

# THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

## Random Modelling Notes

### MY TOOL BOX

(new tools and techniques)

(April 2013)

I guess that every modeller has their own collection of tools and techniques for using them. They probably have different ways of storing their tools so they are ready to hand when they are needed. For years I kept my tools in boxes and mugs so they were easy to reach when I needed them but when we moved to Perth I found I did a lot of model making on the back patio, which meant a lot of running inside to lay my hands on the file or tube of filler that I needed at that stage in a project. This was probably good for me in giving me the exercise I otherwise would not have got, but it was annoying so I bought myself a little tool box that I could carry out to the back patio when I was doing modelling there. This worked alright but there were still some tools that didn't fit so I still had to go and get them. The solution was a bigger tool box, and then another one when I saw the big one that I'm using these days.

In theory everything I needed to make a model was in the box. Over time, however, I came across new tools and new techniques and they went into other boxes that were in easy reach of my work table and, conversely, there were things in my tool box that gradually fell into disuse and gathered dust in there. When it came time to spend a couple of months away from my work table it also became time to have a new look at what was in my tool box, to dispense with things that I no longer used and find space for things that I did use. As a result just about everything I now use regularly is back in my tool box and it is probably a good summary of the tools I use and how I use them. (There are of course, things like boxes of paints and tools like my Dremel that are too big or which I don't use very often that still have to live outside my tool box, but are still within easy reach.)

A decade or so ago I started out on a discussion of the bits and pieces that were then to be found in my tool box in this newsletter. As I recall it, I didn't get much further than a discussion of tooth picks and their multiple uses before I ran out of space and this time around I could spend even more space on discussing this important aspect of modelling because I now have two kind of toothpicks in my tool box, round ones and flat ones. But let's start elsewhere.

Let's start with glues. Although I use 5 minute epoxy, it is not very often and so it seems to have disappeared from my box. I have the usual solvent glue for plastics, I prefer Revell Contacta because of its lovely little metal snout that puts the glue in the right place and in the right amounts. If you use this glue you will have noticed that the glue dries up in the tube from time to time; for a long time I used to solve this problem by using my reel of thin craft wire to unblock the tube but recently I've made myself a little tool to do that job.

Since I do a lot of modelling with resin and white metal, as well as various kinds of plastic, I use a lot of super glue. I've found the most convenient form of super glue to be Zap, which comes in three thicknesses; thin, medium and thick. You can buy cheaper Selleys super glue at hardware shops or in supermarkets and it works well, but I've found that having the choice of three

consistencies is useful and the little bottles they come in store more easily. The real problem that I used to have with super glue was getting the right amount in the right place but then I discovered a range of little applicators sold by Micro-Mark in the US. They come in three sizes to match the three consistencies and although you have to dispose of the applicator after a few minutes use they are not terribly expensive and well worth the cost. The final part of the equation was somewhere to dispense the glue so it could be transferred to the model using the applicator. Micro-Mark also sell a little tool for this but I didn't find them very useful and mine has gathered dust. Instead, I used a plastic teaspoon with the handle cut off, stuck to a bit of cardboard using blue-tac for stability; much cheaper and easier to use. Besides, when one teaspoon starts to get full of dried super glue it was easily replaced by a new spoon which cost next to nothing in packets of twenty at Coles.

This system didn't spring into reality fully formed but evolved slowly through experimentation. I found that the three bottles of super glue fitted neatly into a small plastic cup that I had collected when I wrote the history of Barwon Water and then I found that the applicators fitted nicely into another cup of similar size. These, along with the plastic teaspoon, sat separately on a shelf but, when I reorganised my tool box, I invented a simple device with the two cups stuck to a bit of cardboard onto which the teaspoon was also stuck with a dollop of blu-tac. And voila, a handy super gluing tool for all occasions that fits neatly into my tool box and can easily be lifted out for use.

Next along the bottom of the box is three rolls of Tamiya masking tape; 6mm, 10mm and 18mm. They come in little grey dispensers but you can buy refills that are cheaper.

In years past I used to use rolls of masking tape bought at a hardware store and cut up into strips to whatever width I needed. This saved money and a cheap roll would last for years but the saving wasn't worth the stress when it came to things like paint seeping under the tape because it was too thick to conform to the surface or too sticky and pulled up paint. (I'm still in therapy about what happened to a Qantas Boeing 747 when I oversprayed the red tail on the all white fuselage and then pulled off the cheap masking tape.) As a result, I have seven masking tapes in the box these days, as well as a bottle of Humbrol Maskol. One of the others is a roll of Tamiya 40mm tape and the others are rolls of Aizu tape in 0.4 mm, 1mm and 1.5mm which I use for very fine masking. (From this you'd think that I like masking but this is not true, I like the results of masking airliner models which needs this kind of thin tape for those curves on modern airliners.) Masking tape bought over the counter of modelling shops of Australia can get expensive, during our last bus trip I saw a roll of Aizu tape that cost something like \$15. To overcome this problem I do what most modellers do these days, buy cheap from overseas suppliers where a roll of Aizu tape costs less than \$2.

(Too large to fit in my box is a roll of kitchen aluminium foil that I use to mask large areas and some plastic shopping bags also used to mask large areas. But make sure that there are no holes in the bags; if there are and you don't notice distress and anguish can be the result.)

Next along the bottom of the box is a thick glass bottle of paint thinner which is used, as you might guess, to thin paint and clean paint brushes. Although I paint most models with an airbrush or spray cans there are lots of little details that need hand painting so I have a selection of small paint brushes ranging from 000 up to 6. I could probably get away with three or four brushes but I have more than I need because I always forget what size brushes I have when I find myself in a craft shop (as you do) and end up buying more just in case. I also have a nice flat sable brush which is used exclusively for painting Micro Sol (of which there is also a bottle in the box) over setting decals. I don't know about you, but I can't get much advantage from using Micro Set in the blue bottle, but wouldn't be without my Micro Sol.

There is a lot more to explore along the bottom of my tool box, not to mention what is in the upper tiers. Perhaps I will find the inspiration to come back to this in coming issues

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