

The 1944 Vintage Varney Kit

Model Owned By: T. Garth Connelly

Model Built By: Ernie Webber

Article By: T. Garth Connelly and Ernie Webber

Background

There are some times in your life when something lands in your lap that you cannot believe happened. That happenstance occurred twice to me a few months ago. The first thing happened when a friend gave me an old built up Varney model of a PT boat. The second happenstance was that same gentleman introduced me to a modeler who had/has the skill to rebuild and restore and enhance this model for me. The state that the model was in was basically in a stripped-down one. Pieces were missing. Other parts were saved in a small cardboard box.

When I received the model, it was painted in a light grey, possibly Battleship Grey and a flat red paint for the bottom paint. The model also had a, for lack of a better word, decal of the emblem of Squadron 10. The model had decals for the 171 boat. Overall, even though it was a Varney kit, which served as the basis for the plastic 1:64 and 1:32 scale kits, which are just plain bad and undetailed kits, I could see that the Varney kit **COULD** be built up into a respectable looking model.

Originally, I was going to have the model rebuilt and repainted as the 171 while she was in her Adaptor Scheme (the Zebra scheme) because one of my other PT boat models is of the 171 at a later point in her career and is being rebuilt and will be repainted in Measure 31/20L. So, I wanted to have two models of the boat at two points in her career, just to show the advances in armament packages.



However, the gentleman from whom I got the model insisted that I stay as close to the “original” (whatever that meant). To quell him, I therefore opted to have the model finished as PT-103 in a Measure 1 scheme. Dark grey on top and light grey on the bottom half of the hull. An interesting scheme to say the least, but I don’t think I actually care for the scheme.

To improve the appearance of the finished model, I opted to buy some guns from AeroClub of England. These were good choices. However, I have since learned that John R. Haynes offers an Oerlikon 20mm on a Mark IV pedestal mount. Mr. Haynes’ fittings are really exceptional and I now wish I had known about that or else I would have gotten his 20mm Oerlikon.

For paints, I chose the White Ensign Models’ Colourcoats Line simply because they are the best paints available.

Mr. Webber will now describe how he restored and enhanced the model.

Hull and Bulkheads

When I received the model I completely removed all of the kit's parts and sanded it down to the bare wood. The model basically consisted of a carved hull with the cockpit assembly and dayroom attached to the hull. I was to use as many of the original Varney kit pieces as possible, as per Mr. Connelly's wishes. After all the main wood assemblies were sanded, they were sealed again although it was not really needed after sixty-two years (since 1944). I sanded after the sealer was applied with progressively finer and finer wet/dry sandpaper. This was done three times until the surface was smooth.



Cockpit Assembly

All of the original parts were made from cardboard and they were deemed to be un-useable. New bulkheads were made from sheet styrene from plans that were supplied by Mr. Connelly. The new bulkheads were super-glued in place. All of the cockpit details were made from styrene as well. The instrument panel was punched out with a Waldron Punch set. Throttle levers were made of wire, with white glue handles. Various instrument decals were punched out with the punch and placed in the appropriate positions on the panel.



Weapons

The torpedo tubes were made out of styrene tubes with the Varney ends and caps glued on. Wire of various diameters was used to detail the outside of the tubes.

The .50 caliber machine guns were white metal items from AeroClub in the UK. Simple mounts for the guns were made from sheet styrene and other pieces of styrene. The depression rails were made from twenty-four gauge beading wire bent to the correct shapes, then glued together.

The 20mm Oerlikon gun was also a white metal item from AeroClub. Its mount was scratchbuilt from styrene shapes and some of the original kit parts.

The Depth Charges and racks. The depth charges were made from brass rod cut to size with styrene ends glued on. The racks were also made from sheet styrene following reference material small detail end caps were punched out with the Waldron Punch. Mr. Connelly bought eight depth charges from H-R Products of McHenry, Illinois, but these were not used.



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Miscellaneous Details

Many of the details that were added were hand-made from pieces of styrene. Vents, lights, and hatches were made and detailed with a dremel tool.



Paints

Paints from White Ensign Models' Colourcoats line were supplied by Mr. Connelly and these were applied with an airbrush whereas small details were touched up with a hand brush. Mr. Webber would like to thank Mr. Steve Amato of Amato's Toy & Hobby in New Britain, Connecticut for donating the plastic stock that was used in constructing the model.

Conclusion

Knowing what the model was like and how undetailed it was when I gave it to Mr. Webber, I am both pleased and impressed with the finished model. It is a prime example of what good research and a skilled builder can do with an old and badly detailed kit.