

## ***Beginning the Beguine***

### ***Neil Crawford***

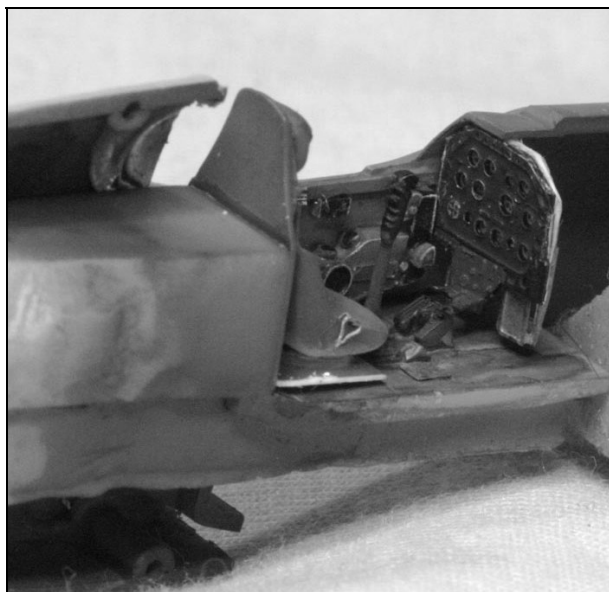


#### ***Academy 1/72 P51B Mustang***

Anders told me this one was state of the art, I checked some measurements and it seems correct. Having heard no complaints, I decided it would be a suitable starting point. Surface detail and fit is of the modern and overwhelmingly magnificent kind. I don't understand why the tail is separate, it causes an unnecessary seam on the rear fuselage, but the fit is so good that it doesn't really matter. The indented rivet detail on the flaps seems to be pushing it a bit far in 1/72, but will all be irrelevant on Beguine, as a smooth finish is required.

#### ***Aires P51B 1/72 cockpit detail set***

I'm in awe at the ease of building nowadays, these resin bits are beautiful, fit perfectly and leave nothing for the modeller to scratch build. The result is a miniature Mustang cockpit that would have taken me a month to do – a couple of evenings was all it took now. I feel like I've been guilty of doping in the Olympics, but it would be silly not to use this stuff when it's available and relatively speaking quite cheap. For "Beguine" I found that the lower rear corner of the moulding needs removing, it gets in the way of the fuselage insert.



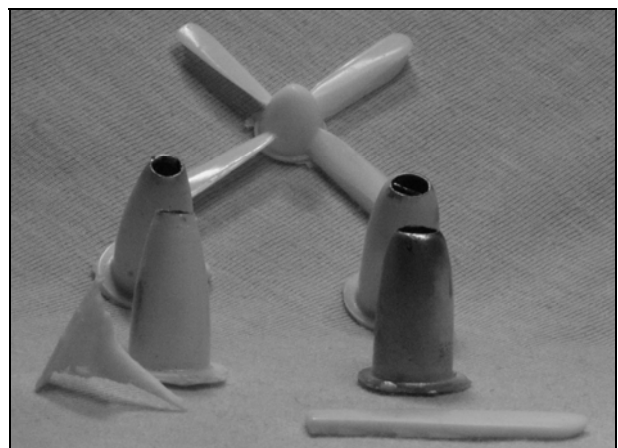
#### ***Aires P51D 1/72 wheel wells***

I couldn't resist these ridiculous things either, even though these were for a D Mustang, not a B like "Beguine". I'm not sure if they are even available for a P-51B? It would also be interesting to know if they fit in the fatter D wing, they certainly don't fit in the Academy B wing. I had to do some massive carving to get them in, and they don't quite match up, either at front or rear. I wouldn't recommend using D wells on this kit, the Academy wells are in fact excellent in themselves, but it's my own fault, they were cheap, and the result does in fact look terrific. I followed Chris McMillin's instructions and painted the wells silver and the rear-spar in zinc-chromate, with a wash of dirty white-spirits. I'm going to pop in a landing light, because I see Beguine has none in the leading edge, I found a photo of another famous P-51C "Excalibur" that has it in the wheel well, so I decided that seems plausible for Beguine too.

