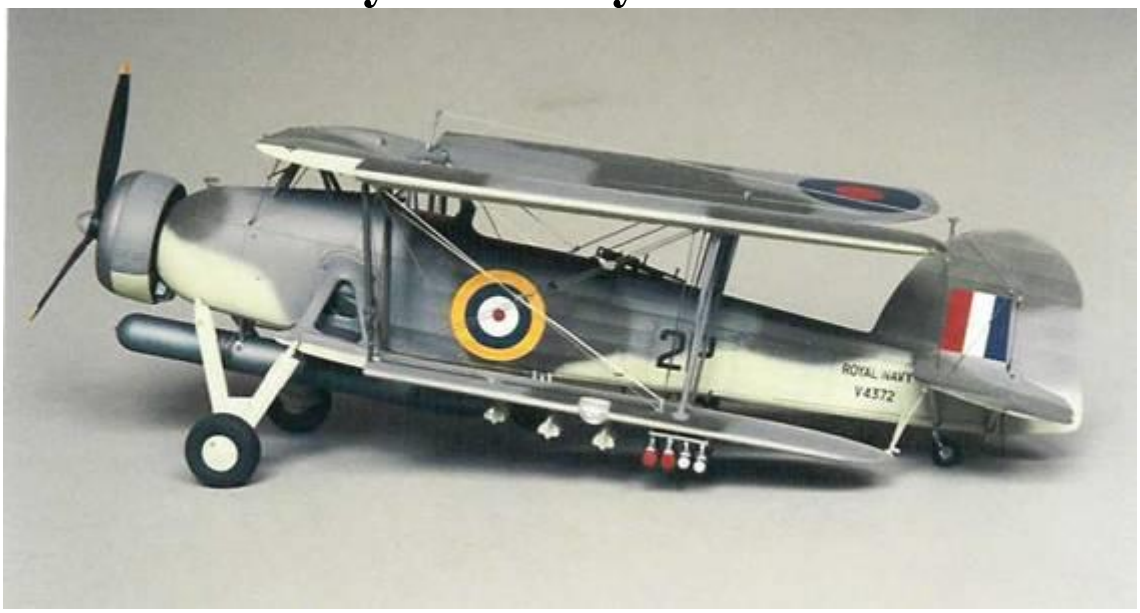
# Tamiya's Fairey Swordfish




**by Dick Smith**

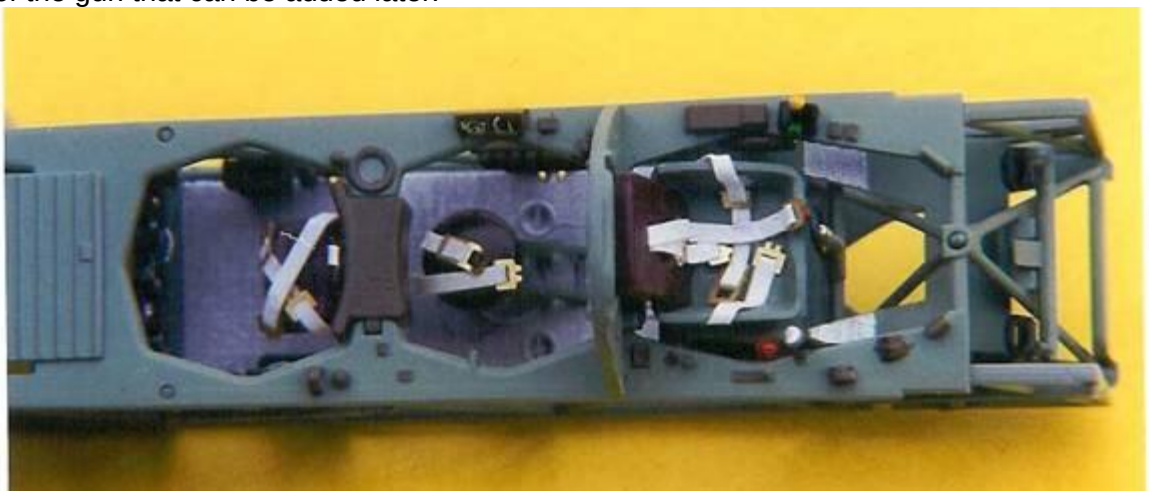
When the British entered World War II, their main torpedo bomber was a slow, obsolete bi-plane that had made its maiden flight nearly ten years earlier. With its fixed landing gear and lumbering appearance, the Fairey Swordfish had a top speed of only 220 miles per hour.

