The Little Aviation Museum

Workbench notes

Robin DR.315 Petit Prince in 1/72 by Dujin

(February 2006)

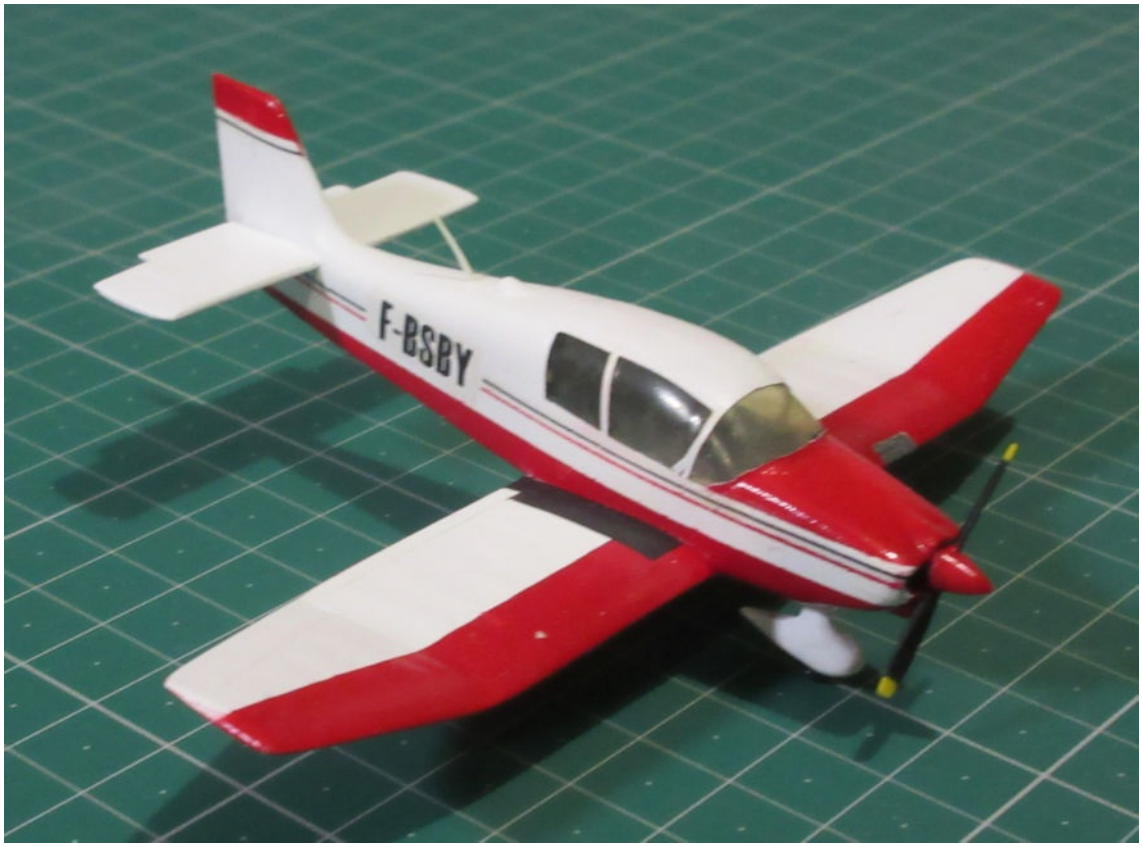
At the end of World War II the French government decided to develop light aviation in a big way, an action also taken by many other governments including Australia's. As a first step the government purchased a large number of ex-war Tiger Moths and Magisters very cheaply that it passed on to flying schools and aero clubs. However, these ex-wartime trainers were slow and very fuel hungry so something more modern and fuel efficient was needed. At the same time Edouard Joly and Jean Delemontez, who were operating a major aircraft and glider maintenance and repair company, began development of a light aeroplane for their own pleasure. The result was the single seat D9, powered by a small 45hp engine with a characteristic wing platform with upturned outer wing panels.

Although they designed and built the D9 for their own use it soon attracted wider attention, including from the French government. This interest led to development of a slightly larger two-seater, the D11 and the formation of the Jodel company in March 1946. Joly and Delemontez did not intend to go into the aircraft manufacturing business and their D9 and D11 were designed so they could be constructed by the home builder.

However demand was so strong that they issued licences for the manufacture of their designs and over 500 D9s were made over a period of 20 years. These two designes evolved into a wide range of light aircraft, all designed around several key components, the wing platform, cabin size ranging from single seat to four seats, the engine power and the undercarriage. By the beginning of the 21st Century Jodel designed light aircraft had developed into three major streams, the 100, 200 and 400 series with the 300 series being a combination of components from the 200 and 400 series designs.

The design and construction of Jodel designed light aircraft is not straightforward. Jodel remains in control of the design of the wide range of its aeroplanes but they are manufactured by home builders or by several companies. The Societé Aeronautique Normande (SAN) was the major manufacture of the Jodel 100 series and the Centre Est Aeronautique (CEN) owned by Pierre Robin began with the 100 series but went on to manufacture most of the 200, 300 and 400 variants as well. CEN was renamed Robin Aviation which was later bought by Apex. In 2004 Alpha Aviation of New Zealand bought the rights to manufacture the Robin R2000 series and another company, Societé Aeronautique Bourgoyne, produces parts, such as fuel tanks, canopies and undercarriages, for most Jodel variants.

