Get Over It -It's Just a Piece of Plastic!

Chairman
Jan Maes
jan.maes@keystone.co.uk

Secretary
Bob Trimnell
robncaro@ntlworld.com

Treasurer
Sonia Maes
sonia.maes@keystone.co.uk

Competition Secretary
Steve Baldwin
baldwinsj@talktalk.net

Newsletter Editor
Mike Grzebien
mjgrzebien@btinternet.com

Contributing Editor
Kev Baxter
cvamp22@hotmail.com

Web Site
http://www.IpmsIpswich.co.uk

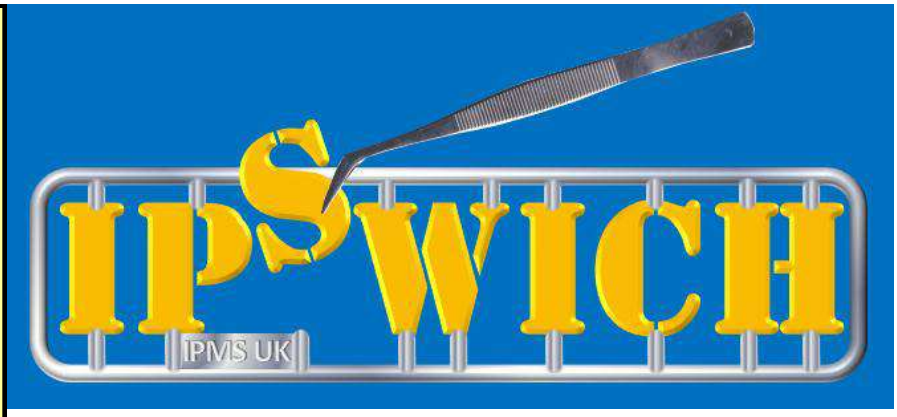
Webmaster
Harris Stevenson

Next Meeting

Date: 24 Sep 2013

Time: 7:30 PM

Location: Greshams Sports & Social Club
312 Tuddenham Road
Ipswich IP4 3QJ



IPMS Ipswich Newsletter - September 2013

•With the help of a few suggestions on overcoming my Adobe Software loss due to a computer crash, I was able to cobble together another newsletter. Compile would probably be a better term, as none of the articles are my own. Big thanks to my over-worked and under-appreciated contributing editor, Kev for penning the lion's share of the original material this month. A mention of thanks to Bob Walls of IPMS Richmond for helping with my computer woes AND for sending the ultra-informative article on sculpting with balsa foam. These talented guys make everything look so easy! If you've ever wanted to try your hand at making buildings, walls, rock faces, etc. to liven up a diorama, then this is "must read" material courtesy of Frerick Noordhuis, Brian Alfano, and The Central VA AMPS club newsletter.

•The club trip to Margate last week to visit Hornby HQ, home of our beloved Airfix was a blast from start to finish, so a final thank you goes out to Brian Wakeman for organising this rare treat.

•The IPMS Brampton club is hosting their annual model show this coming Sunday, 29 September, at The Burgess Hall, St. Ives, Cambs. If you plan on attending, let Bob Trimnell know ASAP.

•Our club stand is about ready for the knacker's yard and we are in dire need of attractive, durable, transportable shelving and signage that will see us through the next few years of show attendance. With Telford now less than 2 months away, this is now a matter of urgency so come to Tuesday's meeting armed with ideas and solutions.

•We are now paying for our monthly meeting place and have also secured corporate membership with Greshams, so we have access to their full range of facilities for club events at no additional charge. On that note, we'll need someone to coordinate our annual post-Christmas meal .

AIRFIX

– YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF THEM

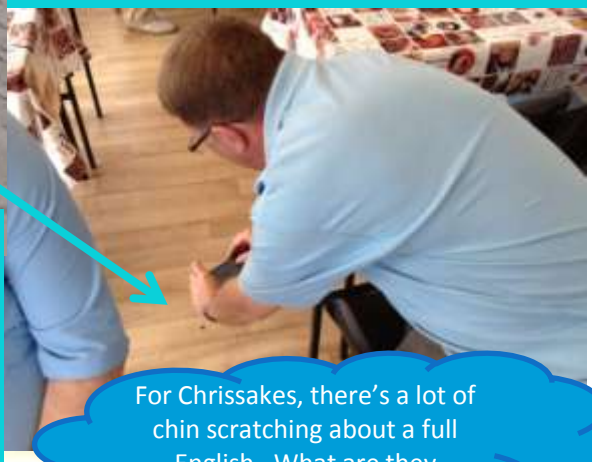
"IPMS Ipswich, legends the lot of 'em!" Well, that's what was written above the door of the headquarters of Airfix when we arrived at the UK hub of Model World domination in Margate, Kent; just off the A254. Okay, that's not true because we all know that Model World domination is centred on a 14' shed 3miles north of Ipswich, but 'Legend' is apposite to the dedicated crew of the Company that greeted us for our Club visit to the historic Margate 1950's landmark that once housed the entire production capacity of Hornby. The whole visit was superbly handled by the sales/production team led by Darrell Burge and they were hugely welcoming and professional in their hosting of the 12 members and Julien's mate who attended. Indeed, it is terribly difficult to be facetious about the event as it was probably the best model related visit we have enjoyed as a Club. However, we'll give it a go…

Getting a team photograph before we entered the building was difficult for a number of reasons: Brian followed his satnav (Jaguar, I could have told him they're crap) and was late having followed us down to within 5 miles of the destination; it was like trying to herd cats as everyone was dancing about as excitedly as an Irish priest in an orphanage (looking to save souls you perverts – not trying to find likely candidates to give him a nosh behind the altar, that would be defamation); but mostly because the chaps were all terrified of what would be coming out of the thought bubbles in the newsletter. Fair enough! However, it's not always the thought bubbles we have to worry about and it was interesting lesson in anthropology to see how we all tackled the anticipation: Brian was looking suitably 'Rock Star', but got a bit sheepish when he realised that he'd followed his satnav to the wrong magazine company; Graham was looking like he was just happy to be out; Bob was looking thoughtful, not for the last time either, but we didn't know whether it was the joy of being out of the office or because his Dad's pants were so comfortable; Steve was looking regal or the drummer off Brian's album – one of the 2; John and Julien's mate just looked uncomfortable like their boss might find they were pullng a sickie; Mike, Jon, William, Julien and Mark looked resigned despite the anticipation and 'Jazz Hands' Smithers was simply disappointed to find out that this wasn't the audition for 'Annie'. But look what happened because of all this. How typically 'Old Skool' Airfix, just when you get all the bleedin' parts lined up, nothing fits and you have to write off for an extra spare piece of photograph that you can glue to the top of your project!

Rolling things back a few minutes, due to the miracle of modern communications (but not satnav) the boys were able to meet up for second breakfast after our early start. The image pictured left was not daubed quickly by Mike as a memento of our visit and it was not indicative of the Kentish chic we enjoyed. Immediately dubbed, "Naseby South", we picked a doozy of a café to exercise our will as men after our lucky ladies had packed us off with only cereal and toast to preserve our manly figures for their pleasure.

Photo: Mike G

Mike is seen here photographing one of our hosts, who was lying down on the job, it must be said…



… Unlike this feisty young lady, who was taking no macho crap from her eastern European employers proving that she could take our orders, money and stand on a chair to take photographs too.

For Chrissakes, there's a lot of chin scratching about a full English. What are they thinking?

What a bunch of losers!

Do they have a vegetarian fry-up?

Christ! (no pun intended) Jesus has let himself go a bit!

I hope Dad doesn't act like a right dick.

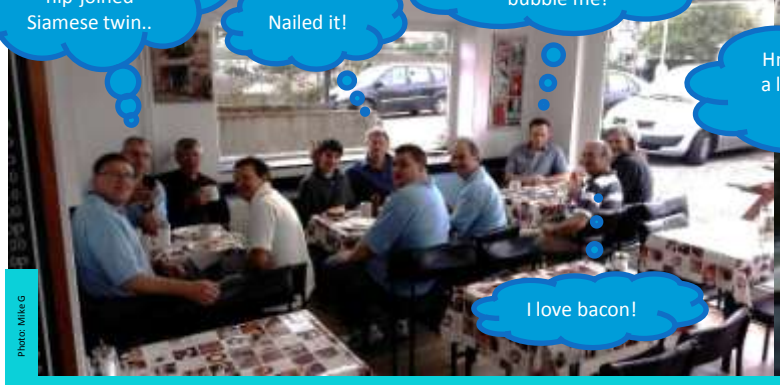
I'd better 'phone Cal and tell her I have hip-joined Siamese twin..