But on the night of November 20, 1940, that speed was enough to take twelve Swordfish from the deck of the British aircraft carrier Illustrious to the harbor of Taranto where the men of the Italian fleet slept. At eleven o'clock, under a moonlit sky, twelve Swordfish attacked and sunk or severely damaged six Italian battleships along with several other vessels in the fleet. A second wave of Swordfish, an hour later, put the final touches on one of the most famous British victories in World War II.

Tamiya's 1/48$^{th}$ scale Swordfish Mk.1 was released in 1999 and was one of the company's new line of "super kits." The model features a complete interior, which leaves almost nothing for the aftermarket resin suppliers to produce.

Construction starts with the jam-packed cockpit. First on the list is the pilot's position. The floor and the accompanying bracing are painted with Model Master RAF Interior Green. The scuff plates in front of the rudder pedals are flat aluminum. The rudder pedals, seat adjustment lever are picked out in flat aluminum and flat black. The seat is RAF Interior Green with Model Master "leather" for the seat back.

I made seat belts from strips of typing paper and used buckles from an IPMS photo-etched brass set. I painted the main floor of the cockpit with flat aluminum before attaching the pilot's seat to this assembly. The observer's and radio operator-gunner's position is assembled and painted next. The observer's seat, just behind the pilot, is a "bar stool" type with a Model Master "leather" cushion. The radio operator-gunner's compartment features a radio set, extra magazines for the Lewis gun, and a tarp for covering the radio set. There's also a neat replica of the gun that can be added later.



The colors for all of these parts are described on the instruction sheet. The entire crew compartment is then enclosed in a tubular structure that is painted RAF Interior Green. Since the fuselage sides were partially fabric covered, I painted the area around the inside of the crew compartment with Model Master "sand" darkened with a little "military brown," FS-30117. This color duplicates the unpainted fabric used on the fuselage.

The instructions call for the installation of the Lewis gun mount at this time. I skipped over this step until painting of the fuselage was complete. The interior of the model is very complete and will benefit from careful work and detailing.

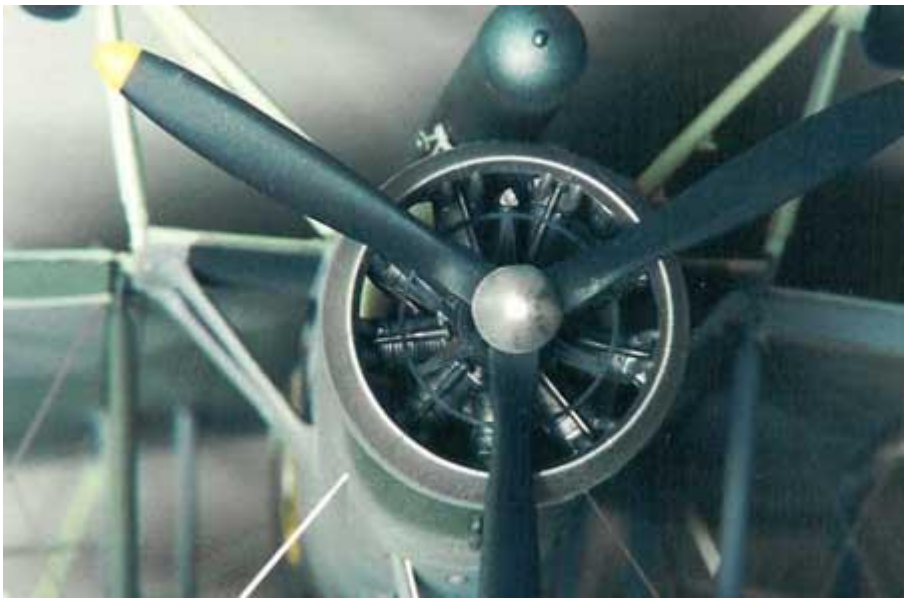
With the crew compartment finished, paint and detail the pilot's instrument panel. The panel is painted semi-gloss black or you may wish to use the decal provided. Don't forget to install the pilot's machine gun in the slot on the right side of the cockpit.

