplied by RCS with 4-wire electronic amplifiers. 4-wire electronics, used by us all prior to the invention of modern 3-wire packages by Bob Elliot of EK Logictrol (USA), had a fundamental weakness in that, should any one of the three power wires detach, the servo would drive to an extreme – the worst possible outcome. The PS3D mechanism was a popular choice for many British makers, suggesting that the its reliability was pretty good.

Modern techniques come to R/C

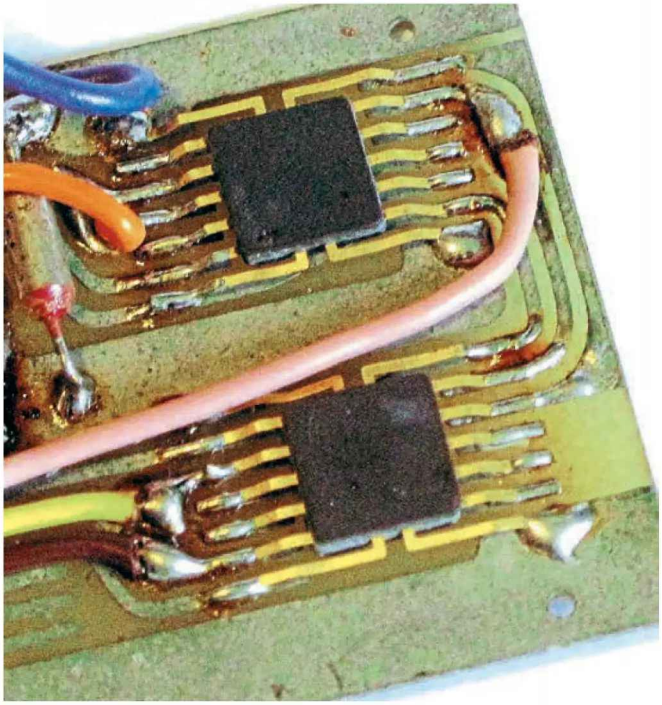
As I mentioned earlier, the *huge* advance with the Digifour (and the matching Digisix, of course) was in the company's use of some very early integrated circuitry in the receiver decoder. I am fairly sure that this truly micro receiver was the first of the genre to feature decoding ICs in the UK. These minute 'chips' made the construction of really tiny, lightweight receivers possible for the very first time. Back then, RCS Ltd was associated with the major electronics concern of Thorn-EMI and, although the chips are unmarked, EMI Ltd is almost certainly the source of the chip set illustrated. I find myself wondering if RCS even assembled these decoder boards or

"Quite where this claim came from, I've no idea – dreamland possibly!"

The complete RCS Digifour outfit discussed in the body copy of this article.

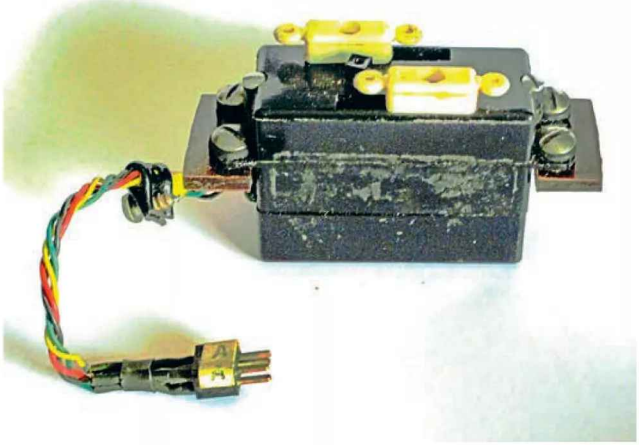
Closer views of the Digifour transmitter and its control column.

The then revolutionary RCS receiver.



A super-close view of a pair of EMI 'chips' used in the decoder.

An RCS Ltd advertisement, as run in a 1969 issue of RCM&E, for this month's featured R/C set.



A sample Orbit PS3D, as supplied by RCS Ltd.

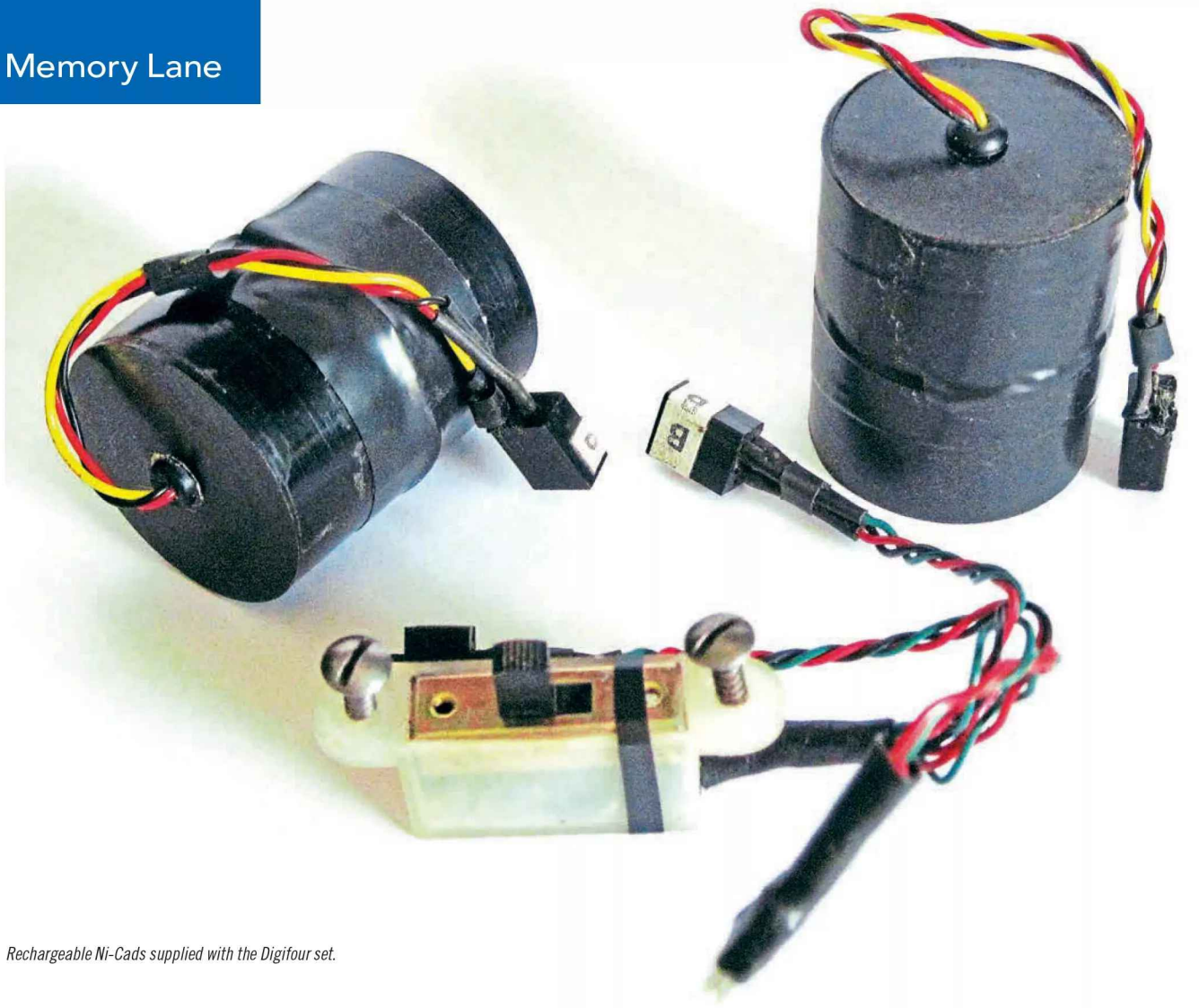
if EMI Ltd supplied them ready to go. This would not have been that unusual. Flight Link (FLC), for example, is known to have imported readymade receiver RF boards for some of its sets and the commercial Radio/TV business commonly used readymade sub assemblies. The major concern where I trained – EKCO Ltd – used both readymade IF strips and audio amps in some of its popular transistor radios.

The RCS receiver RF section would also have been described as 'solid state' back in its day, employing a device called a crystal filter instead of the usual triple IF transformer line up. RCS Ltd had been early adopters of such devices (*aka* trans filters) for its Superhet' receivers - I can no longer recall just how reliable these (then) ultra new items were for RCS; certainly, many of the early radios had a lot of teething trouble as they moved from discrete electronics to full integration, with some quite big names reverting back to transistor encoders and decoders after chip failures in the field. Being 'first' with a new technology is not always the best idea folks!

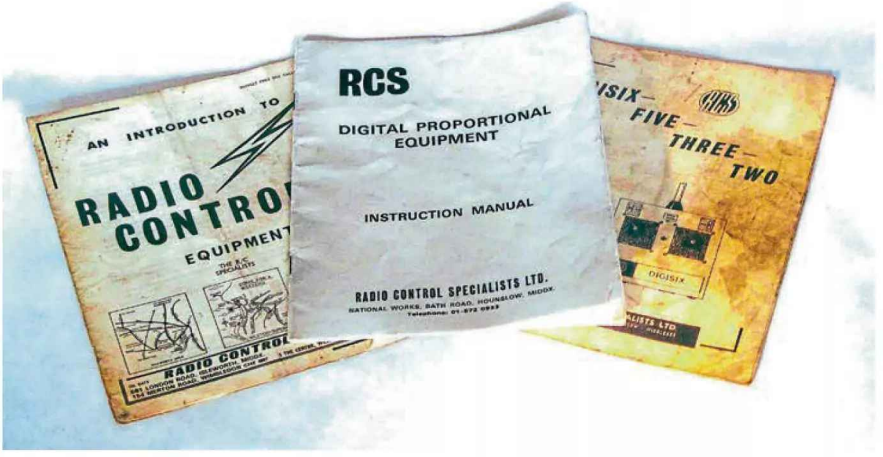
> ***"These minute 'chips' made the construction of really tiny, lightweight receivers possible for the very first time"***

Batteries supplied (the only choice at the time) were the old style 500mah cylindrical 'Deacs', either from Varta or Ever Ready.

My set also came with some quite interesting literature, of which samples are illustrated here.



Rechargeable Ni-Cads supplied with the Digifour set.



A selection of RCS literature.

In summary

It's becoming quite popular on the modern vintage R/C scene to totally rebuild attractive vintage transmitters like the one featured in this article by ripping out all of the old electronics and re-equipping with a modern encoder and 2.4 RF section. If you know what you're about, this can result in a far more attractive set than any modern transmitter in its boring black plastic can possibly offer. In this instance, however, I'd advise you to tread carefully, owing to the mechanical trimmers on the *ye-olde* sticks!

RCS Ltd was at one time easily Britain's biggest R/C firm and its Hounslow factory produced a considerable variety and number of radio sets over many years. It also attempted a foot hold in the retail sector, selling its own systems through its own shops (trading as Radio Control Supplies). The radio illustrated represents its ultimate hobby-focused R/C range.

During the 1970s, bit by bit RCS shifted its focus from hobby to military equipment manufacture as it sought to become involved in designing early military drones and apparatus. I've no idea how successful this proved for the firm but its place and leadership in our hobby was then taken over by companies like Skyleader and Sprengbrook.

"It's becoming quite popular on the modern vintage R/C scene to totally rebuild attractive vintage transmitters… This can result in a far more attractive set than any modern transmitter in its boring black plastic can possibly offer"

Future trip down Memory Lane

The next instalment in this series will focus on a few useful items of R/C modelling/home builders test equipment. Until then, I bid you all *adieu*! ●

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RAF launch info appeal

I noticed on page 12 of the January issue of Model Boats magazine, in the article on 2025 Scale Model World show, a picture of the RAF launch belonging to John Lingwood of Stafford MBC. What especially interested me is that I have a similar, possibly identical, model in my collection, although I have tried without success to find out more about the model or the 1:1 scale original on which it was based. This is the first time I have seen another example of this model, if indeed it is the same as John's. My model has a 30" long fibreglass hull, wooden deck and cabin, and three propellers, although only the left and right ones are currently in use. It is finely detailed and has been made by a modelmaker more skilled than me.

I obtained the model a few years ago from the family of the late Peter Throp who, coincidentally, was also a member of Kirklees Model Boat Club around 30 years ago. The model needed recommissioning, involving fitting new radio-control equipment, new battery, rectifying a few leaks in the hull, a good clean and touching-up of the paint in a few places. After a few trial sails on the lake at Wilton Park, Batley, I entered it in the club's Island Endurance event last Spring where, although not finishing the hour-long endurance test, it gave me encouragement to try again in 2026 with a higher capacity battery.

It was good to see in the magazine another model boater enjoying exhibiting and sailing a similar, possibly identical model. Could anyone provide more information about the model and possibly the prototype on which it is based?

GRAHAM SMITH
KIRKLEES MBC MEMBER

The RAF launch acquired, restored and refitted by Graham Smith; a model he would be most interested to learn more about.

John Lingfield's RAF pinnace, as displayed at Scale Model World and featured in the January 2026 issue of Model Boats.

On receipt of your email, I reached out to John Lingwood, copying him into the info and photo you kindly sent me, requesting more information on *his* RAF launch (as featured in the Scale Model World report run in our January 2025 edition).

John has kindly explained: *"My model was built on a commercially available GRP hull; this is currently offered by Mountfleet Models, although the mould dates way back to the late 70s/early 80s). There was no plan, but no matter, John Lambert had produced drawings still available from Sarik Hobbies) for one of this class of Groves and Gutteridge 60ft general service pinnace; G&G were marine architects and yacht builders on the Isle of Wight. Much perusal of the website RAFboats.com led me to decide on the particular launch I would model using JL's plans as a basis for construction.*

"Apart from the hull, the rest was scratch built using John Lambert's drawings, with everything from the deck upwards fashioned from styrene sheet.