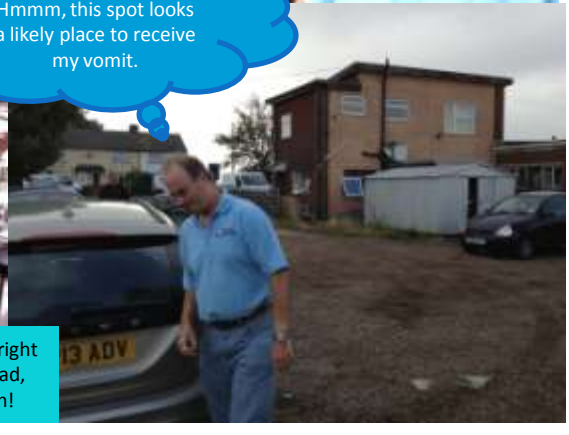
Nailed it!

Oh God, I hope he doesn't thought bubble me!

How can I act like a right dick to embarrass William?

Hmmm, this spot looks a likely place to receive my vomit.



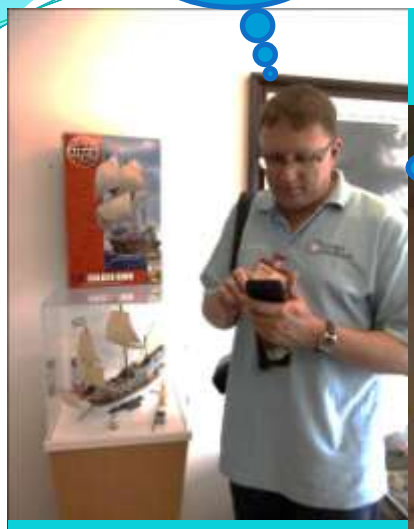


I love bacon!

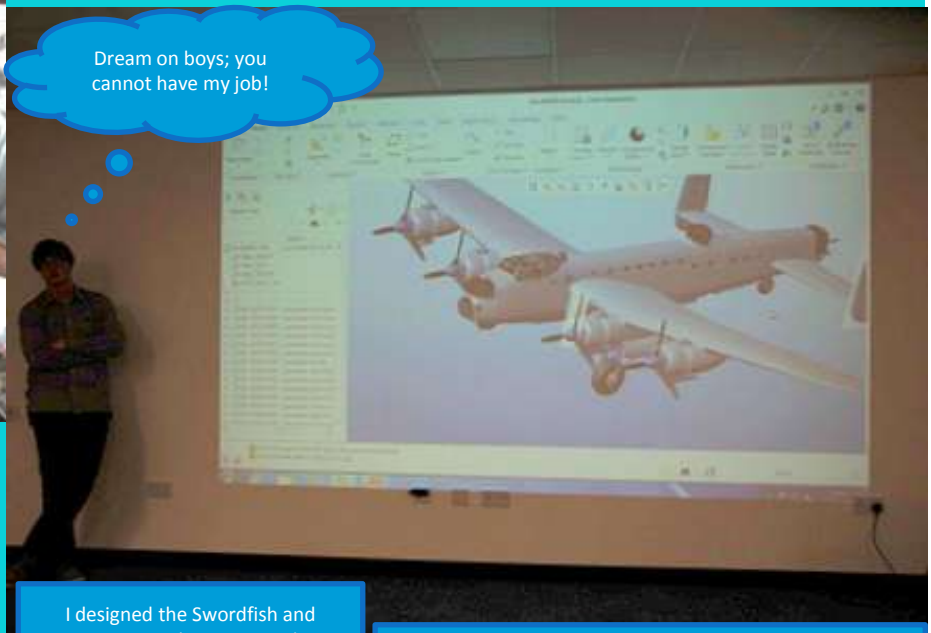
Photo: Mike G

There comes a point in every young man's life when he realises that his Dad can be a right dick sometimes, but he will generally get over himself by about 24 – the lad, not his Dad, he'll never grow up. And, rightly so; we're blokes and we act that way because we can!

Stand here for the purposes of scale my ass! The b*st*rd's going to thought bubble me!



Awaiting our security passes, we noted with glee in the vestibule that Airfix' first 'real' kit, the Golden Hind, has been produced now in the One-true-scale. Mike immediately resorted to a calculator to enable him to explain to Eric what this scale means.



Sam the researcher was wonderfully entertaining, but would not be drawn on the 1/72nd scale VC10. Well he could be, but he was too diplomatic to tell Baxter to, "Ram it, big nose!" However, the rest of the team explained all we needed to know about history, sales, CAD, stereo lithography, India-based injection moulding and why we can buy models from 40 year old moulds still.

I designed the Swordfish and Harrier GR1, why are you asking me that?

Holy crap! What am I doing? I should be at the Annie audition…

Yeah, we like the Golden Hind, but why can't we have more ships and choo-choos?

Can I get back to work on something aeroplaney and 1/72nd scale yet?

Photo: Mike G

Not a chance mate, we couldn't sell 'em! And, that's what Hornby and Scalextric are for…

Over lunch, which was provided for us - nice - we perused some of the latest test shots, which are pretty much state-of-the-art and getting better every with every new kit. Lancaster B.II (quote of the day, "We can't let the Germans [Revell] have a better Lancaster than us, can we?"), Harrier GR1 and Mini. Marvellous!

A new line from the maestros is an easy-build series for younger modellers. The splendidly ironic choice and state of serviceability of this Apache led Mike and Kev to believe that the British Army had had a very large input into its design. The AAC and REME are believed to be using these models as realistic trg aids as they faithfully reproduce the exact state of the real thing!

Of course, it is not just Airfix that operates under the Hornby banner anymore. The Margate powerhouse now is the nexus of pretty much every brand that was toy-tastic in our youth including: Corgi, Scalextric, Humbrol, several ex-foreign brands in the scale railway world as well as Hornby. All of their lines are displayed to potential buyers in a mock-up of a shop that we were allowed to saunter around at will. Interestingly the line of Star Wars Scalextric models commanded an unsurprisingly unholy license fee to Mr Lucas in order to produce them; how better might that money have been spent on a 1/72nd scale VC10? To cater for the girls, who don't want to build anything, just groom and pet their stashes, 'Mike's Little Pony' has just been bought out too. Ann Summers is said to be very interested in coming on-board with the Black Beauty line, not literally, obviously, that would be hideous; but this is not for children strictly, unless under the supervision of the Catholic Church or a porn' director.

Photo: Mike G

Naturally, we were mostly interested in the Airfix segment. This area included a display of what can be obtained exclusively by membership of the Airfix Modellers' Club. Outrageously, it was discovered that Kev's 1974 membership was now invalid and that fellow modellers of this vintage must also reapply if they would like to receive offers on allied aircraft in Russian markings and odd 1/48th scale Me-109 stuff. Maybe not then…

Waaasssssuuppp???!!!

Waaasssssaaaa???!!!

Photo: Mike G

Look what happens when a new model boat is produced! Is it a typo akin to Trumpeter's '*Frot Worth'*, or short for the 'Wazzocks' that build them, or does it just invite normal modellers to the pub? Oh hang on, John builds them, so that can't be right!

Photo: Mike G

Overcome at the Temple of Stash and Futility, Bob fell to his knees, James Brown like, and cried to the Gods of all that is holy…

Photo: Mike G

Photo: Mike G

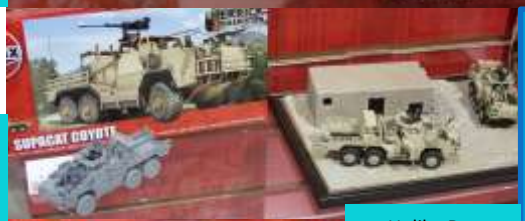
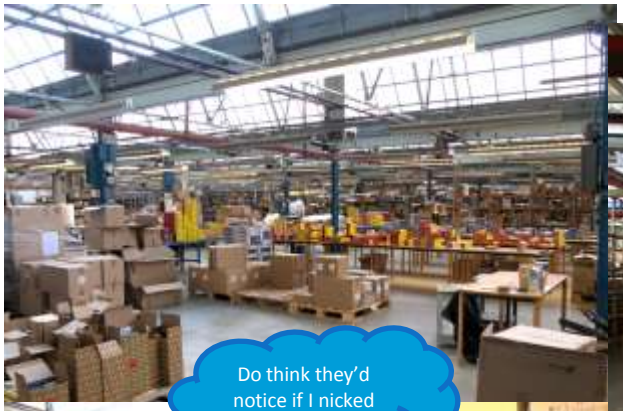


Photo: Mike G

… Unlike Dom, who has a few more years yet presumably to have another go at getting the colour correct on his A-4B, like this one!

Ahhh cannottt, uh, cannottt go onnn! Yaahh! Ahh am naht worthy! Nuh-huuhh! I must build more 1/72nd; where's me coat? Oww!



