

Mannock's SE5a Roden's 1/48th scale kit



By Dick Smith

Over the trenches in 1918, the Royal Flying Corps' S.E.5a was considered to be superior to any aircraft possessed by the opposing German air forces. What gave the British fighter its edge was a redesigned upper wing and the introduction of the new 200 hp Wolseley Viper engine that replaced the original 150 hp Hispano Suiza power plant.

All of these improvements are found in Roden's 1/48th scale kit that also features the markings carried by Britain's number one ace, Major Edward (Mick) Mannock. Construction starts with the painting of the inside fuselage sidewalls with Poly Scale's "clear doped linen." Roden's instructions call for this area to be painted "natural wood" but this is incorrect. The instrument panel is painted with Model Master's "wood" with the additional parts of the cockpit in flat black and silver. The completed cockpit parts are then finished with a "wash" of dark brown to simulate wartime wear. The seat is brushed with Model Master's "leather" and then dressed up with belts made from paper strips dipped in black coffee and, while still wet, draped over the frame to give realism.

The Viper's radiator is sprayed with gloss black and the cooling shutters picked out with Floquil's "bright silver." A dot of brass paint on the radiator cap finishes

this sub-assembly that is set aside to dry. The multi-piece landing gear is glued together and painted “British brown drab,” PC-10. The tires are brushed with British “dark sea gray” not black. (World War I rubber appeared in its natural color and was not dyed with lampblack.) The assembled and painted landing gear and wheels are set aside to be cemented to the fuselage later.



Trap the finished cockpit into the fuselage and glue the right and left sections together making sure the floor is level. Attach the upper forward section of the fuselage, cylinder head covers and radiator into place. The horizontal stabilizer, elevators and lower wing can also be glued to the fuselage at this time.

At this point, it is time to paint the underside of the fuselage and the lower wing using Poly Scale’s “clear doped linen.” Upper surfaces of the S.E. 5a are painted with PC-10. Poly Scale’s PC-10 is a bit on the green side and might be toned down with a little brown or red to give it a more “drab” appearance. When the paint is dry, flip the partially assembled model over and carefully attach the landing gear sub-assembly. Use white glue for this job as it will not mar the already painted underside surfaces.

Set the model aside and let the landing gear dry thoroughly. Paint the topside of the top wing with PC-10 and apply “clear doped linen” to the underside and then set it aside to dry. Remove and clean up all of the wing struts from the molding sprues. Paint the cabane struts with PC-10 and the interplane supports with “wood.” There are steel “collars” on the top and bottom of each interplane strut

which should be brushed with silver. A coat of Future floor wax is next applied over the model to provide a smooth, glossy surface for the decals.

The Roden kit, No. 416, provides all of the markings for Major Mannock's aircraft as it appeared in July 1918. The kit decals are somewhat thick and need to be given extra time soaking in warm water before they will release from their paper backing. They will also need a softening agent, such as Super Sol extra strength decal setting solution, which will allow the markings to settle neatly over the kit's raised details. The decal rudder stripes do not fit properly and should be discarded. To solve this problem, paint the entire rudder insignia white (FS-17925) and when dry mask and paint equal width stripes of insignia red (FS-31136) and true blue (FS-15102.)



Glue the interplane struts to the bottom wing with white glue. When they have dried, flip the model over and carefully position and glue the top wing onto these struts. Support the wing with ½ oz. paint bottles until the adhesive has set up. The cabane struts can now be cemented into place.

The S.E.5a has an abundance of rigging wires. This is a time-consuming task that can be accomplished with a steady hand and plenty of patience. There are several products that can be used to rig bi-planes but I've found the best for this job is Minimeca (Ref. 107) .3 x 250mm stainless steel wire. Use a pair of draftsmen's dividers to measure the length of the wires.

The last job is to cut out and attach the acetate windscreen to the front frames of the cockpit and your S.E.5a is ready for display.