"I scaled the model to 1:24, resulting in a length 30 inches, with motive power supplied by 3 x 385 motors running on 12V.

"There are three shafts and two rudders, exactly as per the original design; though the two outer shafts are contra rotating, on the real things all shafts have the same 'hand'.

"The model operates on 2-channel 2.4Ghz R/C. It comes up easily onto the plane, and the motors are sufficient to replicate the full speed of 16 knots."

"If Mr Smith is interested, I have a good selection of 'in build' photographs I would be more than happy to share with him."

I will, of course, send you John's contact details. I am sure he will also be able to provide information on the prototype vessels, too. Ed.

New Years Day sailing & *Leeds Castle* observations

Of course, with New Year's Day 2026 being a Thursday and therefore a Club sailing afternoon, it had to be celebrated, didn't it! The air temperature was about 5C with a light breeze, but we'd had a couple of hard frosts overnight (down to -3C) anyway so arrival at the lake it was covered in thin ice and some confused waterfowl. Fortunately, two members turned up with heavy glass-fibre hulled tugs and proceeded to clear a strip next to the launch area outside that we could reach by hand. The noise of the ice grating and eventually breaking against the hulls made my skin crawl, but power to them! Eventually we managed to get enough clear water for several yachts and my Type31 frigate to join the tugs and chunter up and down, but we packed up early, about 1500, before we ourselves froze. Unusual, but a good friendly meet, attracting many intrigued observers out for their constitutional.

While writing, although I did not get the opportunity to board any of the OPVs in my day, I must congratulate Stuart Henderson on his superb model of HMS *Leeds Castle*, as featured in the Your Models section of last month's issue. Looking in particular at the smaller picture that appeared on page 78, which so well depicts the cluttered nature of RN platforms of that era, if I may, I would like to make two observations, given they are based now on distant memory…

1. The two life belt housings at the rear of the bridge wings (P&S with the sloping bases) are part of the 'man overboard' response process. On alarm, a punch button in the bridge releases both rings into the sea and generates a point of light on the nav plot to aid recovery.

2. Petrol is hazardous both in liquid and gaseous form (both heavier than air) and is considered particularly dangerous on ships. As a result, procedures for handling and storing it on all RN platforms are rigorous. Looking at the inflatable, I note it is not ready for imminent deployment, no outboard mounted, therefore the Officer of the Watch would be most 'disappointed' to find petrol containers, full or empty, not secured in the fuel stowage locker, which I think is the rectangular structure alongside that inflatable. For information, in the event of an incident that locker is capable of ejecting the petrol containers overboard, hence its location.

I pass this information not as any form of criticism but as perhaps talking points at pondside.

MIKE PAYNE
WARMINSTER MBC

I always enjoy the quiet that seems to descend on New Year's Day, and, providing you're wrapped up warm, I reckon this would be the perfect way to totally chill out – LOL!

I have already passed your interesting observations regarding the Leeds Castle on to Stuart, who, rest assured, has taken them in the spirit in which they're intended and tells me he will bear this in mind next time he is debating where to locate his fuel canisters! The model looks, as you point out, looks simply superb, so I, too, am only sharing the info in case it is of assistance to others. Ed.

Breaking the ice at the Warminster MBC's 2026 New Year's Day gathering.

E-boat mission

I am trying to help a friend of mine who is looking for anyone who has, or knows of, a 1.24 scale German E-boat for sale. It doesn't have to be complete, as he'd be equally happy with an unfinished project.

DAVID WATSON
EMAIL

The only 1:24 scale kit I'm aware of is the Battlecraft one (https://www.battlecrafts.com/complete-fittings-kits/1-24th-scale/246-ww2-german-e-boat-1-24-scale), but it's pretty pricey at £410. Fingers crossed someone reading can be of more help. Ed.

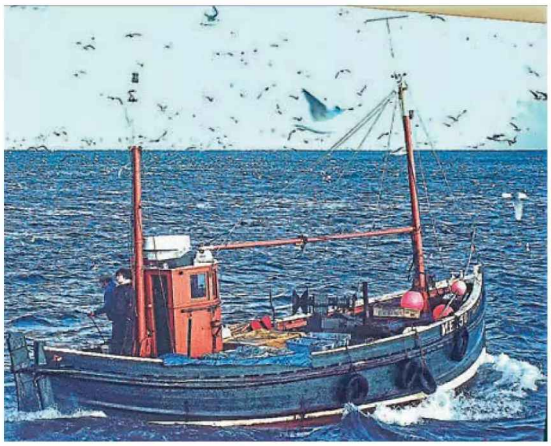
Artistic license vs reality

I was pleased to see (in the January 2026 issue) that my Fifie plan had resulted in a model. I would, however, point out that, when at sea, all gear on small open deck fishing vessels of this type needs to be stowed properly; space is limited and the last thing you'd want would be clutter endangering safe movement on deck in a seaway where there will often be violent gyrations. Another small observation is that the wheelhouse door would normally be hinged at forward side, not the after side as shown.

JIM POTTINGER
EMAIL

Thanks very much for sharing your wonderfully atmospheric shot of a 1:1 scale Fifie, Jim, and for the well explained reality check. These are without doubt very valid points, as are Mike Payne's similar Health & Safety at sea OPV observations.

On the flip side, it could be argued that choosing to take a little artistic license when it comes to detailing can simply add to the fun and enjoyment of a project. That said, as Mike pointed out, having additional knowledge in your back pocket during any chats entered into with casual pondside admirers is bound to give them more to think about and earn you more kudos. Ed.



Caught on camera by Jim Pottinger: a Fifie at sea.

Watercraft MTB kit

After chatting with one of my customers, Nick Clarke in The Wirral, he sent me this photo of a vintage model boat kit, which he thinks may have been made and marketed just after the war. Any thoughts or experience of this manufacturer?

CLEVDON STEAM,
via DAVE WOOLEY
EMAIL

The closest my online research has come to being able to tell you any more about this kit was finding an empty box for a Watercraft 1:600 scale destroyer (HMS Isis) offered for sale on eBay. The listing dates its release as 1947, so, despite an obvious change to the artwork design of the paper label affixed to the box, I think Nick's early post-war suggestion for the No. 457 Motor Torpedo Boat is likely to be correct. The late 1940s/early 1950s did see a shift from war work back to production of other goods, such as toys, with the focus on wood, tinplate and early plastic ones largely driven by companies in the London area. Unfortunately, I've drawn a blank on digging up any more information on this particular Teddington-based kit manufacturer (although Watercraft could, of course, be a brand rather than company name).

So, it's over to you, chaps! Ed.

We would love to hear from anyone who can tell us more about Watercraft and, in particular, its Motor Torpedo Boat kit.

New sailing venue sought

I live on the border of Shropshire and Cheshire, and I have been looking for a club whose water I can sail my model boats on. I used to be a member of Crewe and District Club, but the owners of the lake have cut down their hours of sailing to only two sessions (each of only three hours) a week. So, I am looking for options. I cannot find any contact details for the Telford District Club so I am not sure whether this may have closed down. Any suggestions would be most appreciated.

ANDRE DUYS
EMAIL

I can't find any info on Telford District MBC either, Andre, but hopefully any members reading will be able to supply contact details I can pass on to you. Likewise, I will gladly forward on any invites from other clubs in your area. Once again, over to you, chaps!

Your Models

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**

MS *Oldenburg*

Exactly a year ago, in the January 2025 edition, plans and a build guide for MS *Oldenburg* by Ray Wood were published, and yesterday I finally finished my offering. As I live in Devon and not that far from Bideford where the ship regularly ties up alongside the Quay it was an obvious choice for me to start building. I was also able to see the ship in Bideford and take numerous pictures, which have been a great help with many of the details. Quite a challenging build but I am pleased with the result. Can't wait now for my model boat club to start the new season at Easter when sea trials can begin!

Here are three pictures you may find worthy of the magazine. One shows the lighting I have installed.

JOHN CORAH
EMAIL

She's looking very smart indeed, John! Please do send in some further pics when you get her on the water for 'sea' trials. Ed.

John Corah's splendid build of MS Oldenburg based on Ray Wood's plans for this model featured in the January 2025 issue of Model Boats.

Clyde Puffer *Glenaray*

Puffers are very interesting little boats and have a place in in Scotland's folklore and literature, thanks to Neil Munro's short stories about the fictional puffer *Vital Spark*.

Originally designed for the Forth and Clyde Canal in the 1850s, puffers soon proved their worth around Scotland's coastline, carrying all manner of cargo. They were often seen beached in small communities around Argyll and elsewhere, discharging coal.

The puffer's design was so efficient that the Admiralty cloned one to create a class of auxiliary 'Victualling Inshore Craft'. Steam powered, these brought supplies such as water and fuel to warships in harbour. After the War, these new vessels then effortlessly became some of the last of

Scotland's puffers. One of these was the *Glenaray*, the vessel I decided to model.

I realise that many readers will have built the Caldercraft *Northlight* 1:32 scale kit, and this was what I based my own model on. While, in adapted form, the hull was what I needed, and there were many elements of the kit such as the winch and ship's boat that were ideal, much needed to be made from scratch. I had to remake from brass many parts, including the rudder and most rigging elements, as I found the white metal ones supplied were simply too fragile to be of use.

I also got carried away with detail a little and ended up building my own superstructure from scratch. I now have a puffer which has a smoke unit, lights, heads (*i.e.*, a toilet), a cargo of real coal, a wheelhouse interior and a crew who bear more than a passing resemblance to those of the *Vital Spark*. There is quite a bit of smoking and tea-drinking going on aboard the *Glenaray*, and the engineer seems to be immersed in a novel called *Lady Cynthia Sins Again*!

Glenaray had her sea-trials just before Hogmanay, and hopefully now has a successful career ahead of her.

ALASDAIR ALLAN
SCOTLAND

I absolutely love how much fun you've injected into this model by totally bringing her to life with all the incredible little detail touches, Alasdair. Ed.

No attention to detail spared on Alasdair Allan's utterly charming Clyde puffer, Glenaray.

Pond yacht restorations

I particularly enjoyed Stuart Deacon's piece about restoring Ilona's pond yacht in the January 2026 issue. I restored two pond yachts in 2025 so I thought I would share some photos and a couple of techniques I used.

I bought both models as wrecks on eBay to develop my skills before tackling my Corel 5,5 regatta yacht plank-on-frame kit. The smaller yacht looked like it had been painted with a trowel and then dunked in varnish! The mast had been snapped off for shipping, and the rigging was a mess. The larger model was a bare hull, with no mast, rigging or fittings. It had been badly varnished without sanding the hull planking, so it was a bit rough.

The first thing I would say about restoration is it's much harder than building new as you have to take the model apart first, then repair, and make or find missing parts before you can even start rebuilding. Unlike Stuart, I decided to sand the old paint and varnish off my yachts rather than using paint stripper. This worked well and also created smooth surfaces as a result.

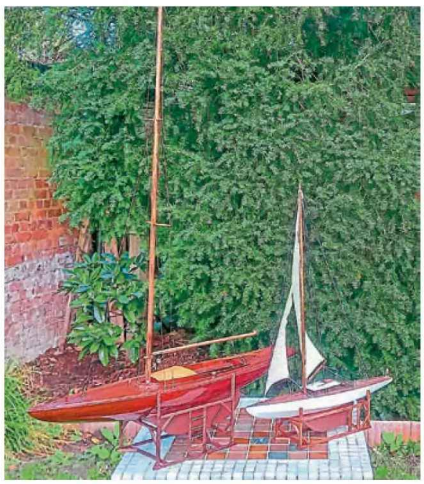
As the smaller yacht is made of plywood, I decided to paint the hull and cabin roof using some white enamel radiator paint that I had spare. I must have brushed on a dozen coats before sanding back, starting with 1,500 grit and working through nine increasingly finer grades, eventually finishing with 12,000 grit (GC Abrasives Micro-Mesh pads.) This produced a perfectly smooth mirror finish ready for car polish and wax.

Having sanded the deck right back, I had to re-create the planking, which was done using a black rollerball pen. This dug a shallow groove in the deck as well as drawing the lines, which gave a reasonable caulking effect.

The cabin portholes now have Perspex glazing to prevent water getting into the cabin.

I attempted to add a self-steering mechanism, which is visible in one of the photos. The elastic from the tiller to the cabin roof holds the rudder straight ahead until the wind deflects the boom and pulls the tiller. As wind pressure on the sail eases, the rudder returns to straight ahead. I'm not convinced it will work very well in practice though.

The rigging is waxed thread used for leatherwork, which is strong, does not stretch and I felt had a good scale look



Demonstrating just how far a little TLC can go, these little and large pond yachts were bought as wrecks and then exquisitely restored and finished to perfection by Jim Martin.

about it. I made the tiny bowsies from 1mm thick aluminium sheet so the rigging could be tensioned properly. The sails are original, but I soaked them in warm water and baking soda to clean them.

As the larger yacht was only a hull when I bought it, I started by sanding and varnishing it while researching the mast and rigging arrangements. I found using real yacht varnish worked better than the water-based alternatives available these days.

I made the mast from 12mm dowel, tapered using a wood lathe and sanding block. The boom is 8mm dowel, fitted to the mast using a brass Aeronaut gooseneck I found going cheap on eBay. The spreaders on the mast are made from the bamboo sticks that hold price labels in potted plants. The mast step is made from a copper disc superglued to a section of copper plumbing pipe and then sprayed with clear lacquer. The two mast rings are also made of copper plumbing pipe, reduced in diameter by cutting sections out and supergluing the ends together. I made the rigging hooks from brass wire which has, surprisingly, proven to be strong enough to withstand tensioning the rigging.