Before closing the fuselage sides, securely attached the two clear windows near the bottom of the forward portion of the fuselage. I cemented mine with five-minute epoxy around the edges. When the epoxy was dry, I attached the vinyl masks for the windows from True Details set #83415. Experience has shown that if a clear part can fall into a closed fuselage at any time during construction, they will. Hold the windows securely when attaching the masks.

Cement the crew compartment to one of the fuselage sides and check for alignment. There a few holes that will have to be drilled out in the tail and forward part of the fuselage. Pay close attention when cementing the underside of the fuselage as the fit here is a bit off. I use Tenex 7R applied with a drafting pen to cement styrene plastic. Working a few millimeters at a time, I got almost a perfect fit with only a little sanding and filling.

Slip the horizontal stabilizer into the slot provided at the rear of the fuselage. Attach the underside stabilizer braces and the last section of the underside of the fuselage. The rudder can also be cemented into position at this point.

I set the fuselage aside and started work on the Bristol Pegasus, 690hp radial engine. The engine is a model itself and will also benefit from careful painting and the addition of the engine details from the Tamiya Photo Etch Bracing Wire detailing set that is, of course, sold separately.



The Pegasus engine is assembled and painted according to the instructions. The collector ring is painted metallic gray and highlighted with Gunze Sangyo "burnt iron." The engine cylinders are a bit oversized for the cowling and some trimming will be necessary for a good fit. Slip the completed engine into the cowling and dry fit the cylinder-cowling assembly to the fuselage. Mark off a demarcation line between the underside and topside colors on the fuselage. Painting the cowling separate from the collector ring will save considerable masking.

The next step is to decide if your Swordfish will be built with the wings folded or spread. I chose to model my Swordfish with the wings folded. (I am building another model of this aircraft and

this time the wings are in the spread position. (The folded wings hide all of the great detail in the cockpits.) No matter which manner you choose, FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY!

Assemble the wings according to the instructions. Check your color scheme for the version of the Swordfish you are modeling. I decided to model mine after one of the aircraft that attacked the German battleship Bismarck. The underside of this aircraft was painted Sky, Duck Egg Green, Gunze-Sangyo, H-74.

The topside of the wings were painted in the standard WWII British camouflage colors of RAF dark green and dark sea gray. I used Model Master colors for this job. If you purchased the photo etched bracing wire set, now is the time to rig your Swordfish's wings. However, the bracing wires from Tamiya are flat. I replaced the Tamiya wires with 0.03 stainless steel wire from Minimeca, #107.
With the wings painted and rigged, paint and add the ordinance under the wings. I sprayed Testors Glosscoat over the wings and fuselage to provide a smooth surface for the decals. I used the kit decals for the model and found they went on well but I did need quite a bit of setting solution for the markings to snuggle down into the engraved panel lines and ribbing on the wings. When the decals were dry, I sprayed Testors Dullcoat over the model for an even finish.

The landing gear and torpedo went on next. The torpedo is painted Model Master magnesium.

Overall I found this an excellent kit but not one for a beginner. The rigging took several hours but was well worth the time. The "purists" will find some faults with the kit, but I found "it looks like a Swordfish." Tamiya has filled a gap in British WWII FAA aircraft. And with all of the cockpit details, it's well worth the money.