Do think they'd notice if I nicked some of this ?

After lunch, the mammoth Q&A session and our tour of the sales department, it was off to our Indiana Jones moment when we went through into the old Hornby production warehouse. Chris like the rest of us was drawn to the legendary spares department; yup, that's where all your little pieces come from…

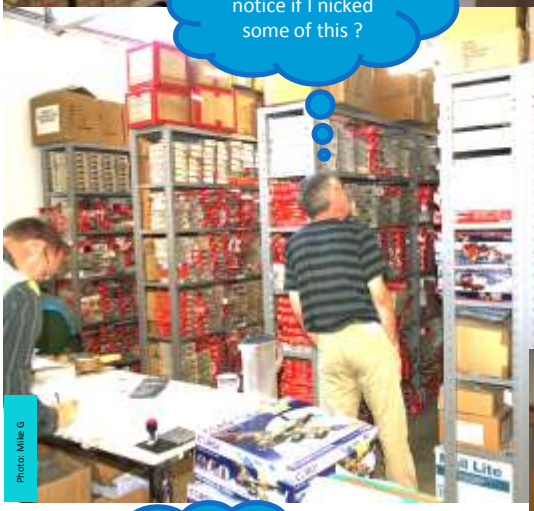


Photo: Mike G

This harmonica's a bit damp?!

I mean it, keep those f*ckin' thought bubbles to yourself!

Oh God, I think I've got one of Mike's 6-legged friends in here…

Chill my Son, at least you aren't a figure painting puke!

Photo: Mike G

Despite managing to get a decent team photograph and having stayed 1:30 longer than we had arranged to, most of it in the shop afterwards, it still wasn't over yet. We still had to pop over to Manston to check out the museums. See next month's installment…

Are you 2 laughing at my smart haircut? At least I've got some you slap'eads!

This has been a CRAFT MODEL WORLD production for IPMS Ipswich.

- 'cos the beer don't pay for itself!

The Table – August 2013

Mike kindly took on the photography duty this month as Kev was supposed to be working. Well, we say, "Working", he was at on an evening shift and when we say, "Evening shift", we mean he pitched up at the meeting just as it was starting 'cos the pongoes couldn't start their helicopters, or they were crying off due to lack of interest - again. Whatever, it gave us a chance to investigate why the pictures weren't transferring properly in this format. Not many models were on the table this month it being the holidays etc. Therefore, lots of different angles of the same things; we hope you agree that the images have been reproduced better this month.

Join in if you know the words...

Dant diddle-ant diddle-ant diddle-ant
dant dant
diddle-ant diddle-ant diddle-ant
dant dant
dannnaaahh...
... TO THE PUB; HOORAH!

John was first up with his Black Prince. We didn't care how nicely it was painted, the model was made from lead; therefore it was completely cheating and disregarded by serious modellers and Eric alike. Only Jan paid attention to how to burnish white metal with a darning needle as he needs more nose weight on his WWI bi-planes to stop them being tail-draggers and he thought he could use the stuff for Le Rhone engine cowlings. Well, that and he wanted to appear like he gives a crap when Sonia starts banging on about figure painting – perhaps it's a Belgian thing *actually* wanting to listen to your wife? Kudos where it is due, however. The Black Prince did kick the crap out of the French, as we are reminded constantly when fondly we pick up any book from Crecy Publications.

Judging by my bandy legs, I should say that you've spent far too much time in the pub already; you fat b*st*rd!

Now then, has anyone else ever wondered why a dynasty would have a surname alluding to the fact that they dig a hole, drop in a 1926, Armstrong Siddeley, 5-cylinder, air-cooled, radial-engine and cover it up again? Next they'll be saying Spitfires are sprouting out of the ground in Thailand. A thousand years of royalty; barking mad, eh? What's all that about Eric, you've seen most of it?

Paul, 1/48th scale, Tamiya, FW-190F8? Who'd have thought it? The grey looks the right colour, it has to be said; but isn't that green a little too 'Olive Drab'? Montex masks, hmm? Paul liked them so much he used them twice; show off!

The Table

Eric displayed his consummate versatility once again by building a model ship. Called 'Raymond'. Who, if the American sitcom is to be believed, everybody likes. Not Ralph, however. Having had the ignominy of being forced into a gimp suit with a capstan jammed up his bottom last month, Ralph's travails were perpetuated in, get this, 1/400th scale. The Wivenhoe-based, sweat-shop lothario, lint-fluff was crammed into a tiny little red thing that nobody cared about on the side of the sticky-up bit of Eric's teeny scratch-built masterpiece. The damning irony of Ralph's continued demise was that it was in an *understandable* scale. Perhaps if Eric ever builds the USS Ralph relations will improve.

IPMS Tidewater ship-modeller, Charles Landrum, has confirmed that he will be attending Telford in November. In a blatant attempt to garner favour with our American friend, Eric produced not only USS Randolph this month but also HMS Wilton too. To Eric's favoured scale of one inch to sixteen stones, HMS Wilton also had a red bit that nobody cared about half way up the sticky-up bit in the middle. Goodness only knows what medieval horrors Eric had picked up from his boyhood pal Teddy Buryacat in order to divide Ralph thusly. The horror!

Anyway, it says here that Charles *is* bigger than Kev and that he has been known to drink with the RM. This means one of several things: Charles is a marine or an ex-marine, likely as geographically Virginia has a high percentage of jar-heads to humans; he has a proclivity for musical theatre as the entire World knows that the RM is the single largest repository of repressed homo-erotic tension on the planet and they were far from home and feeling lonely; or, that Kev still has a chance as Charles is not bringing his mates and Kev can run a lot faster than Eric. Time will tell and Steve is taking bets.

Mark was back with his 'Far-out' 1964, Ford Fairlane. This is the Revell, 1/25th scale offering and it appeared that only 2 people knew this: Mark, who built it and Steve, from whom a little bit of wee came out he got so excited at having seen this many cars on the table in one year. Never a pedant, Mark explained how he had wired the distributor cap to the spark plugs in the correct firing sequence, amongst other things. A plumbing lesson was listened to intently following the HT-lead story. Mark thought it was because the membership were interested in how he scratch-built the internal roll-cage; however such is the age of the gentlemen in IPMS Ipswich, it was discussed a great length afterward whether the technique could be used to bypass the prostate so that we could manage more comfortably to offload the beer we had chugged! Except Steve, of course, who waddled off to find a clean pair of incontinence pants from his car. Only Eric didn't cringe at the thought of abrading the 'round parts' with wet'n'dry; poor Ralph, what has he in store for him next month?

The Table

Hang on, it's coming to me... Hobby Boss, 1/48th scale, F-105D... Eric, no, too pointy; Jan, no, not enough propellers; Sonia, no, too linear; Frank, could be – no, too conventional. Ian! No, not nautical enough. Mike, no it's completed. Kev, no wrong scale; Dom, no, correct colour; Jon, no, same as Jan but with an 'a'; Julien, no, it's not a Thunderbird. Bob J, no, not hairy enough. That's it! Bob T, he does USAF. No, wrong era.

Of course: clearly researched, posed naturally, it has all the correct GSE, chocks in and RBF flags. Brian, no...

George, by George, that's it!

Anyway, it appeared that Mike had followed the Black Prince down to the pub by the end of the evening as some of his angles got a bit Ford Fairlane. Let's hope he'd listened to Mark's plumbing lecture, or he had a friendly arrangement with Steve at least...

This has been a CRAFT MODEL WORLD production for IPMS Ipswich.

Competition Report for August 2013

A bit shorter report this month, as we were back to normal (well some of us are!) monthly competitions. It was good to see an old face back again in the shape of John Goddard, maybe we may see a model on the table next time work allows him to pop along. And staying with John's, John Page returned for another visit, it's good to see that we haven't scared him off just yet!

Talking of what was on the table, let's see what we had this month:

Paul Casson	FW 190F8	Tamiya	1/48	Detailed
George Robinson	F 105D	Hobby Boss	1/48	Detailed
Eric Dyke	H.M.S. Wilton	Scratch	1/192	
Eric Dyke	U.S.S. Raymond	Scratch	1/400	
Mark Van Osdol	'64 Ford Fairlane	Revell	1/25	Detailed
Jon Page	Black Knight			

So after all the votes were counted it was VERY close as to who came out on top. Do you really want to know who won, really, are you sure? Ok then if you are ready.

The winner this month is… is John Page with his Black Night (oops that's a Deep Purple track) let's try that again!

John Page with his Black Knight! By the way I'm on commission from John to get his name into the newsletter as much as I can.

I hear you all shout shut up Baldwin and get on with it! You know it's amazing how all of your voices carry down to sunny Felixstowe!

So here is how the voting went.