I decided this model would be for display and not have sails, so I wanted to try an experiment with the rigging. I used copper wire which is tensioned by passing it through short sections of brass tubing at deck level, pulling it round the deck fittings, passing it back through the brass tubing and bending the end of the wire over the top of the tubing. Hopefully this is visible in the photos. I was surprised to find this worked very well and was much easier than making more bowsies. The deck eyelets were taken from a picture-frame hanging kit. I think this looks neater than the bowsies and more in keeping with my theme of wood, copper and brass.

I sprayed the keels on both models using metallic copper paint to represent anti-fouling. I wanted to show the hull finishes and therefore did not paint to the waterline as this would have hidden a much larger area.

I made the stands from 6mm square section wood bought from B&Q, stained and then spray lacquered. The ladder rungs on the stands are made from brass tubing.

Having now completed these two restorations, I have moved a little further up my own learning curve and will be ready to tackle my first plank-on-frame build during 2026.

JIM MARTIN
EMAIL

Take a bow. You've done the most amazing job of restoring these two beauties, Jim. They both look so slick and stylish thanks to the sensational level of finish you've managed to achieve. Ed.

Model Boats is a friendly, inclusive, community-led magazine that welcomes everyone, from the complete novice to the seasoned vet, aboard. As well as including a FREE PLAN in every other issue, no aspect of the hobby is off radar, with content embracing everything from scale static display models to radio-controlled, combustion engine-powered and steam-driven working renditions. From model yachting skills to Fast Electric thrills, we've got it covered!

Lindsey Amrani

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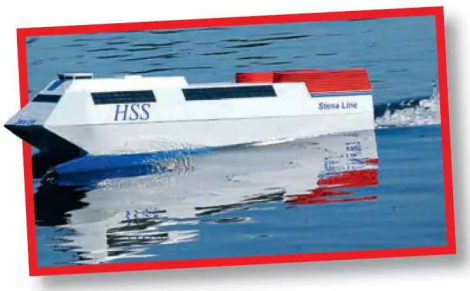

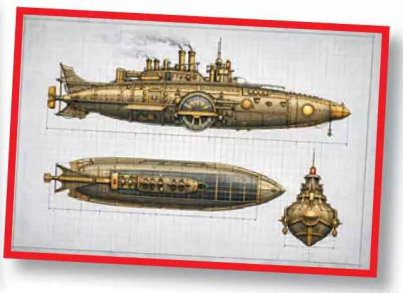

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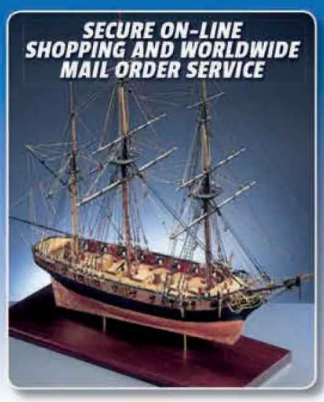

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Dumas Running Hardware Kit Jersey City Tug	110.20

Crew Figures

Set of 6 Fisherman Figures 75mm 1/24 scale	42.14
Set of 6 Fisherman Figures 56mm 1/32 scale	29.93
Set of 6 Fisherman Figures 37mm 1/48 scale	9.30
Set of 6 Fisherman Figures 30mm 1/60 scale	5.72
Set of 6 Fisherman Figures 25mm 1/72 scale	5.72
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Helmsman 1:10 Scale	38.68
Lady Ophelia 1:10 Scale	36.10
Divers Equipment 1:10 Scale	33.26

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Hilda 2 Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter	137.00
Galway Hooker Hull & Plan SETSH2022B	141.00
Pilot Cutter Hull with Plan	150.00
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Hoga pearl harbour tug

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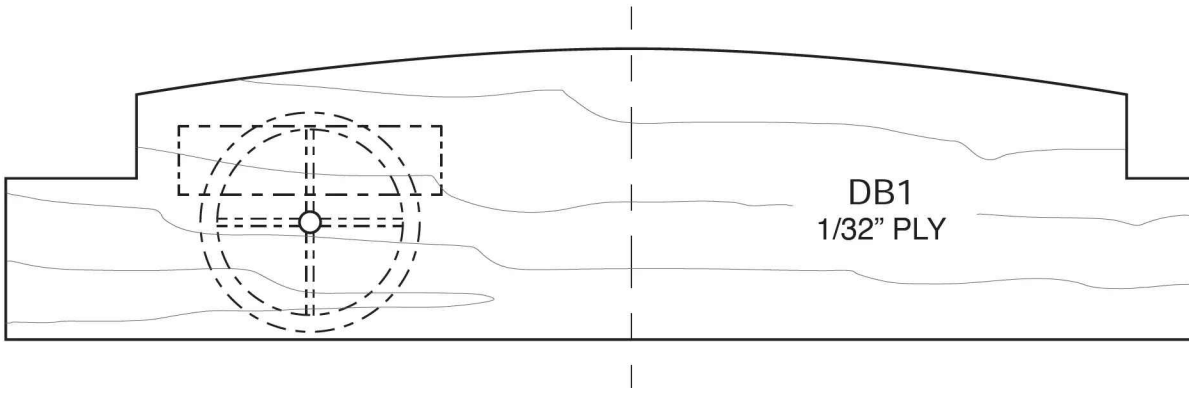
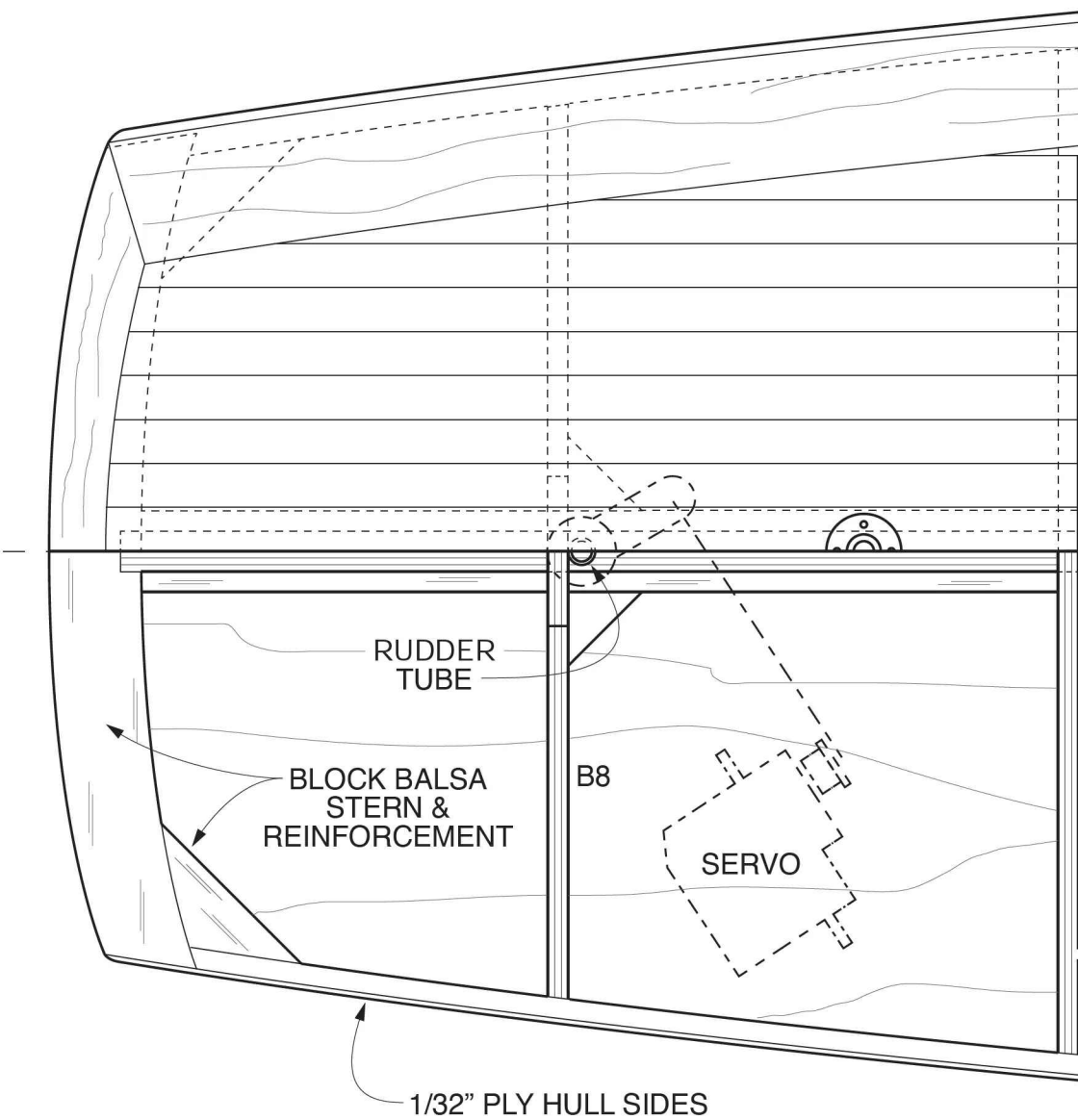
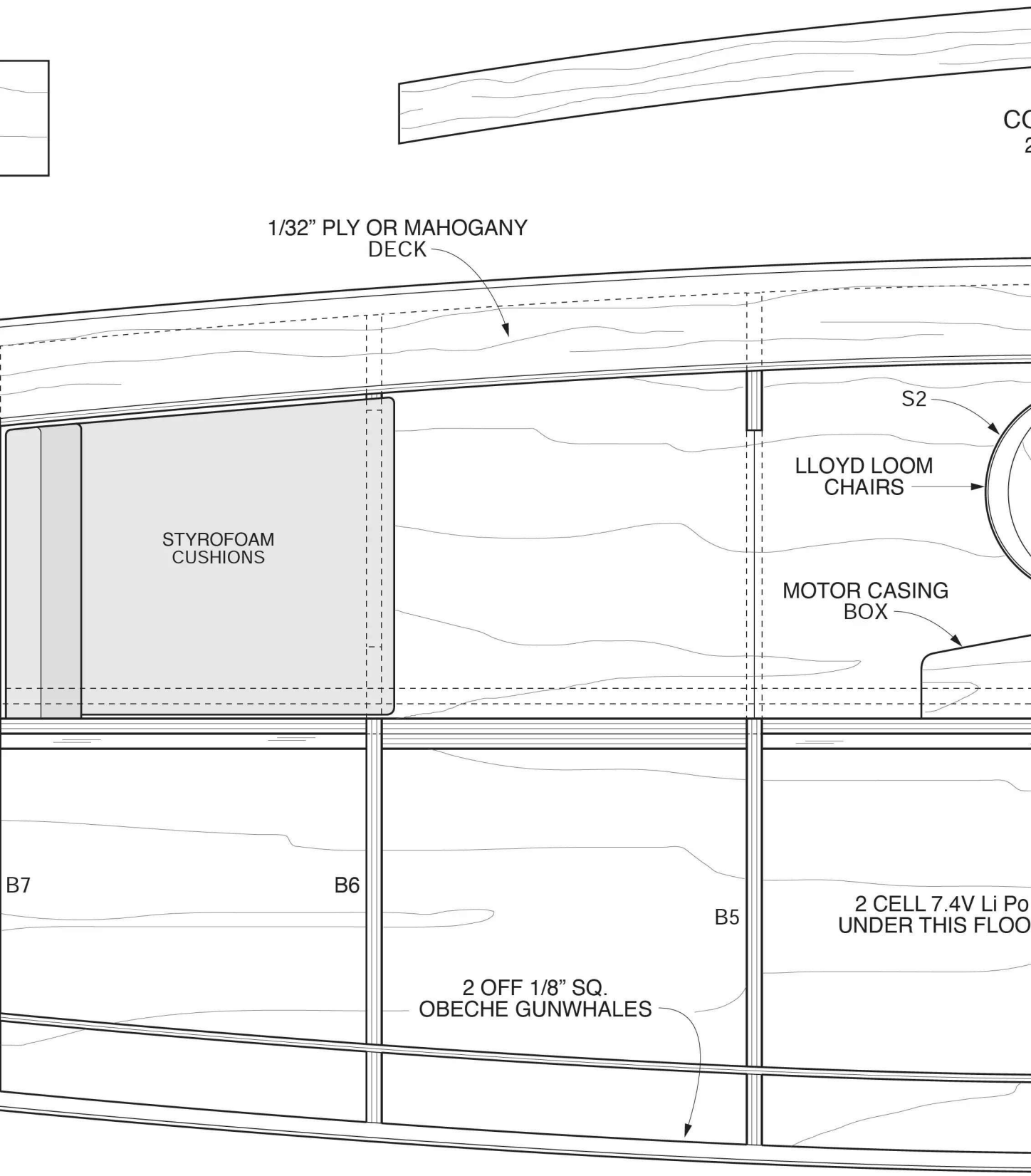
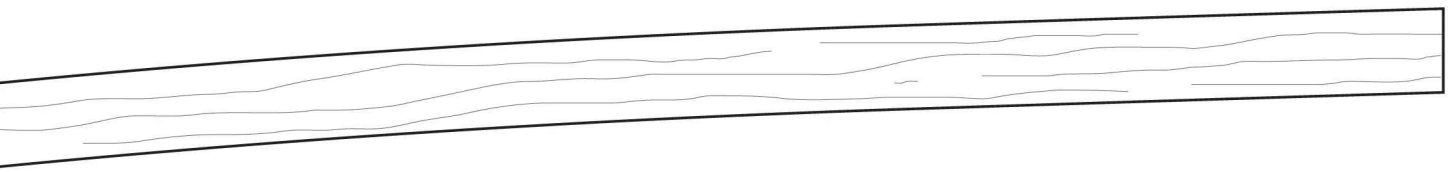
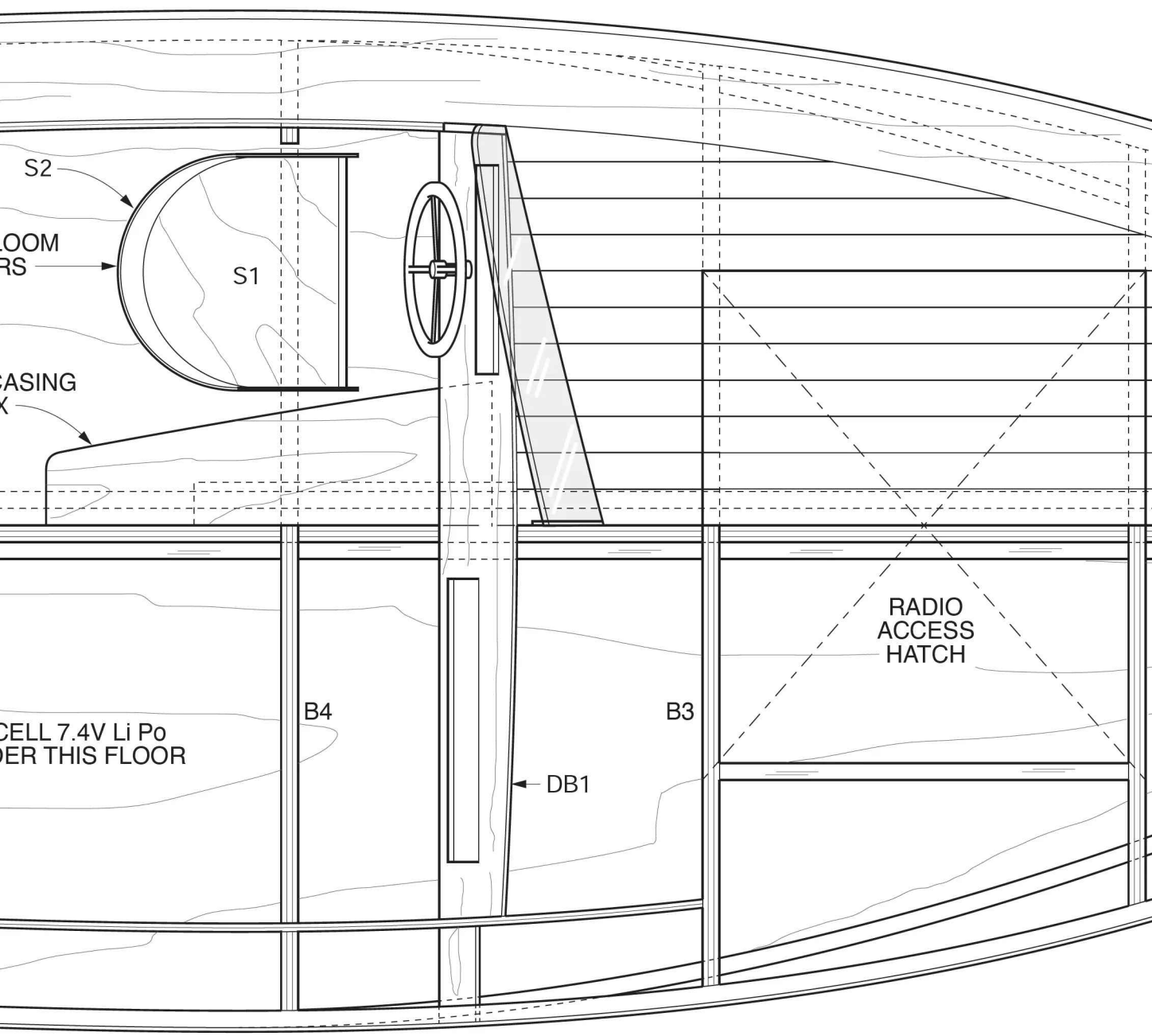

