

# THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

## *Workbench notes*

### LOIRE-NIEUPOINT LN.411 IN 1/72 BY AZUR

(April 2001)

During the 1930s many of the world's leading aviation nations, Germany, the United States, Britain and Japan became interested in the idea of dive bombing. Since the beginning of military aviation delivering a bomb onto the target accurately had been all but impossible except under ideal circumstances so the idea of using an aeroplane diving down towards the target to aim the bomb seemed to be the solution. The Germans and the Americans took up the idea enthusiastically with aeroplanes like the Ju87 and SBD, the British introduced the Skua to naval service while the 'Val' entered service with the Imperial Japanese Navy. In combat it turned out that dive bombing was not such a good idea and the French dive bomber, the Loire-Nieuport LN.411, demonstrated the types' inherent weaknesses perhaps more clearly than the others of its kind.

Design of a French dive bomber began in 1932 and work was completed on a tandem two-seat dive bomber in 1935 that was extraordinarily similar to the Junkers Ju87 (so similar that when the Germans occupied France they charged the designer with espionage even though Junkers was only beginning work on the Ju87 around the time the French dive bomber first flew).

By 1936 the French design had evolved into the LN.40 single seat shipboard dive-bomber of similar appearance and the prototype commenced trials in June 1938. Similar versions, the



LN

401 were ordered into production for the French Air Force and the LN.411 for the French Navy and the aeroplane began entering service in late 1939. By then the Air Force had decided that it was too slow and would be highly vulnerable to fighters and determined anti-aircraft fire and handed its LN.401s to the Navy. Two naval squadrons, one equipped with twelve LN.401s and the other with twelve LN.411s played only a small part in the war. On 19 May 1940 20 of them attacked the Berlaimont cross-roads, 10 were shot down and none of the survivors was airworthy. After that some of the aeroplanes were used for other purposes, but not for dive bombing, and they had all but disappeared from use by 1942.

Again this company that designs its kits in France and makes them in eastern Europe has turned out something that sent me searching through just about every source I could think of (it's not in *Jane's*) to find out what it was that I intended to make. I know I say I'm not a great fan of research but for some aeroplanes you have to make a bit of an effort, especially if they are French.

The kit comes in a box with a lovely painting of the aeroplane and inside the plastic is nicely moulded, the decals are excellent, there is a small fret of brass bits, a good vacformed canopy, an excellent if sometimes vague instruction sheet and even a little bit of celluloid for the instruments in the cockpit. All in all it is a very nice example of the kit makers' craft which shows how good a limited-run kit can be. There's only one major thing missing from the kit - it's a model of a dive bomber so where's the bomb? Even though I rarely put armaments under the wings of my aeroplanes (so many kits, so little time) a bomb of some kind would have been much appreciated in this case.

Construction was as straight-forward as you're going to get in this kind of kit. The parts fitted well but not always with delicate accuracy. For example, the radiators and inserts in the undercarriage bays had to be fiddled with a bit to get them to fit and the cockpit also needed some trimming. As usual, there were no locating pins for the wings or tail, and with large end-plates that meant even more work with the drill and little pieces of wire to make locating pins for stronger joins. (As it was I had a lapse in concentration and put the end-plates on the wrong way around to begin with and had to do it all again.)



The vagaries of the instruction sheet didn't help at times, you're given options for the radiator under the nose but no idea of which is the right one of the two in the kit to go on this model. The colour drawings suggest that there are wing mounted machine guns but the construction instructions say nothing about them. Apart from the undercarriage - the legs have to go straight down, not an at angle as they would if you just stuck them on, so some more drilling and cutting there - the kit went together with relative ease.

Then came the fun part, the painting. Fortunately I'd bought all the French paint from the shop on Sturt Street when it decided to give up on Model Master paint, so that was easy. The trouble was the camouflage which is complex - there is a second colour option but I decided to be courageous and go for the more difficult one. It took about three nights of masking to get the pattern more or less as it appears on the instruction sheet and I used Blu-Tack, little realizing that as I put on the next level of masking my handling the model was pushing down earlier layers as well which meant that green areas were surrounded with little lines of brown. There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth when the masking was taken off, and a lot of retouching to solve the problem, next time I'll try something else when it comes to doing such complex masking.

After that the decals, which are the right shade of blue and red, went on nicely but, as usual, the tail stripes didn't quite fit and had to be trimmed and touched up. Putting on the undercarriage was a trial because the doors don't fit properly so I had to add little brackets to the undercarriage legs. Then there were a couple of brass bits to finish it all off and the end result is a handsome looking aeroplane. What a pity is was such a dud aeroplane in real life.



## THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

W011