??	Black Knight *	Jon Page	18 Points
1/25	'64 Ford Fairlane	Mark Van Osdol	17 Points
1/48	F 105D	George Robinson	14 Points
1/400	U.S.S. Raymond	Eric Dyke	14 Points
1/192	H.M.S. Wilton	Eric Dyke	10 Points
1/48	FW 190F8	Paul Casson	6 Points

*** Goes forward to the Grand Final in January 2014.**

The Grand Finalists so far after 6 rounds for the Model of the Year 2013 are:

March	1/72 Mil Mi 10 Harke A	Brain Wakeman
April	1/48 F14A Tomcat	Brain Wakeman
May	1/35 STUH 42	Paul Casson
June	1970 Dodge Charger R/T	Mark Van Osdol
July - Normal Comp - Born in the USA	 1/192 H.M.S. Nepal 1/48 P 51 Mustang	 Eric Dyke Paul Casson
Aug	Black Knight	Jon Page
Sept	??	??
Oct	??	??
Nov	??	??

This is starting to look quite good, with John's figure now in the mix we have a bit of everything on the table for the Grand Final in January 2014. To be honest I thought when I was adding the votes up we might have a second car from Mark in the final. Now that would be something to dream of!

As for our Scale Modeller of the Year Competition here are the top three in each class after six rounds.

- Aircraft 1/50 - 1/144 = No change here this month, Brian Wakeman leads on 31 points with Kev Baxter in second with 26 points and Dom Stevenson in third with 22 points.

- Aircraft 1/49 - 1/10 = Brian Wakeman is still leading on 80 points, Paul Casson has closed in a little on 54 points and George Robinson has moved into the third spot on 45 points.

- Armour 1/50 - 1/144 = Still no change in this class Kev Baxter still leads (just) form Marc Maes, 9 points and 8 points respectfully.

- Armour 1/49 - 1/10 = Again no change here either, Paul Casson leads on 21 points with Darrin Howe in joint 2nd with Marc Maes both on 1 point.

- Ships = Did you know that the heavy metal band Iron Maiden recorded a track called the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" as a tribute to our Eric (his favorite band), who by the way is still leading this class increasing his lead on, well on one really as he is the only entrant so far with 62 points.

- Figures = Sonia Maes has 42 points, but John Page is starting to put the pressure on and is only 20 points behind (you can do the maths). One good result for John and he could take the lead away from Sonia!

- Civilian Vehicles = So Mark Van Osdol has increased his lead to 47 points with Brian Wakeman on 11 points and Steve Baldwin in third with 6 points.

- Sci Fi / Fantasy / Misc = Just Steve Baldwin with 1 point so far!

- Juniors (any model) = Young William Wakeman is the only junior member so far with 15 points.

As always if you have any comments / suggestions or thoughts for future competitions just come and have a chat.

Steve

Balsa Foam - Sculpting Made Easy!

Modelarmour.com Feature Competition Winner - January 2011

by Frerik Noordhuis

Posted on modelarmour.com
Date of PDF: June 2013

What is Balsa foam? It is a dense, rigid, expanded plastic made from a phenolic resin. It was developed specifically for model making and is ideally suited to carving, sculpting and coating. Its tight cell structure also makes it effective at holding fine detail.

It comes in three types... I, II and III. Type I being the softest and type III the hardest, meaning type I is easiest to sculpt and carve but also easiest to dent or damage. Types II and III are harder, but also strong enough to use in vacuum forming.

It can be purchased in different sizes: 9 x 6 x ½ inch or 12 x 9 x1 inch or 12 x 9 x 2 inch being the sizes I use mostl

Three types - which one to use?

As it says above - Balsa Foam comes in three types, or rather types of density.

Type I being soft, easy to work with...even with blunt tools or fingernails. The downside of this is that it damages easily when being handled, and is too soft to use as a master for example a casting process.

Type II is far more rigid and denser. Still easy to carve or scrape, but a little harder to use a stamp on this one, as it requires a little more pressure. It is better suited for the casting process, but since it still has an open structure, it needs sealing before making a mould from it.

Type III is the hardest, and can stand much more handling. You are able to produce really fine details in this material, but it needs to be carved rather than stamped or scribed. Thus needing more time to produce a building for instance.

My choice when making a one-off building for a diorama? Choose the softest type...it also happens to be the cheapest one!

When making a building you need to handle a lot, or when wanting to reproduce it and use it as a master...go for type II. Only when wanting to make wafer thin details on buildings like incorporated shutters should you choose type III.

Sources:
Direct from the producer:
American Foam Technologies

From the USA
BUCK Art Materials

From a UK Distributor:
Antenocitis Workshop

Or down under:
Bunyan Films

CAUTION!

When working with this material there are a few things to keep in mind. Balsa Foam is non-toxic, it is made from non-toxic materials unlike most resins we use in modelling! However, when sanding or turning or even scribing Balsa Foam, it can produce large amounts of fine dust.

This dust can irritate your eyes when it gets into them, and I can imagine that like any fine dust such as MDF dust, it is bad for your health when inhaled!

So take care when doing a lot of sanding, and blow it away from you when working,
or like I have seen others do, mount or keep the vacuum cleaner close to or on the work bench.

Balsa Foam also can rust your tools... quickly! Leave a scalpel blade on or in it just overnight, and it will be rusted overnight!

This would be good to ware while sanding Balsa Foam

Tools for Working with Balsa Foam

Balsa foam can be cut with a knife, or a large coping saw or even a small razor saw. It can be sanded smooth, or roughed up. It can be carved with hobby knives, or sculpted with one. It can be scribed with almost anything.

Firstly, you will probably want to cut the basic sheet down to manageable sizes, or whatever the size of your wall or base elements are going to be. For large pieces, use a coping saw or even a band saw...making sure you clean the dust off afterwards because of the way it can affect metal. For smaller pieces or cuts the razor saw or a long blade on a hobby handle, or even scribing the cut through and through with the back of a hobby knife will suffice.

For sculpting you can use a set such as that shown below from X-acto or Proedge.....

For scribing, similar sets can be obtained. The top four tools shown below, are in a set, whilst the bottom three are separate items.

Here's a close-up of these last two, that I use the most. A seam-scraper, and a panel line scraper.

Then there are needle files...use cheap ones for Balsa Foam!

And there are various embossing tools you could use...easily made yourself from rounded off nails, brass wire or plastic, etc.

Also most usefully, an old stiff toothbrush, and a soft brush to wipe away excess dust without damaging detail!

Making a scribing tool

The first technique you will probably use is the scribing technique. So you'll need a tool. As you can see, I have a few of those, but it is real easy to make one yourself, and then a few more as and when to suit your needs.

You need - a knife holder and a paperclip.

Fold the paperclip open - don't cut it just yet, as this is easier to hold! Hold it against a cutting disk in your motor tool. Grind the blunt tip to a more or less sharp one...it doesn't have to be as sharp as a needle...you'll find different ones more or less comfortable and easy to work with. This can also be done with a file, should you not have a motor tool available.

Next...cut off a length and insert it into your handle...voila! A scribing tool.

As you experiment with different scribing techniques, you might want to make a few more - thicker or thinner wire, blunt ends, differently bent wires...or even straight strips of material.

Alterative: Use a pin vice and assorted sewing needles sizes. Just change out different sizes of needles for fine detail scribing

Eager to start

When you first get your hands on some Balsa Foam, you might be tempted to start straight away...but first try practicing on a small piece. Start out by scribing some bricks for simplicity. If you are not satisfied, sand down the top layer, and start over! When you feel ready to do a project....make a plan!

Ask yourself these sorts of questions:

- ❑ What do I want to make?
- ❑ How can I make it more interesting to the viewer?
- ❑ What is the scale I am going to be building it in?
- ❑ What size should the doors or windows be?

Don't just scribe in the bricks... think deeper, add layer, add interest!

Example 1

A project I worked on consisting of a stone arched bridge.

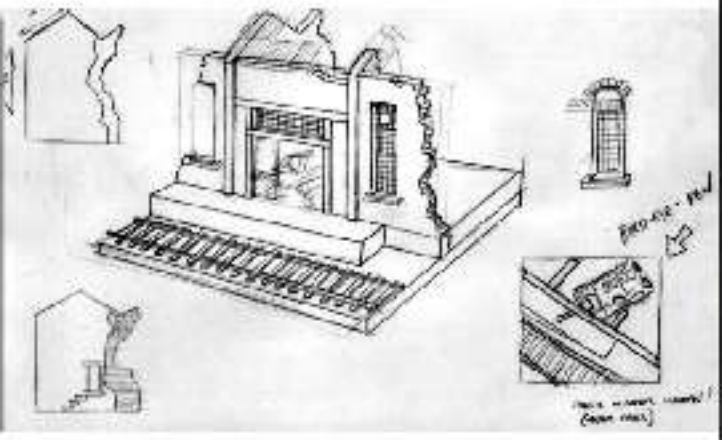
Notice the cutting back of a few bricks to add interest.