DB1
1/32" PLY


RUDDER
TUBE
BLOCK BALSA
STERN &
REINFORCEMENT
B8
SERVO
1/32" PLY HULL SIDES


20
16
1/32" PLY OR MAHOGANY
DECK
S2
LLOYD LOOM
CHAIRS
STYROFOAM
CUSHIONS
MOTOR CASING
BOX
B7
B6
B5
2 CELL 7.4V Li Po
UNDER THIS FLOO
2 OFF 1/8" SQ.
OBECHE GUNWHALES



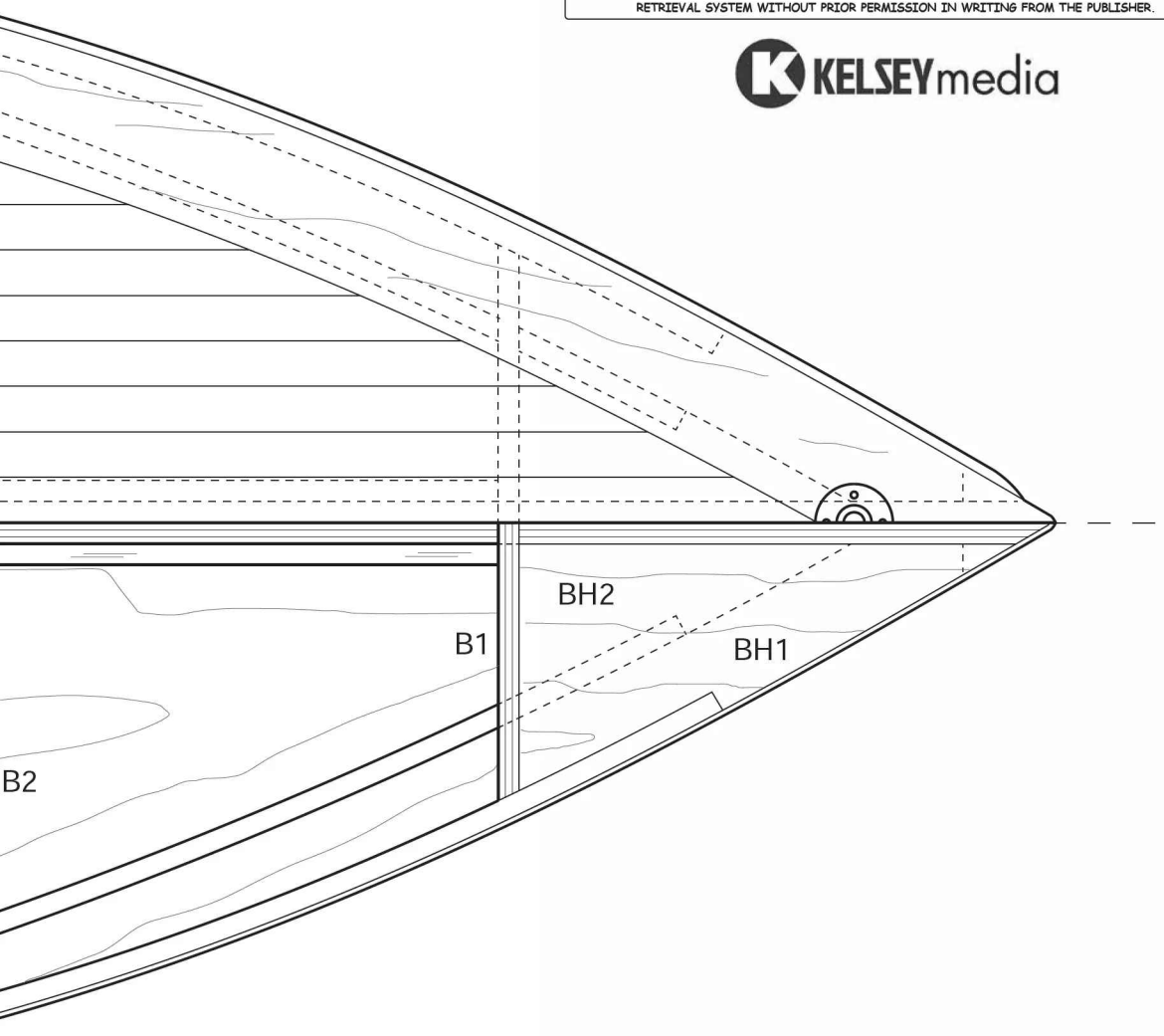
COCKPIT SIDE COAMINGS
2 REQ'D, 1/16" MAHOGANY



SCALE
INCHES

SLIPPER LAUNCH
LADY LUCK
BY RAY WOOD

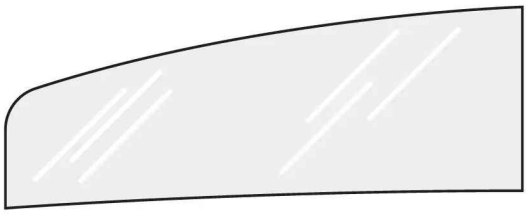
PLAN No: MM2185	No. OF SHEETS: 1 OF 2	First published in Model Boats March 2026