#### ***XS Models 1/72 Beguine conversion set***

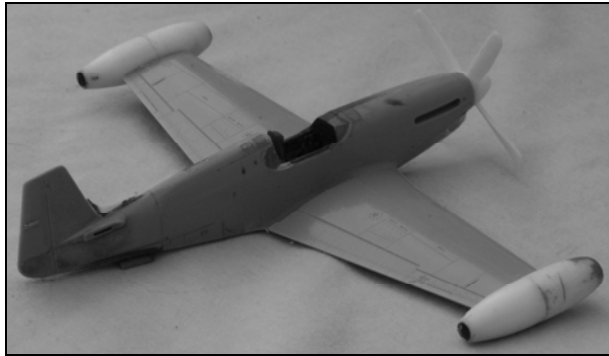
This consists of wing radiators, propeller, tail fillet and filler plate for the hole where the rear-fuselage radiator/air intake is removed. There is substantial flash and the parts will need cleaning up, but that's what we modellers are here for, so no problems with that. Some moulding pimples will also have to be removed.

The wing-radiators are unusually moulded with a vertical front/rear split, which guarantees perfect intakes and rear outlets, which is often a problem with a horizontal split. Painting the radiator interior is a pain, but nothing impossible using a small brush. On the whole I think the vertical split a very good idea. There is a fair chunk of plastic to be removed from the pod-ends, I used a saw-blade in my Dremel which is dangerous practice, and there is in fact such a margin of plastic that a hack-saw would probably be the best alternative.



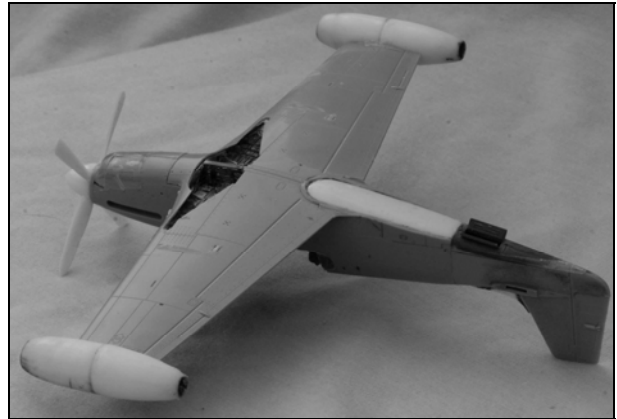
Once the ends are lopped off, the mating surfaces should be levelled off by sanding on a flat surface. Be careful how you hold your wrist, its easy to make it crooked. I did a good job on one pod, but the other one needed some filler, for which I use Milliput. I really like old-fashioned tube glue for this kind of job, it's slow drying so gives plenty of time for making sure the pods are absolutely straight. If an accident happens and a pod

comes out too short, just break it in half, insert a piece of plasticard as a spacer and sand smooth. Comparing the finished pods to drawings, I found them perfect in shape and size, and gluing them together was much easier than I've made it sound, a little care and a big saw is all that's necessary! Sawing off the wing-tips is easy because there are panel-lines in exactly the right place, which is also significant as regards the lop-sided debate. It is said that Walter Beech specified one wing to be shorter than the other, but this doesn't make sense when actually making the cut. It would mean cutting through the middle of one aileron rather than following the internal structure, so I went for symmetry.



Removing the radiator scoop was fun, I used the Dremel and felt like a hooligan! The filler piece fitted well enough, and what's more important it has the correct curvature and shape. As curiosa the Mustang without intake and with clipped wings is surprisingly similar to a Bf109! The tail fillet looks like a lump, and at first I meant to do a new one in plasticard. But looking at references I realized that it is not just a simple sheet, there is a structure, and it flairs into the tail and fuselage. So I cut out the fillet from the rest of the lump, and sanded it down, I use wet-and-dry paper on a glass plate and use

double-sided tape to get a grip on the piece, turn the piece over and use a new piece of tape often, it's very easy to sand too much. In the end the fillet turned out quite well, but if you have an old D Mustang lying around I'd recommend stealing the fillet! There is a serious problem with the propeller: the rear diameter is too small, which gives a nasty-looking step where it butts against the fuselage. Apart from that it's a nice moulding, and good quality plastic means that you can sand down the blades to a fine edge. I fixed the diameter problem by sawing off the base, and gluing on the rear plate from the academy kit. Some putty will be necessary.



In summary, these are useful parts for a Beguine conversion, but no free lunch. Quite a lot of trimming and adaptation is necessary. I would only recommend them to experienced modellers. A Beguine conversion has never been easy, but it is now a good deal less work.

*To be continued...*

***Thanks to XS-Models for the review kit!***