

# THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

## Random Modelling Notes

### OUT OF THE BOX

(what's in the box)

(August 2004)

Now, where was I? The last time I ran out of time to get a model finished before the next meeting I was reduced to writing about my tool box. This time other work has kept me from finishing a lovely little avions Francaise so it is time to go back to my tool box for inspiration. As I recall it, last time I got as far as writing about tooth picks which was really only the beginning of the tools in my box. I didn't know that it was possible to write so much about little splinters of wood and how they could be used in modelling. With any luck we might get as far as toothpicks again. we may not.

Between then and now I've upgraded from the little box I had to the rather larger cavernous container I now have. The previous box wasn't bad but it was just a touch too small for all the stuff that I need as a modeller so when I saw a whopper in the now extinct 'Plastic Unlimited' shop, I



bought it. This one has quite enough space for all the stuff I need to use and at the moment there is even a little bit of spare space that I have yet to fill. In time I'll think of more things to add.

Using a tool box like this accomplishes several things. It puts all my tools in one place so I can carry them around if I want to. It means that there is a place for everything and everything goes in its place to make modelling easier by forcing me to be tidy. Thirdly, it stops stuff from getting dusty from sitting around out in the open, as used to happen before I thought of getting everything into one box. After six or seven years of using a box to contain all my modelling tools I don't see how modellers can work any other way, but that's like most things to do with modelling, everyone develops their own techniques and ways of doing things to suit their own temperaments and abilities.

I started using a tool box when we were living in Perth and we spent a lot of the year living outdoors in the lovely weather. Every time I wanted sit outside and amuse myself by working on a model I had to gather up the tools I'd need and take them out with me. After having done this for five or six years it occurred to me that it was a cumbersome way to do things so I looked around for some way to make modelling easier and somehow came across the idea of a fishing tackle box - the kind of thing that has lots of little compartments and fold our trays to hold all the little bits and pieces that anglers use. I bought a small cheap one to test the concept and after a few months bought a bigger one that I used for many years.

My new box, like the previous one, has three trays that folded out on each side with a selection of little bits of plastic that allowed me to make up the partitions to suit myself. So when I got the new box I spent some time figuring out how all the different bits and pieces would best fit in the trays by fitting the partitions in various ways. After experimentation I figured out the best ways to arrange them so that the files, paint brushes, drills, tooth picks and so on and so on fitted



together. The additional space allowed me to include some general purpose paint in this box, the kinds of colours that get used on most models such as black, white, silver, red, yellow and French interior blue-gray.

Then I made up partitions for the bottom of the box. In the previous box things had just sort of rattled around and it all ended up in chaos so this time I decided to make it so everything there had a place and things like glass jars holding fluids for cleaning brushes weren't in danger of clanging into each other and breaking. This project took me the best half of an afternoon, using thick white card glued together with good old aquadhere. The first stage was to cut a piece of cardboard that fitted snugly into the bottom of the box and then built up the side walls and then a series of partitions for the various bits in pieces. In the center were spaces for the bottles of kerosene, water and 'Future', little bottles or tubes of super glue and so on. In truth, everything turned out better than I had expected although, as I've used the box more, some bits and pieces have moved around so that the various tools or materials have found their right places. This is part of the natural process in which the tools and materials that get used most gradually find their way to the parts of the box that are easiest to reach so it is easy to tell which are my favourite tools just by where they are located in the box.

There are really two classes of tools in my tool box, those that get used all the time and those that only get used occasionally but I wouldn't be without for those special occasions. Those are the ones I have to rummage around a bit to find whereas the ones I use all the time I can pick up with barely a glance.

So, let's begin with those tools in the latter category, the little set of modelling knives, all arranged so the blades point in the same direction so I'm not in danger of stabbing myself every time I reach in for one. There are two knives with snap-off blades, both of which I've had for far longer than I can remember. The best one is the first knife of its kind that I ever saw, probably in the late 1960s, that is so old it has a metal body rather than the more modern plastic ones and most of the paint has been worn from it over the years of constant use. The other is a fairly old plastic one that doesn't take up much room and seems to fit my hand just nicely when it comes to some kinds of trimming.



It's so old that the little snap-off bit in the handle no longer sticks in place so I have to fish it out to snap off a bit of blade. There are also two blade dispensers which shows that I'm forgetful when it comes to stocking up.

Then there are two of the craft knives of the kind that you can fit all kinds of blades into and you just tighten them up to clamp them tightly in place. In theory I should be able to use a wide range of blade shapes but somehow I only seem to use the ones with the sharp points that you buy in most model shops in little plastic tubes. I have two of them, one with a thin handle that I've also had for ages and a more modern thicker handle that I bought in Stanbridges (in Perth) which I expected to be better to use because it was bigger but somehow I still prefer the old one. As a result it has a dull old blade that I use for jobs such as cutting off slabs of two part epoxy putty and that kind of thing. I recall having been instructed at one time that the snap-off blade knives were not recommended for modelling because they aren't as stable as the other ones but I prefer them for all kinds of things, particularly because you get much more use out of the blades than you do with the other blades. (Some time back Wayne suggested sharpening blades on the bottom of a mug but that never worked for me and I have a little blade sharpening stone that I use, although I find that only new blades are really sharp enough for things like masking canopies.)

Above the knives are the tooth picks, two segments of ordinary cheap flat toothpicks and one of the fancier round toothpicks. I've only taken to using the fancy round one recently and really only for painting wheels because it is easy to twirl them around between thumb and forefinger smoothly to paint the dark grey of the tyre. I used the others for years for wheels and never got the smooth round shape on tyres that I wanted, now I have little trouble. It did occur to me that you could mount them in the chuck of some kind of drill and set it running at a fairly slow speed to get an even rounder shape, but I haven't tried that yet.

There are so many uses for the old flat toothpicks that I could fill up a page or two writing about them all but I've already been there so I'll move on to writing about some other tools next time.

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