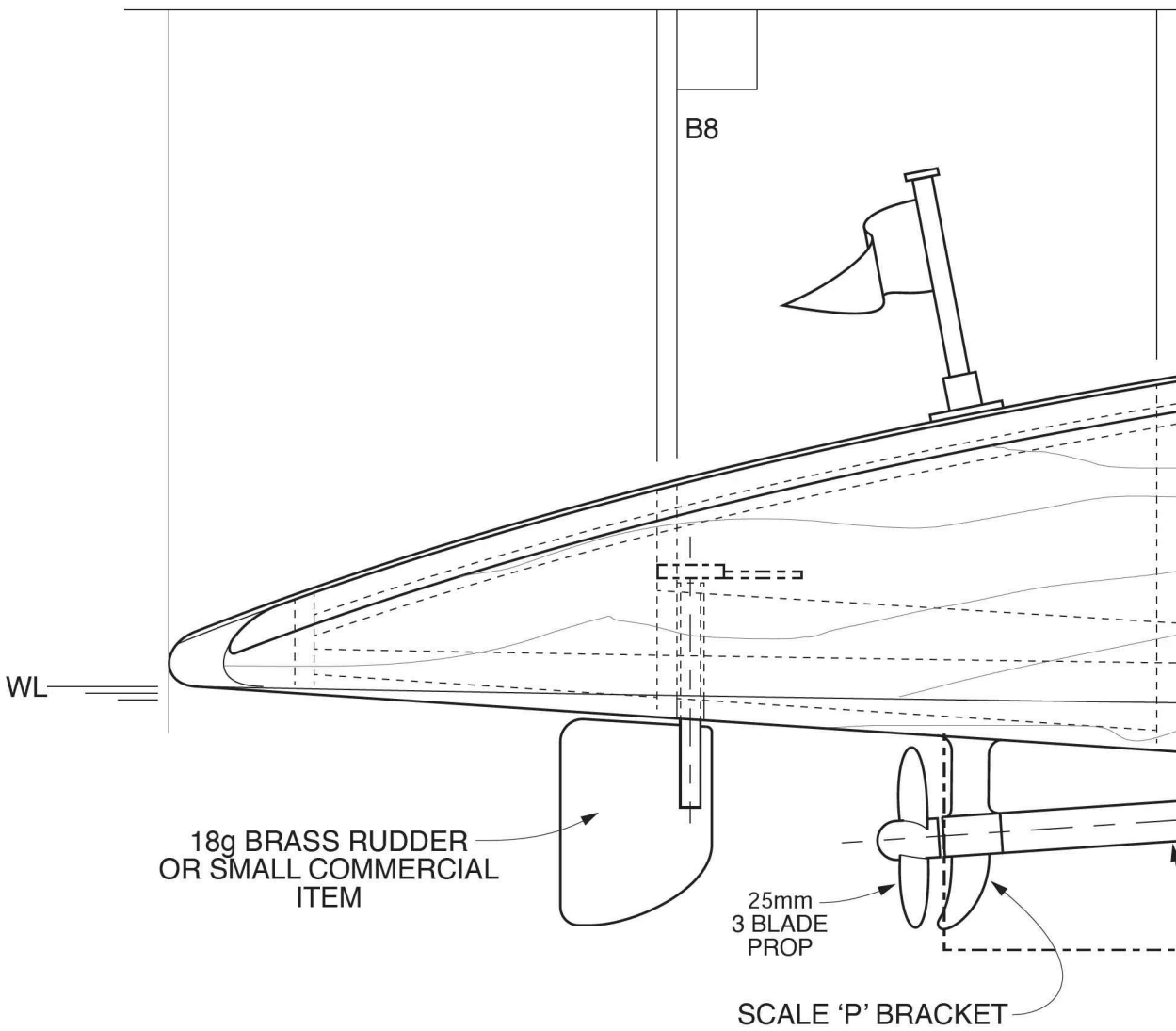
BH2
2 REQ'D, 1/8" PLY

BH1
2 REQ'D, 1/8" PLY

1/32" PLY HULL SIDES

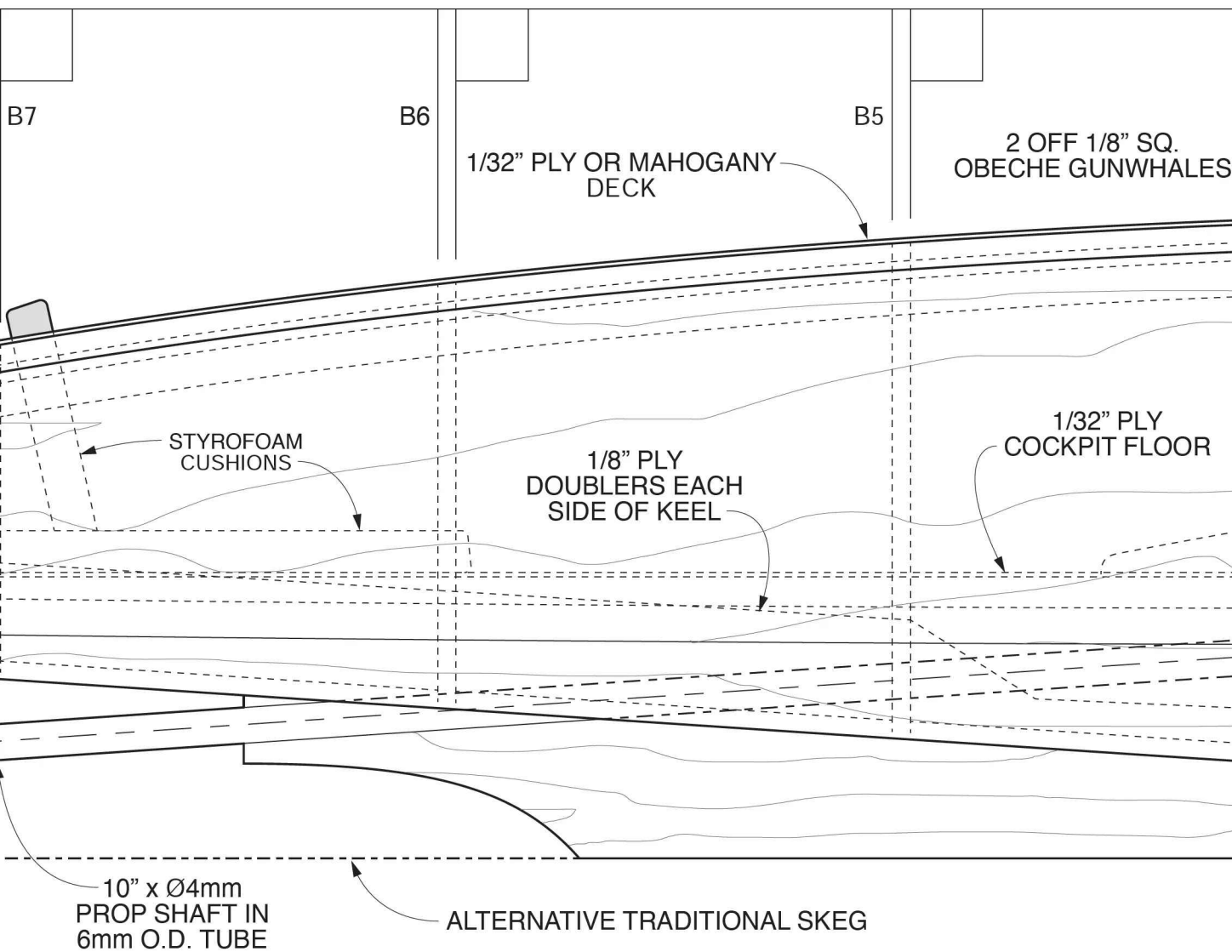


WINDSCREENS
2 REQ'D, CD CASE PLASTIC

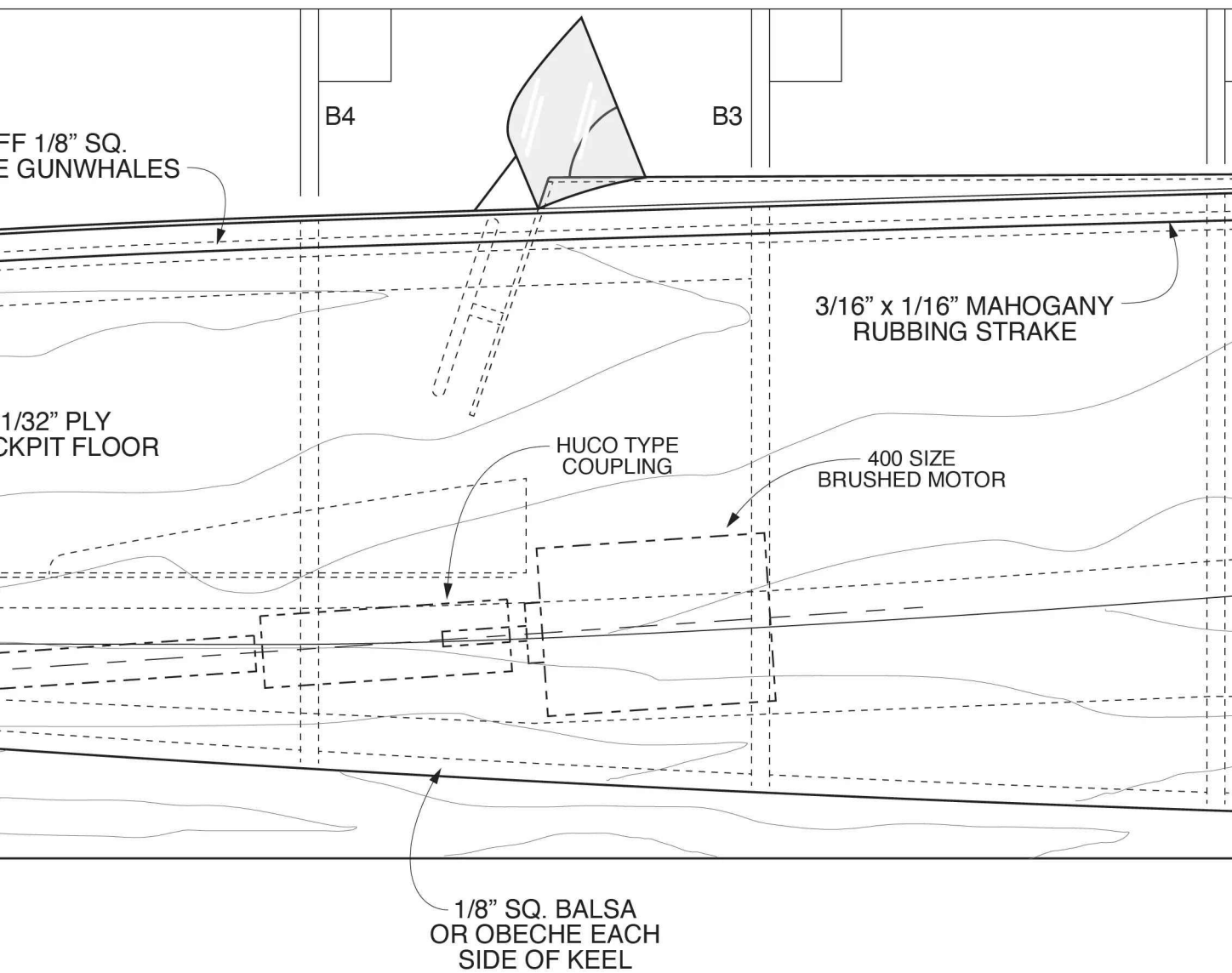


200
100

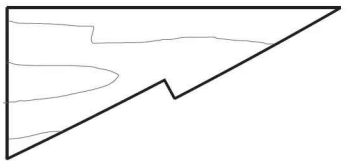
SCALE
MM
100


B7
B6
B5
1/32" PLY OR MAHOGANY DECK
2 OFF 1/8" SQ. OBECHE GUNWHALES
STYROFOAM CUSHIONS
1/8" PLY DOUBLERS EACH SIDE OF KEEL
1/32" PLY COCKPIT FLOOR
10" x Ø4mm PROP SHAFT IN 6mm O.D. TUBE
ALTERNATIVE TRADITIONAL SKEG

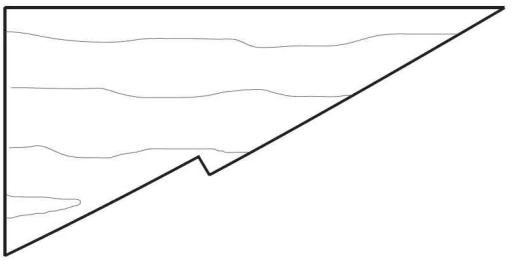
200 300 400

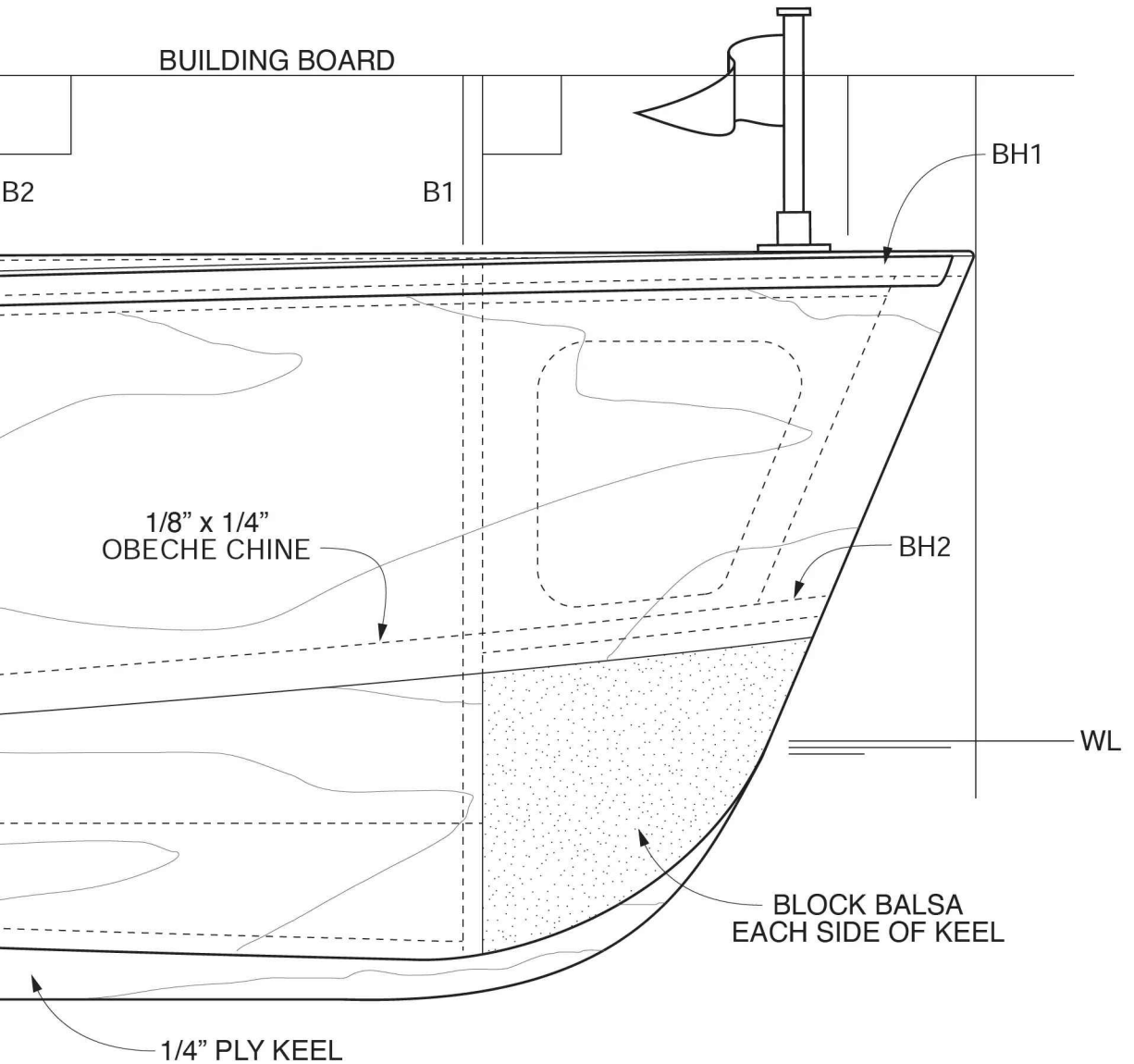

B4
B3
FF 1/8" SQ.
E GUNWHALES
3/16" x 1/16" MAHOGANY
RUBBING STRAKE
1/32" PLY
CKPIT FLOOR
HUCO TYPE
COUPLING
400 SIZE
BRUSHED MOTOR
1/8" SQ. BALSA
OR OBECHE EACH
SIDE OF KEEL