A small house. The picture below is actually of a ceramic copy, which was an abandoned project since we were unable to cast it without lots of air bubbles in the bricks.

Eager to start

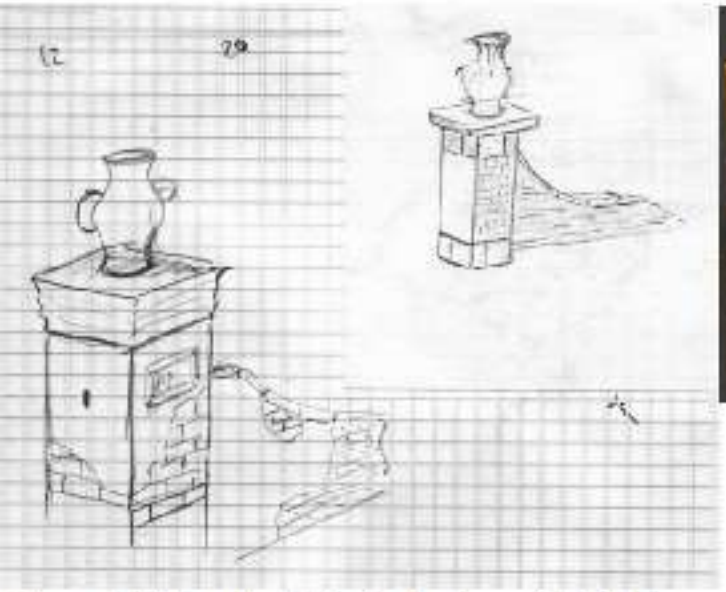
Example 2

Here is an example of how planning and drawing is applied to a definite project. This is a one-off original made from Type I Balsa Foam.



Balsa Foam: Step By Step

Planning (A)
A while ago I started a small vignette to demonstrate some techniques. First a simple sketch was made.



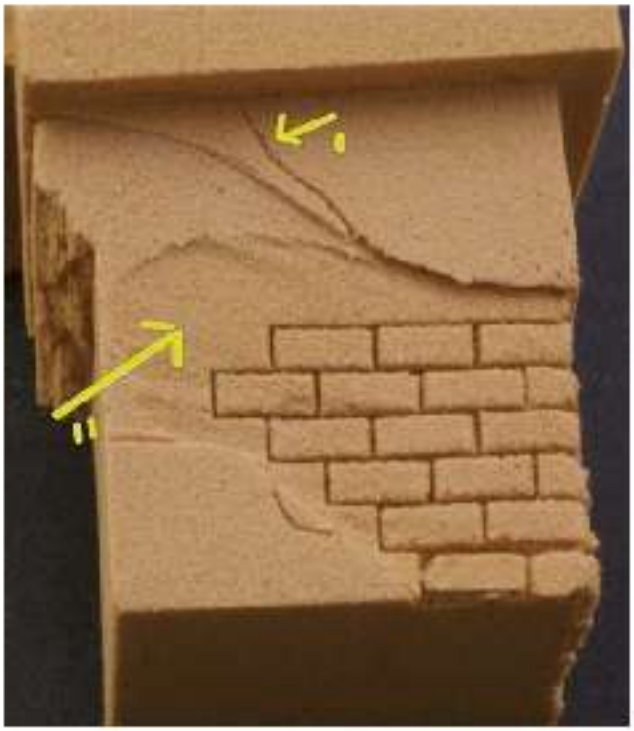
The small sketch on the right in the drawing was the initial one, see how the damaged stucco makes the second drawing more interesting to look at. It's hard to go back when you have already scribed the bricks!

Rough Material (B)
Next I had to find some Balsa Foam, roughly the size needed.

Rough Shape (C)
Then cut and sand roughly to shape, and check if the scale is right!

Cuts that Matter (D)
Then begin to make more precise cuts. Try and work in large cuts at first, this gives you re-usable off-cuts, but also reduces the amount of fine dust.

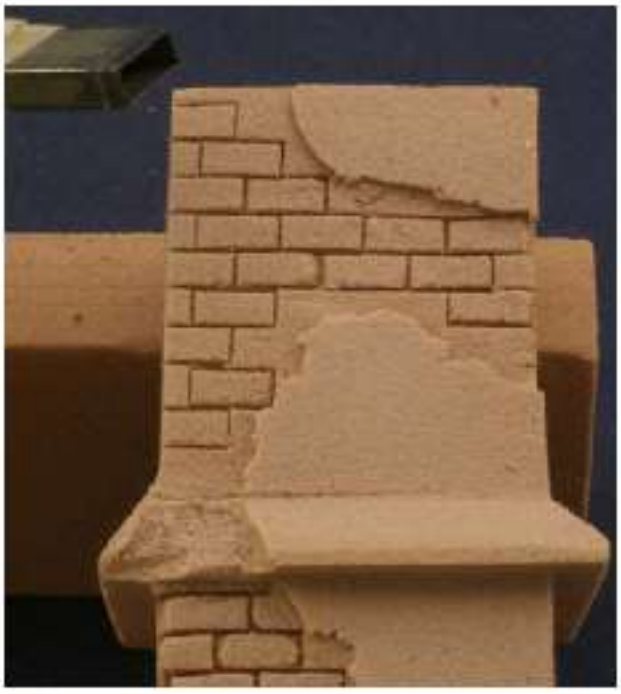
Drawing in the Lines (E)
Try to think in 3 dimensions. Draw lines where you want the stucco to have fallen off, and take away a layer with a chisel type blade.



Balsa Foam: Step By Step

Drawing in the Lines (E) (cont.)

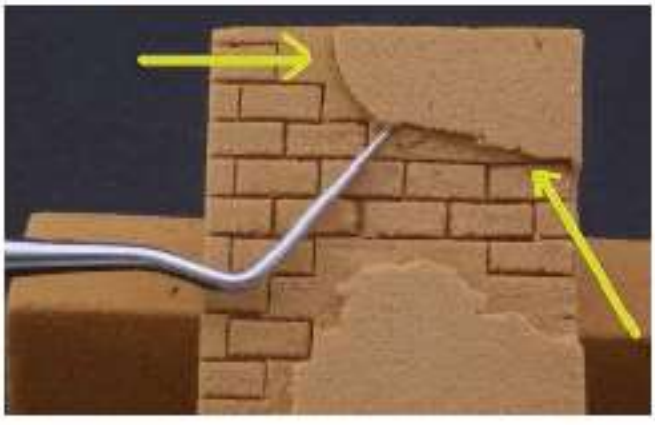
You can see below I have added some bricks already. This was done with a 'stamp' or punch technique. You can see it in the upper left corner.



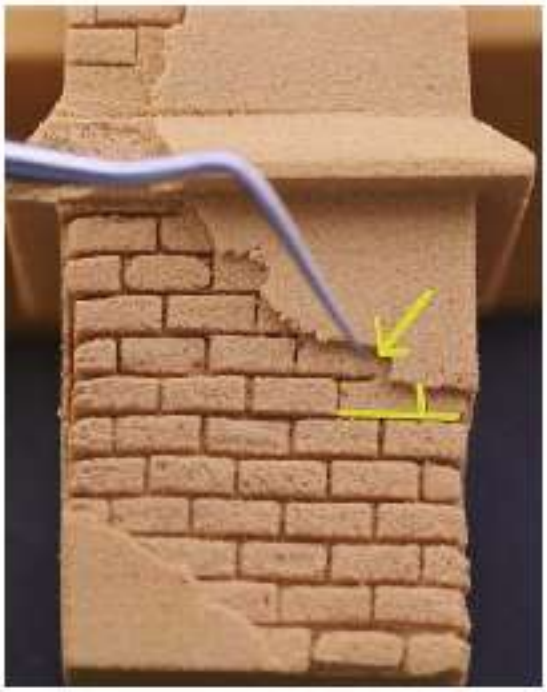
This is what they look like...

Square or rectangular brass rods are used, the ends filed thin and bevelled. I wrapped some tape around the handles since they can tend to irritate after a few hundred bricks!

When you have punched in the bricks, pay some attention to the edges of the stucco. Scribe underneath them to make the stucco look thin and about to fall off. This will really pay of when you start painting!



After this, finish the brickwork. Scribe in the missing lines, where you could not punch in a whole brick.



