

Wiener Modellbau Manufactur 1/48 Gloster VI – Kit review

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Wiener Modellbau Manufactur kit No. 48004 "**Gloster VI**". 1/48 kit, containing 16 resin parts, 59 etched brass parts, four cast brass parts, instrument panel film and decals for two versions. Available from the manufacturer: Wiener Modellbau Manufactur, Eichenstrasse 6A/139, A-1120 Wien, Austria (www.wmm.at, e-mail kontakt@wmm.at). Price: EUR 88.80 inside the EU, EUR 74.00 for the rest of the world, plus P&P.

The plane

The "VI" was the first monoplane racer from Gloster, developed in competition with the Supermarine S.6 for the 1929 Schneider Trophy race. It was of mixed construction, with fuselage and floats of duralumin and wooden wings. Two planes, N249 and N250, were built and the first flew for the first time on August 25th, 1929, only two weeks before the race. The planes handled well, but were handicapped by their 18-cylinder three-bank "arrowhead" Napier Lion engines, which had been supercharged and boosted to 1,320 hp. This was way more than the 500 hp of the standard Lion, the development of which started in 1918, but still far behind the 1,800 hp of the Rolls-Royce "R" engines of the S.6. To make things worse, the Lions were unreliable and had a tendency to cut out, particularly under high G loads, which is of course not a desirable feature for a pylon racer. Therefore the S.6 was selected for the Schneider Trophy team.

After the 1929 races, on September 10th, Flight Lieutenant G. H. Stainforth set a 3 km absolute speed record at 336.3 mph (565.35 km/h) in N249, the engine running well when flying straight and level. The engine problems, originally believed to be related to the fuel system but later diagnosed as caused by the carburettor ducting design, could never be solved, and the engines could never be made to run reliably at full power. Therefore, while the Gloster VIs remained on the inventory of the High Speed Flight as training planes through the preparations for the 1931 Schneider Trophy, they were rarely flown.

The kit

This limited edition kit (only 500 will be made) is first venture of Peter Plattner's company into the world of air racing. Immediately when opening the kit you get a feeling of expensive quality – from the very solid black box to the

20-page instruction booklet. And the kit parts look good too... The fuselage is a one-piece casting, beautifully depicting the "arrowhead" cowling over the Napier Lion engine (although the cowling over the centre bank is perhaps a bit too flat-topped at the front – compare photos!) and with thin wall and nice sidewall detail around the cockpit. The cockpit parts are attached to the single-piece wing and comprise a floor frame, seat, rudder bar and stick in resin, with etched instrument panel. The canopy is also an etched part, which has to be bent over a resin plug to match the fuselage cross section and be fitted with film windows. It looks a bit tricky, but it should look very good if you manage it. The wing fits well around the fuselage bottom, but as on every resin kit some filler will be needed. The propeller has separate blades, and you might want to sand the trailing edges a bit to narrow the blades – the curvature of the trailing edges looks a bit exaggerated.

The wing has nice thin trailing edges and correctly depicts the original's thin roots and thicker outer parts. The tail surfaces are also very sharp mouldings. All control surfaces are separate, with the leading edges fitting into recesses at the hinge lines, just as on the original. The fabric detail is nicely done, but perhaps a little overstated, but that of course depends on your taste. The surface radiators on the wings, fuselage and floats are provided as etched brass that should be glued on to the wings. The inner parts of the wing radiators are intended to be folded around the leading edge. Only practice can tell how well it will work, but the corrugated effect looks very good. The cast brass float struts, although thin, look very solid and should carry the weight of the model without problems. The wing rigging is in the form of etched brass strips, which will have to be cut to length. It will be important to keep them straight, since a wire-braced plane with slack wires looks very unconvincing to me. Does anybody have experience of etched metal wing bracing – how should it be handled? The kit also includes some panels for float access, rigging attachment points and exhausts.

All the resin parts are extremely well cast. Most of them are attached to heavy pouring blocks, but there isn't a single bubble and apart from the float bottoms the mould joints are almost invisible. The surface detail is very good, and correctly very discreet. The decals look extremely thin and include the tail flashes, markings for both the all-gold N249 and the blue-fuselaged N250 and some little stencil markings for the floats. The bilingual German/English instruction booklet includes six photos of the real plane, nice CAD-drawn assembly drawings and some history and data.

Conclusion

All in all, this is a superb package! The "Golden Arrow" is one of the most beautiful Schneider Trophy racers and the kit surely does it justice. When compared to Harry Robinson's drawings there are only some minor discrepancies. I have some concerns about how to fit the etched radiator panels and rigging, so you if you have built it I would be pleased to hear about your experiences. Peter hints that there might be another Schneider Trophy racer coming – let's hope that it's true!

References

- Drawings by Harry Robinson in "Aircraft Archive – Famous Racing and Aerobatic Planes" (Argus Books, 1979, ISBN 0-85242-999-1)
- Derek N. James "Schneider Trophy Aircraft 1913-1931" (Putnam, 1981, ISBN 0-370-30328-8)