BH2
2 REQ'D, 1/8" PLY

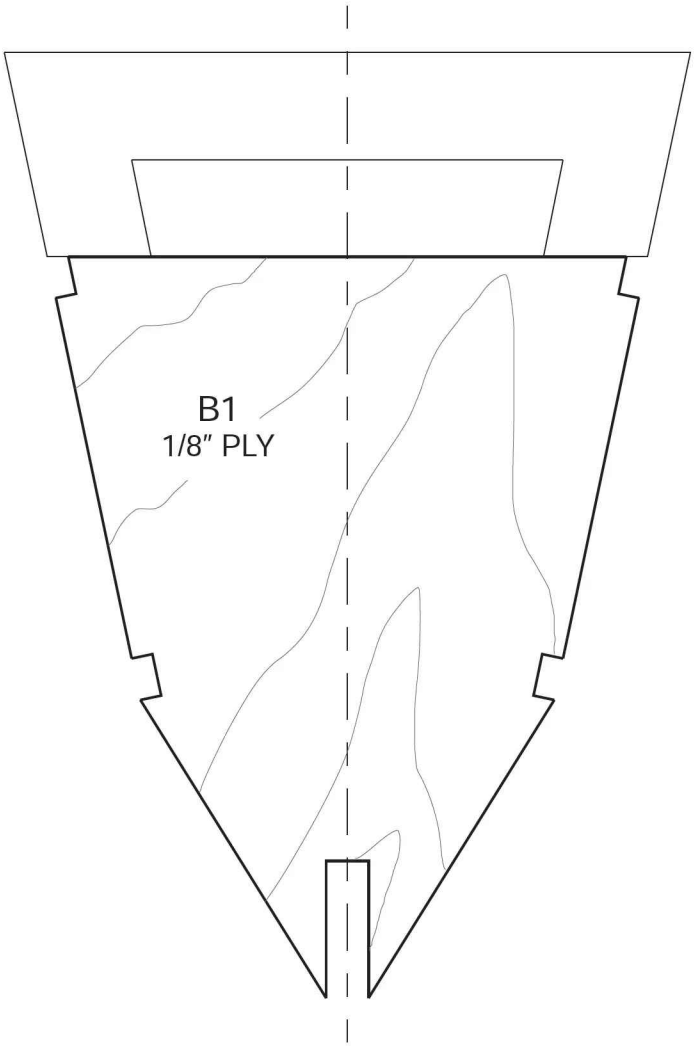


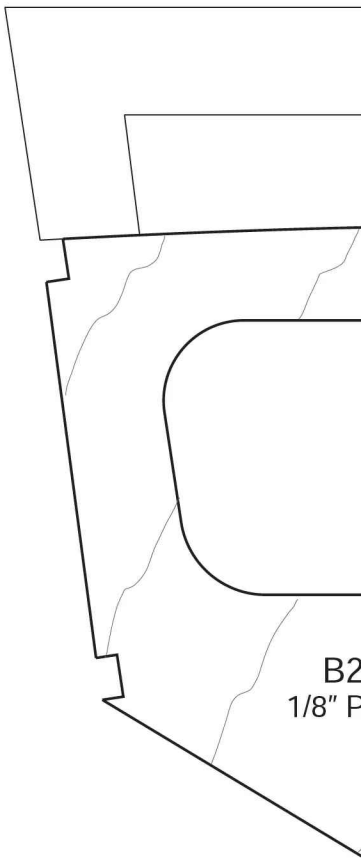
BH1
2 REQ'D, 1/8" PLY

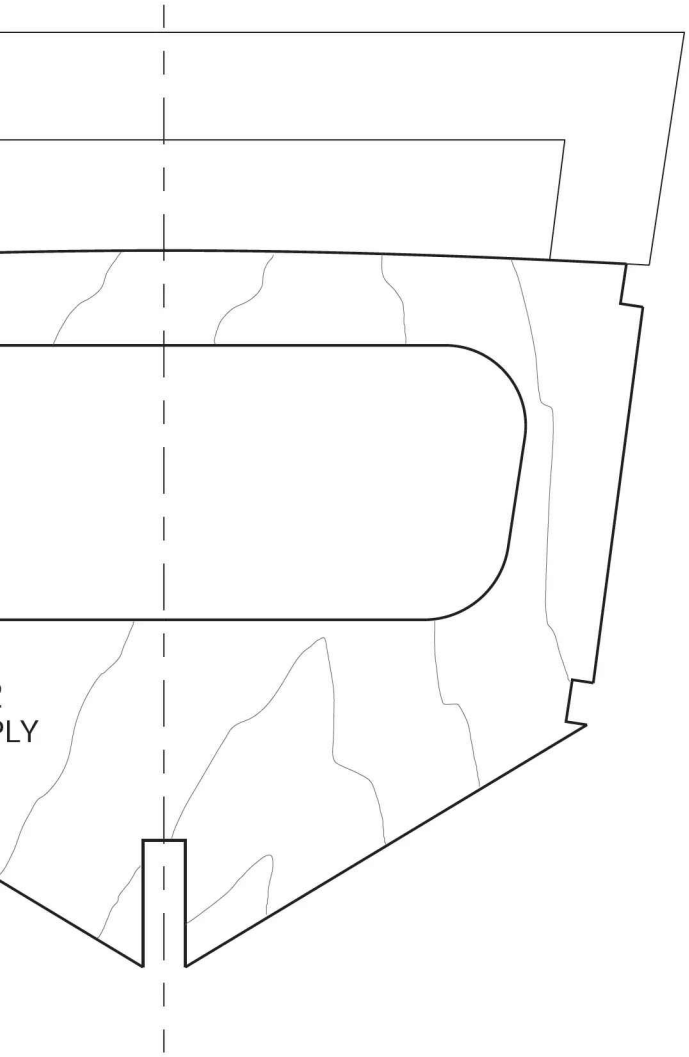


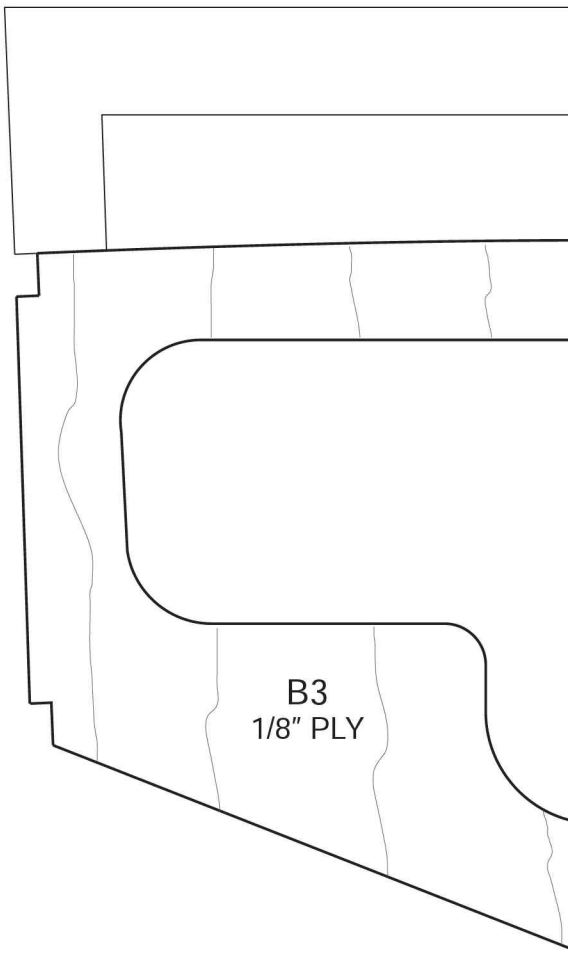


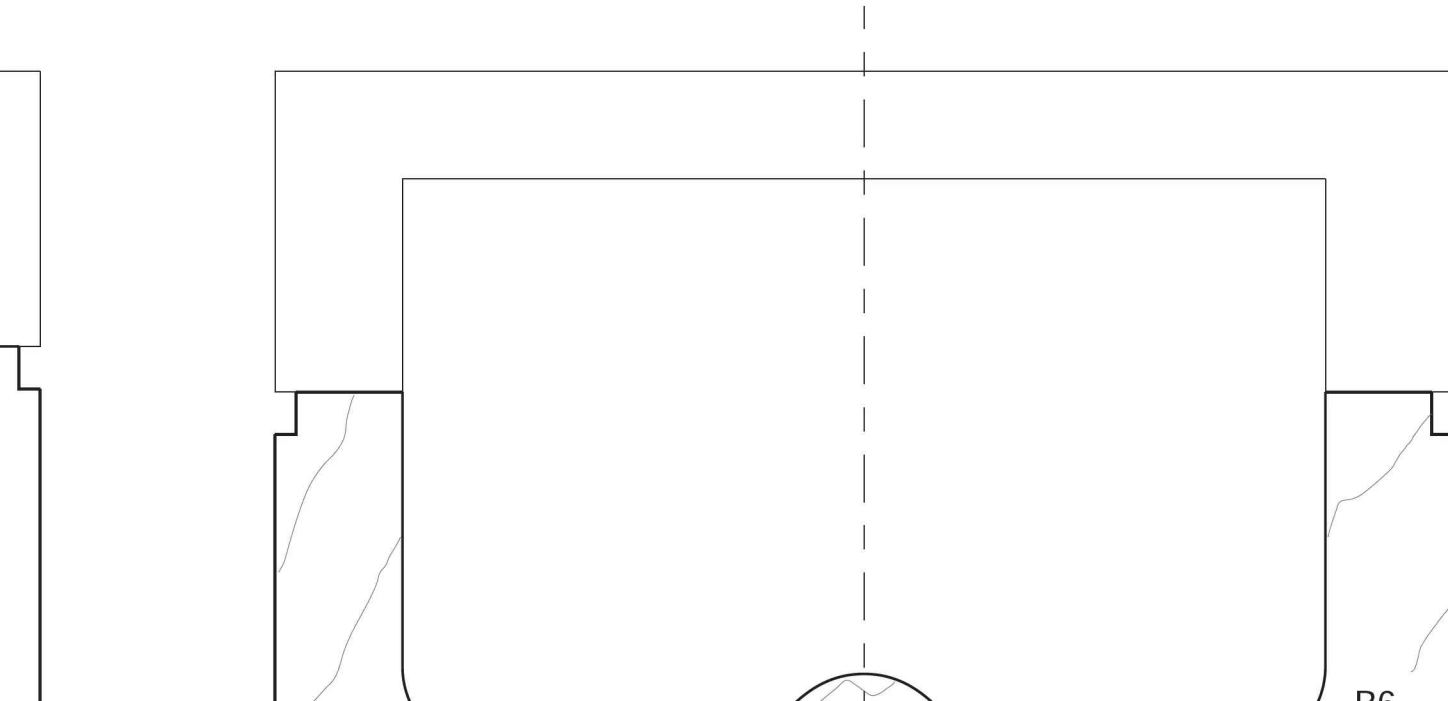
12
16
20
600
700

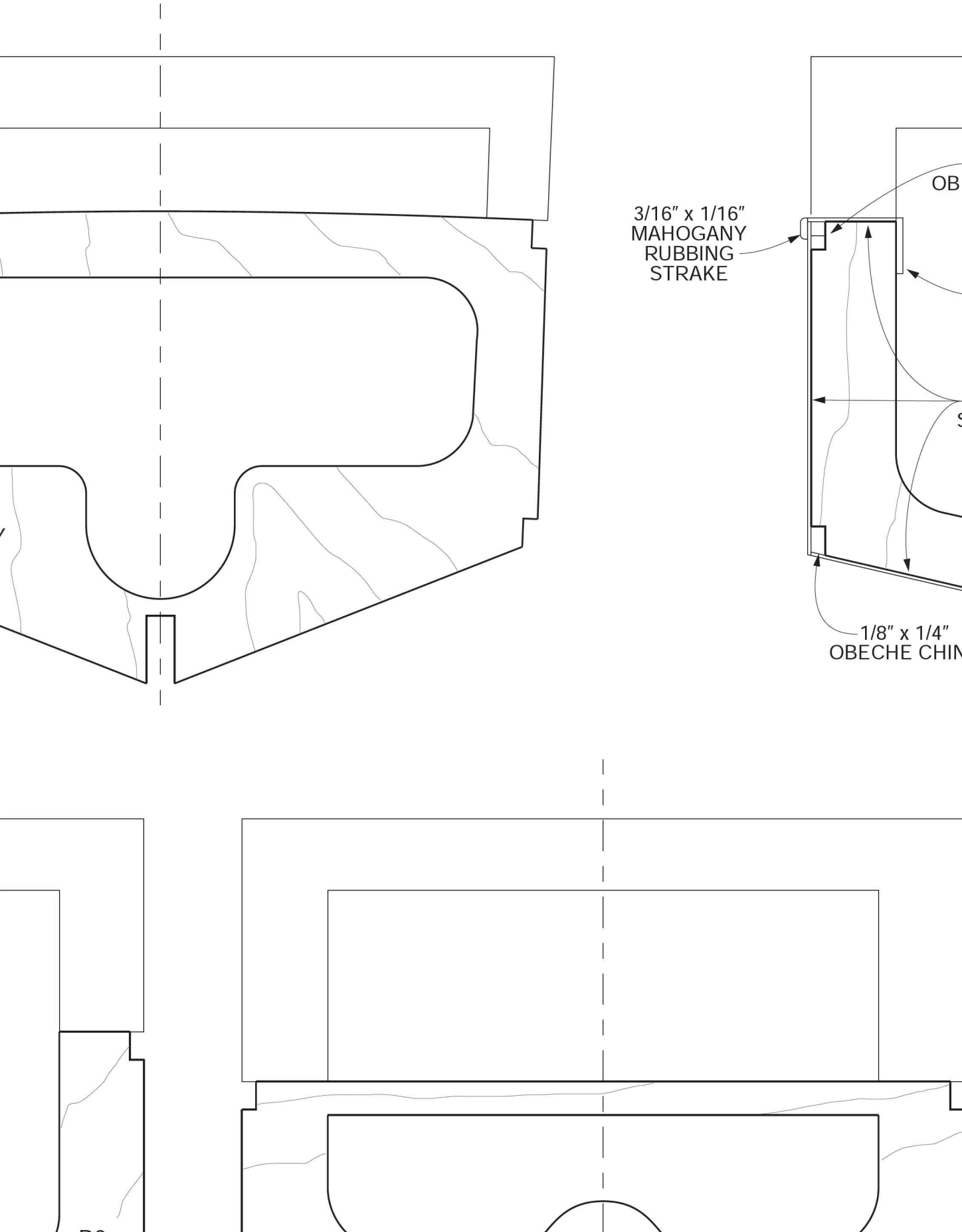

B1
1/8″ PLY

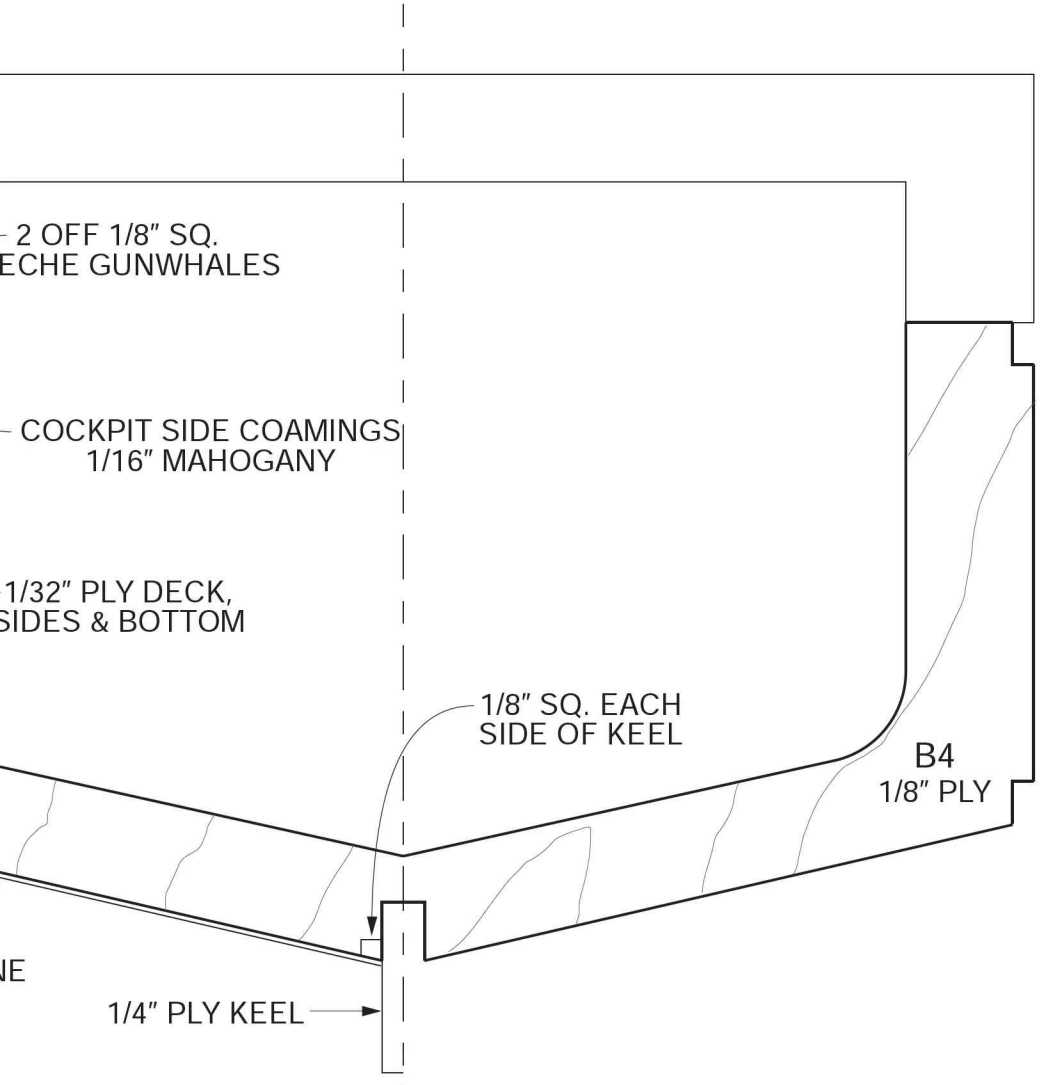

B2
1/8″ P