Brickwork Details (F)

Now for the fine detail! Dent the bricks a little with embossing tools. Rough them up using the toothbrush and give them cracks using a fine scribing tool. You can also break the edges of the stucco by flipping a tool upwards from underneath the edges

Balsa Foam: Step By Step

Stucco (G)

Lastly, the stucco in the above picture is sanded smooth...great if you want new stucco, but if you want to replicate old stucco...damage it by rubbing your finger over it, making cracks with a scribing tool, and rough the surface up with the toothbrush and give dents with the embossing tool.

Try to work around corners, making sure lines, brickwork and other details continue in a natural way.

Stone Work (H)

For the top of the pillar, I wanted a large stone plate on top so I sanded a piece flat and to the thickness I wanted, after which I cut it to size.

The best way to do so is to mount a large sheet of sandpaper to a piece of MDF or even better perspex...

The edges were shaped using the needle files...

Then the top aged by scrubbing with the toothbrush after denting with the embossing tools. The scrubbing with the toothbrush is one of the most useful techniques. It removes the top layer giving a rough surface, rubbing down hard edges on bricks.... perfect for aging!

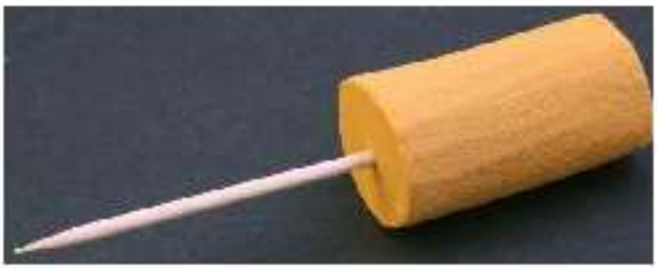
Stone Work (H) (cont.)
And that's the pillar itself finished already.

Turning an Ornament (I)
In the drawing shown on the previous page there was an ornament shown on top of the pillar, and you have seen the block of foam in its rough shape...now its time to give it a twirl!

To Begin:
Take a block of Balsa Foam, and insert a piece of rod in its centre. I used a piece of wood skewer for it, but it's probably more advisable to take a length of copper or brass rod. That way it won't break or splinter if you hit it with a sharp knife, unlike the wooden one!

Now shape the block to a roughly cylindrical shape. It will not wobble at the tip when perfectly cylindrical in shape...and perfectly mounted of course!

Glue the pin into the Balsa cylinder with some white glue, and let dry overnight! I advise white glue as opposed to superglue because the super glue soaks into the balsa foam and doesn't adhere well. This could cause your rod to spin, but the cylinder to stop when attempting to shape!



CAUTION
Wear Eye Protection and Mask when Turning Balsa Foam

Before turning the motor tool on high speed, a word of caution.

Working with Balsa foam on a lathe, or in this case chucked into your motor tool is in some ways comparable to woodturning in a lath, in some ways it is not.

Please be careful when shaping it. Take precautions. For example, **wear eye protection and a mask.** Look at the pictures closely, you can see dust flying and you could even make your whole project fly!

Take your time. You are working with spinning objects and sharp tools! Easy does it, and better a few small cuts than a large one that ruins your day...or even something more serious.

On the other hand, Balsa foam has no grain direction, unlike wood. Your tools do not need to be sharp, it can be shaped by a knife tip, a toothpick or even just sand paper. It is much easier than wood turning! So go and have a try. It is fun!

If you want to experiment first, try out as in the following picture: a firmly glued cylinder of Balsa foam, slow speed on your motor tool, and hold a piece of rolled up sand paper against it...now apply real light pressure...and away you go!

Turning an Ornament (I) (Cont.)
Practice round

I made an ornament to show a few techniques and possible shapes that can be done, although I will not show this ornament in place on the pillar!

The pics were made with the timer on, so sorry for some movement or out of focus pics, I was actually working on the ornament at the time, no staged pics here!

❑ **Step 1:** Mount rod into balsa block

❑ **Step 2:** Shape block into a cylinder.

❑ **Step 3:** On a slow speed let it turn, chucked into a motor tool. Watch as it turns. You will probably see fuzz at the tip. This indicates a not so perfect cylinder. It will probably wobble a little. That is why it must be done at slow speed.

❑ **Step 4:** Prepping. Making a perfect cylinder. Move the tip of your hobby knife up and down the block while it spins, let it hit the cylinder, cutting into it NO MORE than 1 mm deep. You will see a groove forming. Once you have moved the knife up and down a few times, you will notice the cylinder begin to spin calmly, without wobbling (if it is, the block came loose from the rod)

Step four above can also be achieved by using a coarse sanding stick, or sanding paper. Be sure to hold it underneath the turning cylinder, this way the dust flies away from you and your eyes, lungs etc.! See the picture.

As you can also see in the picture, I am doing this free handed. Both the rotary tool and the knife are in my hands, just resting on my legs. For beginners I would advise them to mount the motor tool on a stand, and maybe lean the knife on a small block of some kind. This prevents trembling of the hands, and thus the tool!

❑ **Step 5 :** Now comes the fun part, shaping. the cylinder into whatever you'd like. I used a fine blade in my hobby knife, but anything will do. Although I must say something flat works best as it shaves material from the surface better than something round like a needle.

As a result of its fine tip, you can make bowls or dig into deep crevices.

❑ **Step 6:** Sanding. If you have worked with tools on a turning object, unless you used genuine tools for a wood lathe (a miniature one) you will know that the surface will not be smooth. If you want it to be, you'll have to sand. Turn the speed down and use fine grade sand paper. I think I even used 400 grit for it. Take into account before shaping if you want to sand it smooth; you can easily take away too much too fast.

Note that I am holding the sandpaper in a way so that I won't apply too much pressure. That way, the edges of the bottom bowl for example could be sanded to a wafer thin edge. Note also that I am also holding the sandpaper underneath the object so that the dust flies away from me!

Art or trash?...
The finished practice item....

Turning an Ornament (I) (Cont.)

Below are two more I made earlier. The one on the left was a little too slim when mounted on top of the pillar, so the second was made.

The rim was made by first digging into the top, leaving a strong enough edge, and then sanding it down to a wafer-thin edge. This is thinner than an X-acto knife, and was fun to break on purpose! This was made in type I Balsa foam by the way. Careful handling was required!

Type II or maybe even III would have give a stronger result. You can see the open structure of the Type I material when looking at the neck/rim. Type II would have a closer cell structure.

Mounted on the pillar...

Tiles (J)

In the picture below you can see I began scribing the natural brick of the wall. You can see how I work from one end to another, scribing and making up sizes and shapes as I go. Try not to think in straight lines to much! You can also see I attached some tiles to the top of the wall.

Let's see how these can be made. There are two ways to makes tiles;

You cut a long strip, and sand it flat and thin on a piece of sandpaper (preferably the one attached to a flat surface).

The down side of that method, or rather the difficulty of that technique, is to sand in such a way that the strip has an even thickness all over. Now I have practiced quite a lot, but somehow one finger always presses down more than others...

Tiles (J) (Cont.)

It's much easier to cut a block the size of the surface of the tile... And using a technique similar to slicing bread, cut the tiles with a razor saw. Individual tiles can be sanded to thickness if needed.

I like to make the tiles as if they were new, attach them, and after they have dried, age and shape them. Below is the finished wall from a few angles.

Compare to the above pics where the tiles are on 'new'. Notice the aging of the tiles, rounded of sides, thinned down, cracks and dents. Also notice that I left the side of the wall neat and straight. The bricks at the end of the wall were scribed last so not to damage them while handling the wall.

It is important to plan this carefully though, nothing looks more out of place than strange seams or out of size bricks to make things fit.

The freehand scribed bricks in the wall were first all scribed. If you'd look down the side you'd see a flat surface, break this up by cutting down a few bricks so that they lay deeper in the wall. Now take your scribing tool and point the face of the brick a little beveling the edge. Add cracks and scratches, and last...my favorite action...scrub the toothbrush horizontally over the surface of the bricks. It sands the bricks like years of wind, rain and sand would do...but does it lots faster... so be careful. A little at a time is best.

Protection (K)

With the wall and pillar finished, I wanted to make a base to sit it on.

Before that, I thought it would be wise to protect the surfaces from the sort of rough handling required when fitting it to the base.

Balsa Foam is porous. It can be painted without treatment, but would soak up lots of paint because of this porous nature. By giving your finished project a protecting layer, it not only seals it for paint, but also strengthens the surface.

There are multiple products you could use. Below are the two least expensive and easiest to use. Some modelers use a resin that can even be applied by brush.

Pactra Aero Gloss Flat & Pactra Gloss Jet Black

On the Left in the above picture is regular white wood glue, of the sort mostly used by carpenters. (**Elmer's Wood Glue**) You can buy the type that can be thinned with water. Thin the glue with water to a substance that resembles milk. Brush it on the Balsa Foam and watch it being soaked in. Repeat after it has dried, and then wipe a way the excess if it builds up too much. You can recognize this when you see too much white in the seams/cracks/mortar lines etc.

