

Building Hobbycraft's 1/32 scale Sopwith Camel



by Dick Smith

One of the most decorated aces of World War I was Royal Flying Corps Captain Henry W. Woollett. Captain Woollett was credited with 35 victories while flying his Clerget powered Sopwith Camel.

For many years, World War I aircraft kits were somewhat under represented by the major manufacturers. However, with the emergence of short-run plastic and resin kits, these models have taken on new popularity. One of the less expensive replicas of the Sopwith Camel is the 1/32nd scale Hobbycraft.

When building bi-plane models, much of the painting is done prior to assembly. Starting with the cockpit, paint the interior "sand" (FS-33531) to simulate the inside of the area's unpainted doped linen. There is room for plenty detailing here since the cockpit is open. One area of super detailing is to replace the simulated "wicker" pilot's seat. The seat provided in the kit "passable" when I painted it with Model Master "wood" and drybrushed it with light gray to show detail. I added some paper belts with after-market brass buckles to complete the seat. The instrument panel is engraved. All that is necessary is a base color of "wood," careful painting of the dials, a drop of gloss to simulate the glass covers and it's ready to install.

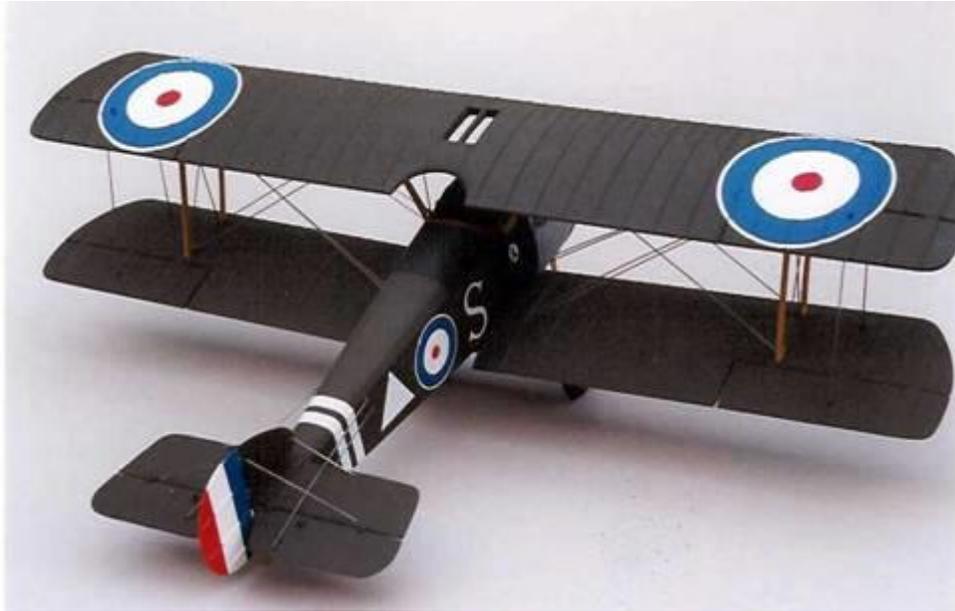
While you have your “wood” paint out, it is a good time to spray or brush all of the landing gear, cabane, and wing struts. It may seem like we’re jumping ahead in construction but painting the struts now will have them ready when it’s time to attach the top wing to rest of the project.



Cement the cockpit into one side of the fuselage and then close the sides together. You may have to fill and sand the fuselage top seam. Captain Woollett’s Camel was painted in the standard colors of the time; green drab topsides and unpainted doped linen undersides. I used Model Master “green drab” (FS-34086) and “Panzer Interior Buff” darkened with a little brown. Paint all of the upper surfaces green except for the exterior of the cockpit and the engine compartment.

The cockpit was sheeted with plywood and presents a smoother finish than those covered in fabric. Photos and descriptions of Captain Woollett’s Camel show this area a darker color. I painted the area green drab darkened with gloss black. The outside of the engine compartment was natural metal. Here I used Model Master “buffing aluminum.” The rudder of the vertical stabilizer is painted in equal blue, white and red stripes. I masked and sprayed mine since the decal provided did not fit correctly. The Clerget rotary engine in the kit builds to a convincing replica. I painted it aluminum and gave it a wash of black to bring out the details of the nine individual cylinders. (There is an opportunity here to replace the kit engine with one of the many resin or white metal offerings.) References indicate the cowling of Captain Woollett’s Camel was gray. I used “medium sea gray” (FS-35237).

With most of the painting complete, I sprayed on a coat of Testor’s Glosscoat over the area where the decals are to be placed. The wing roundels are quite large in this scale and must be applied carefully. They do require setting solution. Go slowly and brush out all of the air bubbles from beneath the decals. The personal markings for Captain Woollett’s Camel are found in this kit and depict his aircraft as it appeared prior to March 22, 1918.



When all of the markings have been applied, it is time for final assembly. Medium thickness super glue will work well for the rest of the construction. Attach the lower wing and horizontal stabilizer to the fuselage. Glue the cabane and wing struts into place on the fuselage and lower wing. I chose to rig my Camel with very thin (.015) music wire. The kit instructions recommend using thread or stretched plastic sprue. On a model of this size, I decided to use the stainless steel wire, as it appears more “in scale.” It is best to complete as much rigging as possible before attaching the upper wing.

After the upper wing is attached, set the Camel aside and paint, assemble, rig, and cement the landing gear into position. The last step is to paint the propeller gray and attach it to the engine.

While this kit may have flaws, it builds into a convincing replica of a Sopwith Camel. The dark green wings and fuselage are in sharp contrast with the huge red, white and blue wing roundels and white triangle squadron markings and commander’s stripes.