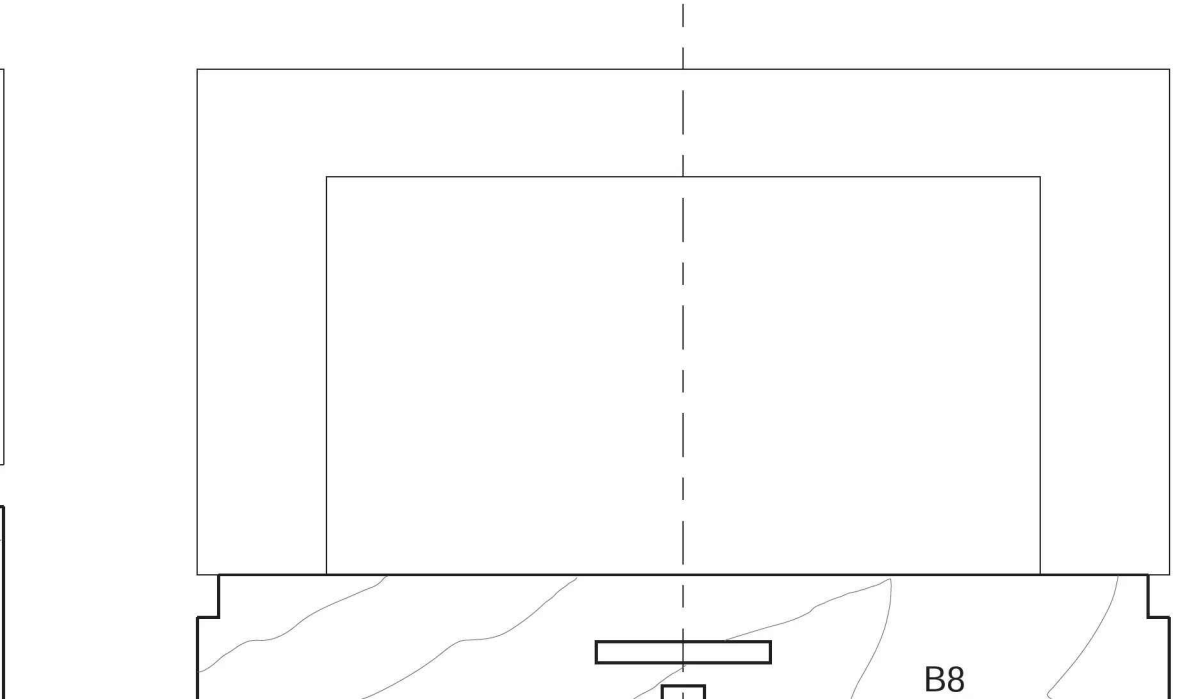

PLY

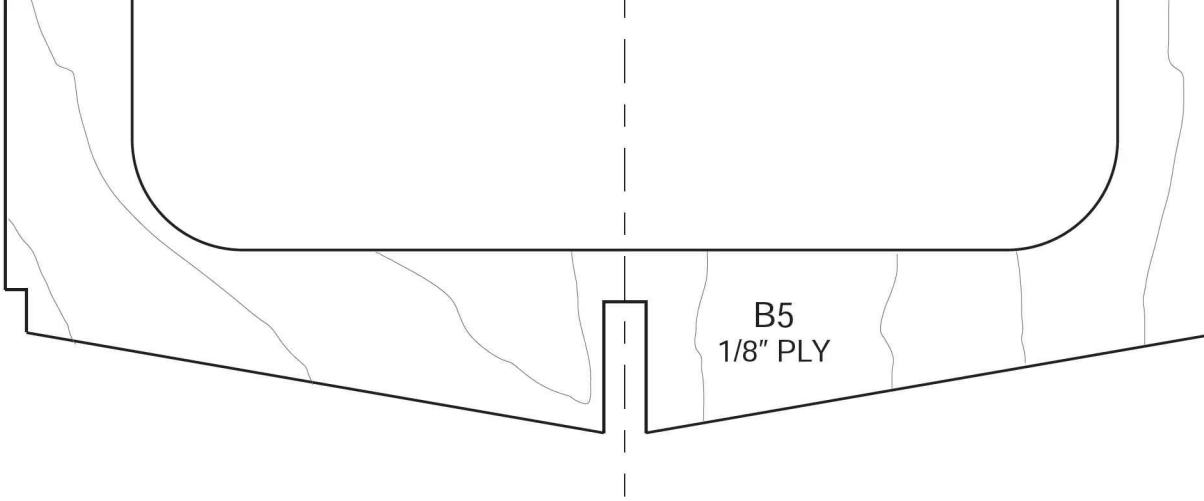

B3
1/8″ PLY

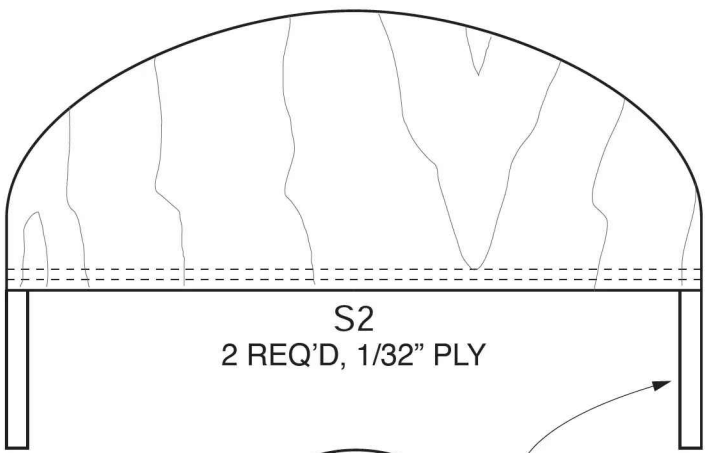



12
8
3/16″ x 1/16″
MAHOGANY
RUBBING
STRAKE
OB
1/8″ x 1/4″
OBECHE CHIN

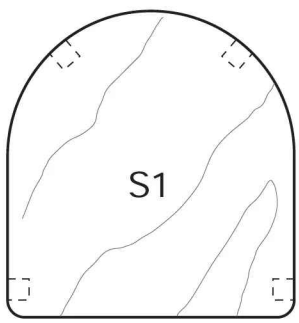

2 OFF 1/8" SQ.
ECHE GUNWHALES
COCKPIT SIDE COAMINGS
1/16" MAHOGANY
1/32" PLY DECK,
SIDES & BOTTOM
1/8" SQ. EACH
SIDE OF KEEL
B4
1/8" PLY
NE
1/4" PLY KEEL