On the Right in the above picture is a proprietary pore filler of the sort used by model boat and plane builders (**Pactra Aero Gloss Flat & Pactra Gloss Jet Black**). It's a chemical mixture and it smells awful! It is used to seal the balsa wood they use to prep it for painting, or as a water resistance treatment. Again, brush it onto the surface of the Balsa Foam then watch it dry and repeat. Take care with these products...it is hard to notice that you put on to much layers...until you start painting and you see no surface detail.

Alterative: Testors Dullcote can also be used to seal and protect Balsa Foam. Just watch out for excessive build up that could obliterate fine detail

The Base (L)

The wall and pillar are now finished, sealed and primed. You can use your favorite primer at this point. The author uses Halfords Grey primer

It needed something more, and I found a large mansion entrance gate from Scale Link. I cut off most of the finials and ends on top, as they were distracting and too large, it unbalanced the whole set-up. Next, I shifted it around and established the correct size base.

I found a few figures that would be nice to add, and a 'bakfiets'! The tree was made from wires twisted together, following Richard Windrow's technique. A sheet of Balsa foam was cut to size, and a block of wood also, to serve as a base. The block is solid Mahogany, a scrap piece from a company that produce solid wood doors. I love the look of solid mahogany especially with a clear gloss finish!

And a view from the side, that shows I ran out of large Balsa sheets. Unfortunately I have a gap showing, but the good side of it is that I can show some more techniques to hide this!

Paving the Streets (M)

The Street in front of the gate is going to be paved with cobble stones and for this another stamp/punch was made.

Here are a few I have. The grey one is square, and used to produce a straight pattern

The white ones are used to produce curved, or other shaped pavements

The brass punches/stamps are finer, and used to replicate brick work.

Paving the Streets (M) (cont.)

How it's made

First you take the punch and press in rows of cobblestone. I laid the paving on an angle to the sides of the base on purpose, but the important thing is to try it out. If everything is in straight lines, it can look odd.

Next, you take your scribing tool, and deepen the grooves, scraping away some of the excess balsa foam dust.

Some half-cobblestones you are not able to make with the punch without destroying adjacent work. Pay attention to these areas, and form and scrape the cobblestones with your scribing tool.

If you have finished pressing, and scribing the street, look at it from the side. You will notice it all looks flat and un-real. So let's add some depth! Remember, think 3D!

Pick out random cobblestones, and remove the top layer. This way they will look like they are sitting deeper.

Paving the Streets (M) (cont.)

How it's made

Now, re-press them with the punches/ stamps.

And clean up the seams! Look at the excess balsa foam at the red arrows!

Now, you might think you are finished, but compare the two pictures below. The first looks flat and strange, and the second looks real and lively. Don't forget to add some aging!

Concrete or natural stone

This is really the simplest technique there is when using Balsa Foam. It relies on the fact that after a bit of rubbing, Balsa Foam resembles the texture of natural stone or concrete or cement.

So with this in mind I shaped the kerbstone and after adding a few details and some wear, gave it a good rubbing with the old toothbrush.

Sidewalks/ Tile Floors (N)

Remember the seam between the two part baseplate above? I am able to hide most of it under some sand and grass, but part of it is under the path I planned. To hide it Iscrap away the top layer, sanded it smooth. It is less visible as it is, but I want to hide it completely. You could scribe in some tiles at this point, but you'd have trouble with the hard edge that the glue leaves behind.

So first the sliced loaf technique...

Glue them on the path where you wanted them. Balsa foam is easily glued with PVA. Avoid using super glue as it soaks into the Balsa foam. Let them continue over the edge, and you can trim them later. Use tiles in different thicknesses, not bothering to sand them to a uniform thickness. This adds a little visual interest.

When everything had dried, shape and weather the tiles. After that trim the edges with a sharp knife. This way the edges remain straight and true, enhancing the look of the scene .

Finishing Touches – Cracks (O)

I like to exaggerate scribing seams and mortar lines, in this scale it somehow looks good. The other advantage deep grooves have, is that I can add sand into them.
That's the final step before painting:

As you can see I added a heap of sand, and then with a soft wide brush I brush it from the cracks. Use a diagonal brushing motion if you want to brush away excess and across the grooves if you want to remove some from the grooves themselves. The idea is to leave just a tad more sand than you'd like...Remember with gluing it, it will shrink in volume.

Next I use a large old syringe to drip a thinned down mixture of white glue and water over the sand and all of the Balsa Foam. This way you glue the sand, and seal the Balsa Foam in one step.

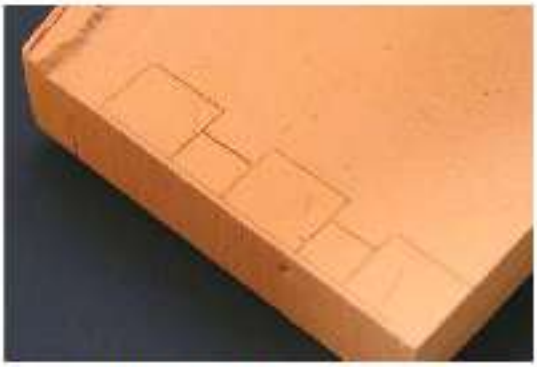
At first it will look odd, too wet and like a complete and utter failure! But the mixture will dry and soak into the sand and Balsa Fam, and you end up with this:

Fixing Damage (P)

The best way to repair damage to your base is to avoid it in the first place...and the best way to avoid damage is to plan!

Take for example the bridge I am building...although I have been building it for a few years!

In the first picture below you can see I drew out the lines of the stones I want to depict and that I left a little edge on the left. This is my 'damage area'. I will work and detail the front first, and work on the sides last, removing the 'damage area' piece by piece.



As you can see in the next picture, the front of the facade has been partially sculpted, and I have worked around the edges. Part of the 'damage area' is still in place and functioning as a bumper! This will be removed last.

Also a wise thing to do is work in areas. Finish one area first, complete with sealing and hardening the surface, and then move to the next. One thing to be wary of is not to harden the surface you haven't detailed yet!

Suppose that despite all your precautions, you stored your last project, a small wall, underneath your workbench, and one of your sculpting tools fell on it? Well, you get the point, one that cannot be hidden by a crack in the wall, or a well placed bullet hole....Like this one....

SEAMS (R)

There are two ways of dealing with seams. Either leaving them out in the open, as part of the structure....or hide them!

OPEN SEAMS: For example this train station. You can figure out where sheets of Balsa Foam meet if you look closely.

Or on this small house... The sides are sheets, where the concrete/stone door frames start is the other piece

Again, the right side wall is a sheet, where the door frame starts is another. Seams are obvious when you search, but don't have to be obvious or distracting.

HIDING SEAMS

Here's a little thing I scratched to show one of the techniques to hide a seam. Once again this is the 'over-the-top' way, separate bricks can also be used to good effect.

I took some left over pieces to show this technique, so don't pay attention to sizes and total finish. The finished project will be sanded down to a smooth sheet afterwards....another plus in using Balsa Foam!

First I took two pieces and set them up to simulate a corner in a building. I carved the thick one, to approximately the thickness of a normal sheet.

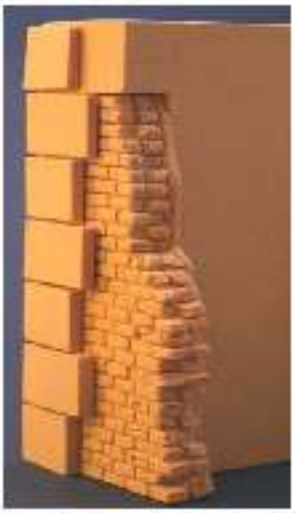
And then fitted the connecting wall. I did not glue them yet, as this would have made sculpting that much more difficult.

And after sculpting the small wall, I glued it in place. Again, remember to use glue sparingly, do not let it touch the edges where you need to sculpt later on.

Next, cut some tiles. I used rectangular tiles and some that were more or less square. I made sure the square ones were large enough to touch the seam, and the rectangular ones to cover it.

SEAMS (R) HIDING SEAMS (cont.)

Then I glued them in place. Making sure they all extend beyond the side of the wall.



As you might have noticed, I did not worry about obtaining an even thickness, or their neatness on the side extending over the side of the wall. I did however pay attention to even spacing of the stones. Why? Because I then could place the complete wall on a flat sheet of sandpaper, and make them all the same thickness. Also sanding the other wall and removing all the extended parts, neatly and evenly... repeat on the other side...

In the close-up you can already see the seam of the glued-on stones is negligible.

If you look closely you should be able to spot the small amount of white glue seeping out between the top stones! This is actually hardened glue, surfacing because of the sanding. This might get troublesome later...that's why you must pay attention where to put glue!