B8

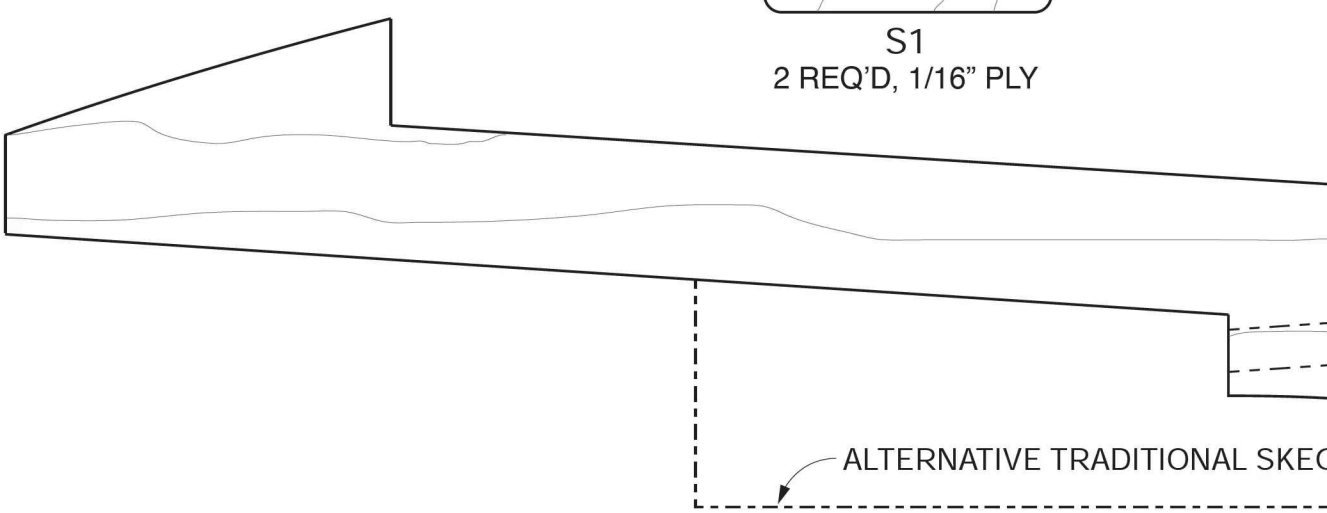




1/8" SQ. OBECH
CHAIR LEGS



S1
2 REQ'D, 1/16" PLY



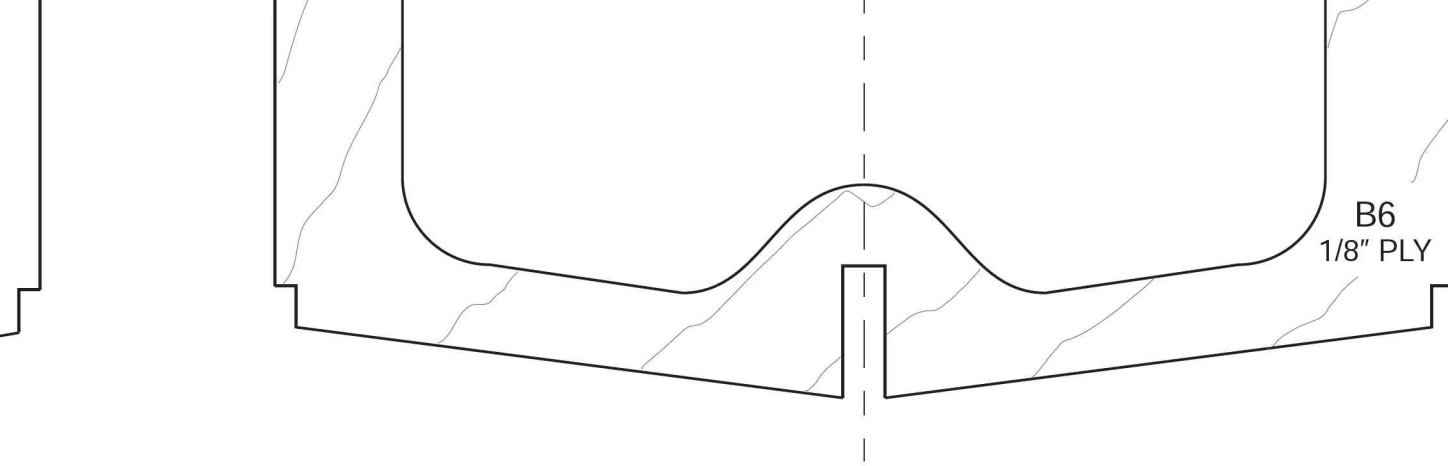
ALTERNATIVE TRADITIONAL SKEC

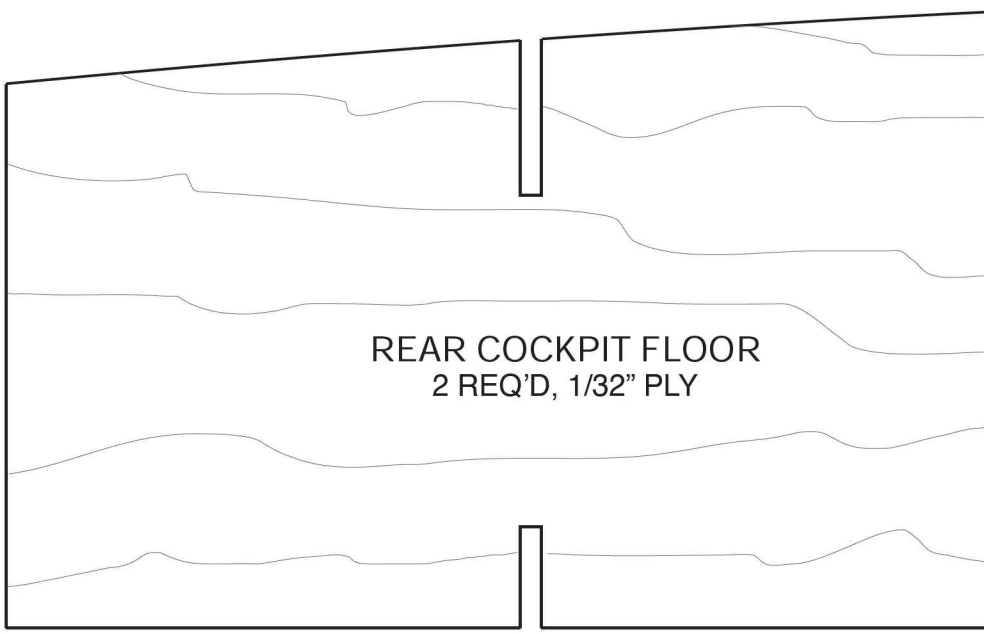
200

100

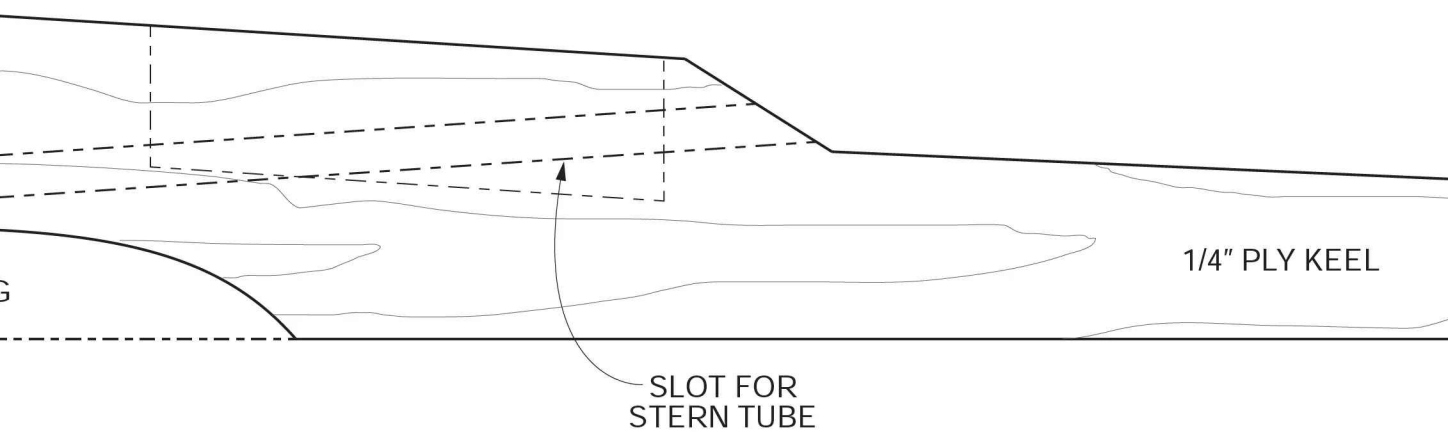
SCALE
MM

100

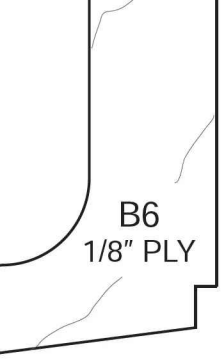


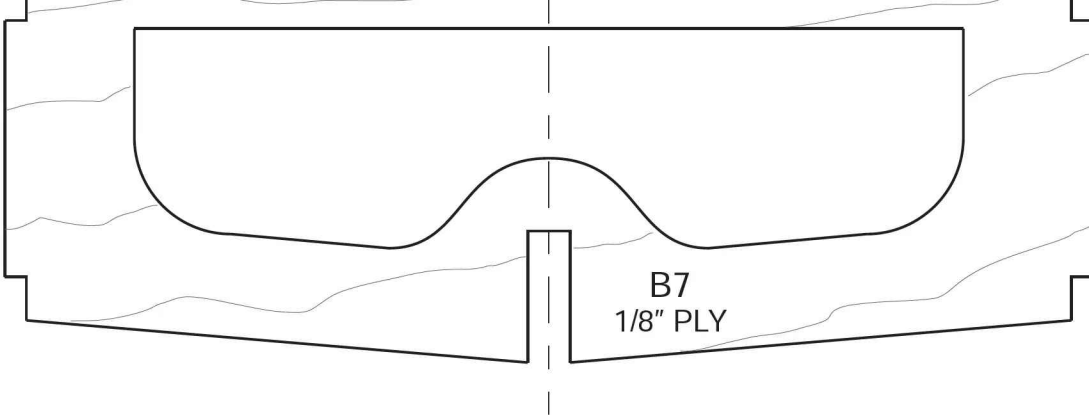


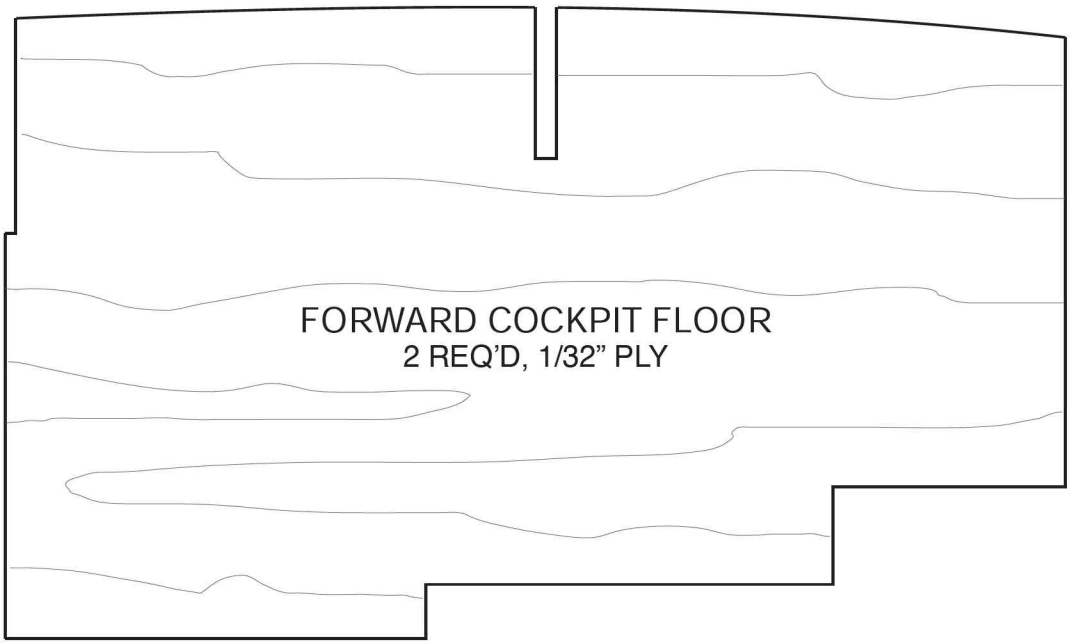
HE

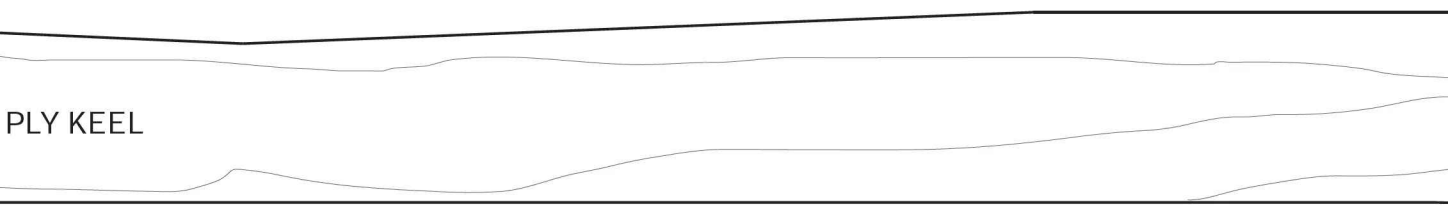


200 300 400

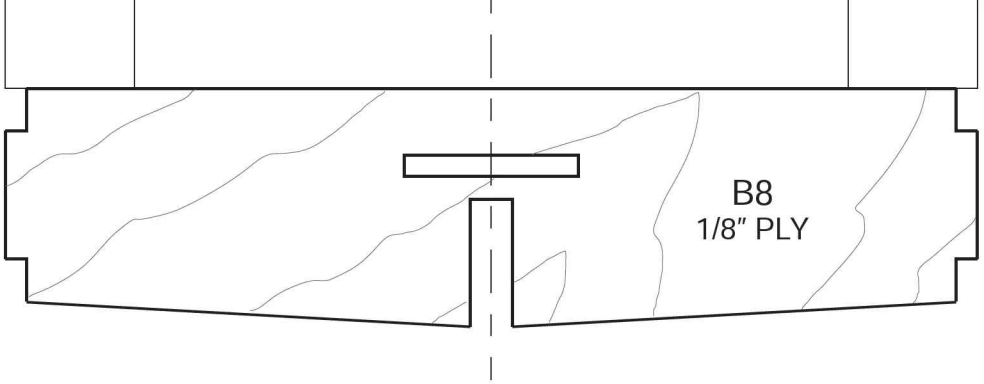

B6
1/8" PLY


B7
1/8" PLY


FORWARD COCKPIT FLOOR
2 REQ'D, 1/32" PLY


PLY KEEL


400
500

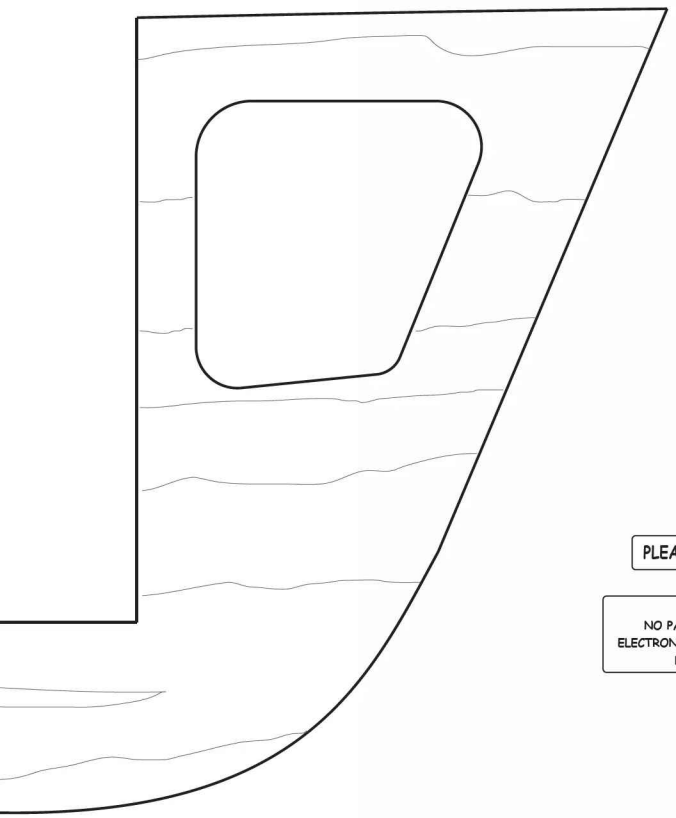


Model Boats

SLIPPER LAUNCH
LADY LUCK

BY RAY WOOD

PLAN No: MM2185	No. OF SHEETS: 2 OF 2	First published in Model Boats March 2026



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