I left the sanding a bit coarser because in these types of facade stones/corner decoration, vertical lines in the bricks are often seen. These decorative stones are often made of a softer type stone than the structure itself...like sandstone.

Now you could leave it at that...but I decided to add a beveled edge with a file or sharp knife for a more decorative look.

Looking at the images again, I am not completely satisfied with a few of the seams, since I could see some glue residue. If I were to finish this, paint and all, I would now harden it with PVA or pore filler...and after drying I would lightly sand away the glue residue.

It was a hasty project, for example I put the glue on sloppy, but I'll be able to say I did it on purpose to show how not to do it!

Incidentally I showed another simple technique. The top five rows of bricks in the last picture are actually from the other sheet. Compare with one of the first pics and you will see. Hiding seams by having it fall into a mortar joint is the simplest!

The simplest way to hide seams is to use a filler. However, if a seam runs all the way up, the seam will be obvious, no matter what you do. The repetitive disruption, no matter how well filled, will still be noticeable. Therefore the best way is to camouflage them!

To demonstrate this, I took the wall I made earlier and simulated a really lousy glued seam. I think you will agree that well sanded, cut and fitted parts will produce a much less obvious seam!

SEAMS (R) HIDING SEAMS (cont.)

I started a few runs of freehand scribed bricks. Of course I did use a ruler for the horizontal lines. As you can see, I made sure I started in the middle with scribing, thus having the least amount of bricks to repair.

I scribed and weathered the bricks as usual. Now we can see that two bricks need to be repaired a the seam runs right through them and remove the bricks as a whole.... leaving a hole!

Then cutting and gluing in place two replacement bricks. A square hole and square brick are easier to make tight fitting than a round hole and brick by the way. Just thought I'd mention it in passing.

I sanded them flat and even with the surrounding wall, then sculpted them and weathered them like to match others. When pressing the bricks into the white glue to fix them in place, a tiny amount seeps from below into the mortar grooves around it. I sprinkled a small amount of Balsa dust into it to hide tiny seams there.

For a complete wall this would mean replacing half of the bricks, but does offer a great looking result.

Masonry or brickwork. The technique has been explained above, so I'll keep this one short. Bricks punched in.

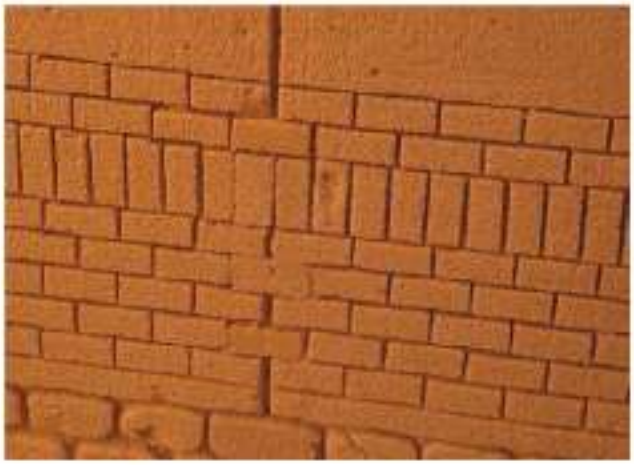
Spare bricks made with the punch. These are bricks approximately 6mm by 2 mm

First remove the damaged bricks ...

Here the new bricks are glued in place.

SEAMS (R) HIDING SEAMS (cont.)

Bricks sanded smooth with the others...



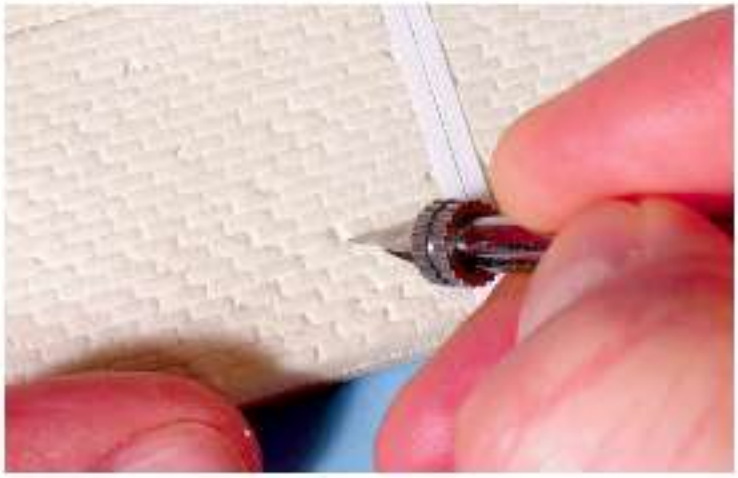
And finally all bricks weathered and sculpted...

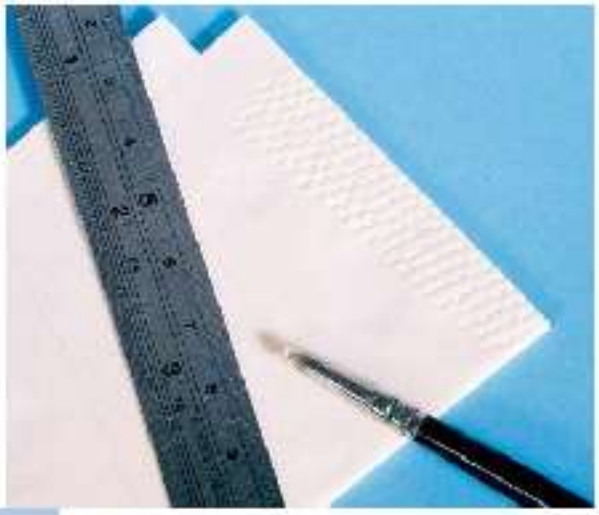
Here is the original full thread on Working with Balsa Foam. This provides additional form other modelers in addition to the author.

Construction of House using Balsa Foam:

Here is a Scratchbuilt Farmyard from Balsa Foam:

Another excellent model rail road web site. While balsa Foam is not used the techniques used here will work for balsa foam too. Make sure to check out the other link to the left for other useful reference and ideas.





May meeting demo: Balsa Foam buildings/structures

by Brian Alfano

Balsa Foam was developed for artists and industrial designers. It's a Phenolic foam that is non-toxic, takes various paints well and is easily carved and shaped. As the name implies, it is a material somewhere in between balsa wood and foam. It is perfect to use for natural materials like stone, rock, brick, cement and well-traveled road beds. The best Balsa Foam for modeling is called 'Balsa Foam II' and has a 10 lb. (per cubic foot) density. There is a softer one with 5 lb. (per cubic foot) density if needed.

Here are the notes from Brian's demo:

- Balsa Foam comes in different thicknesses and dimensions, but it cuts easily with common modeling tools such as saws and knives. It also sands easily with sandpaper or even another piece of Balsa Foam. The material has a low ph (acidic) and will cause tools to rust if they are not cleaned after working with Balsa Foam. Use soap and water for cleaning.
- The material has no memory, so even the tiniest marks remain on the surface.
- All paints/primers work on Balsa Foam. Auto spot-fill primers work very well to fill in the texture and can be sanded when dry if a smooth surface is desired.
- Make a brick wall by first printing out a template of symmetrical brick marks. Apply spray adhesive to the template and apply to the Balsa Foam. Use the template to guide a scalpel blade, marking the lines of the bricks. Peel off the template and use the blade marks as guides to carve in mortar marks by using a scribe or other pointed tool. Being exact is not critical—the template is just a guide to keep the proportions correct. Feel free to wing it for freeform designs.
- Some bricks can be rounded off more, damaged, pock-marked or sunken deeper depending on the look you're after.
- Texture with wire or stiff brushes if desired.
- Walls can be made of Balsa Foam, just plan ahead and think about the topmost surfaces first and work down from there.
- Most glues work to join pieces; Brian has used white, CA and hot glue. Beware that CA glue is harder than the foam so sanding would be difficult without damaging surrounding areas.
- Brass pins work well for internal bracing at joints.
- Repair damage with Spackling, the lightweight kind called 'Fast & Final' because it dries to a hardness similar to the Balsa Foam and can be sanded easily.
- There are limits to thickness so experiment first.
- Individual bricks are possible by cutting them apart from thin segments of Balsa Foam.

Resources: (clickable links)

American Foam Technologies (manufacturer):
www.americanfoamtech.com

Dick Blick Art Supplies:
www.dickblick.com/products/balsa-foam-ii/

Informative PDF from the manufacturer:
www.americanfoamtech.com/foam/balsa-foam-20/Working-with-Phenolic-Balsa-Foam-final-9-6-2012.pdf

Brick photos free to download:
mayang.com/textures/Architectural/html/Brick/