Without meaning to I've been building up quite a collection of Dujin kits. I've come across them at swap and sells, a plastic bag containing resin bits, sometimes with a simple sheet of paper telling you what the bits might build up into, but no details. Since Dujin is a French company many of its subjects are French too, which is why I've been picking them up. I decided it was about time to find out how one of these kits went together so I embarked upon the adventure. Now I know why I'm picking so many of these kits up at swap and sells. Hopeful modellers buy them by mail but when they get them and look at them seriously they go white in terror, throw them into a box of stuff



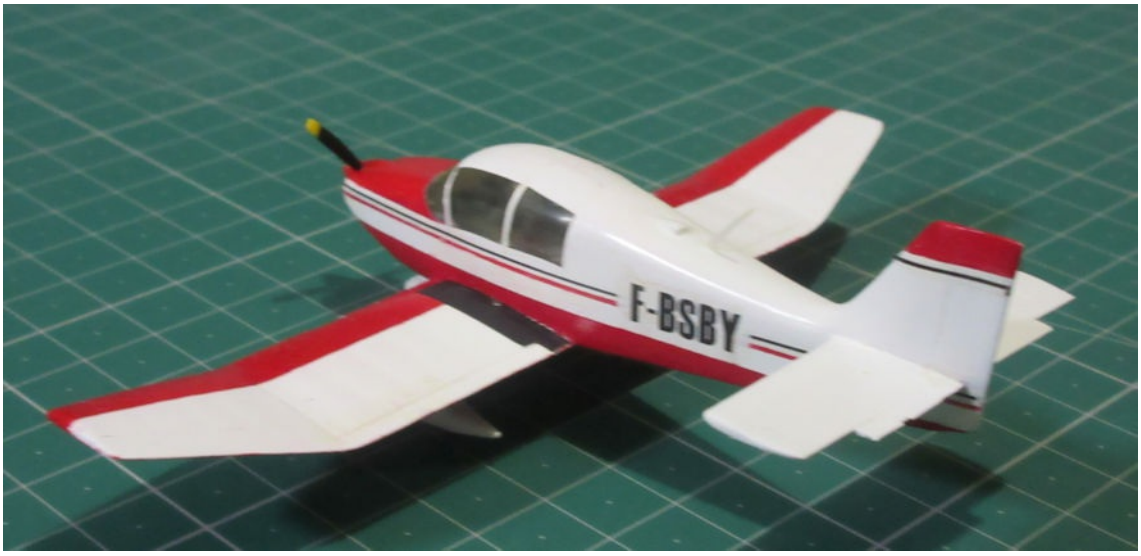
to be sold and try not to think about them again. One review said that making one of these kits is like scratch building a model using parts out of the spares box. I wouldn't say it was that bad, but then I make Mach 2 kits for fun.

I decided to start with a Dujin kit I didn't mind getting wrong, which just happened to be this one. I hunted across the internet and found a few pictures of the Petit Prince, but it seems that just about every owner modifies their aeroplane in some way so there seem to be half a dozen styles of canopies and other options. Fortunately I found a few good photos of F-BSBY taken at an aerodrome in France last year and decided to use that as my guide.

The kit has all the parts you need to make a model. However, Dujin assumes that modellers know what they are doing so there is a photograph, a fairly good three-view drawing and five lines, in French, giving you a very brief history and two sources for further information. However, anyone who has put together a few kits has given up using the instructions, so who needs them anyhow. You get a wing, two fuselage halves, two elevators, three undercarriage spats, two seats, two wheels, three spinners, one propeller and two vacformed canopies. That doesn't leave much to the imagination.

Then the fun started. It turned out that there was no part that didn't need modification The wing has very nice surface detail but no landing light. The fuselage halves were very nice, except for some poor moulding around the nose. In addition, the fuselage sides were so thick the seats wouldn't fit until they were dramatically thinned. While I was doing that I carved away as much resin as I dared from the rear fuselage to make it lighter so the model wouldn't be a tail sitter. The elevators weren't too bad and getting them attached to the fuselage wasn't too hard, really. Even with the thinned fuselage sides the seats had to be thinned a lot before they would fit into the fuselage and I gave them some seat belts as a concession to the huge windows.

The kit came with two canopies, which was just as well because one was so badly moulded it had to be tossed out. The moulding of the good one was so vague that it took me a long time to figure out where to cut. When I had done that I was faced with the mystery of how to make this vaguely shaped bit of plastic fit over the model. Amazingly it did, but only after endless trimming and fitting and fitting and trimming. Let's pass over the rest of the trauma of painting, which was more my fault than that of the kit. I decided to experiment with white laquer and it is really very good for things like civil machines, once you figure out how to use it. Then the red acrylic paint bled spectacularly under the masking. Merde!!! A myriad of tiny bits of white decal sheet now cover most



of that disaster. The little cleat lines and registration letters came out of the computer and printer, which was a whole new world of hurt.

On to the final stage! It turned out that the kit wheels were far too big for the undercarriage spats so I had to scrounge smaller ones from the spares box. After I'd attached the wheels to the model I discovered that the main undercarriage spats are far too long, giving the model a very pronounced nose-down sit. Off they came, a millimetre or two was trimmed off and they didn't look too bad when they were glued on again. The resin propeller would have been very nice if it hadn't been warped, so I scratch built a new one. It looked alright but when I was about to glue it in place it flicked off into the distance, and was never seen again. Unable to face that ordeal again I found something else in the spares box and carve it to shape. There's more, but I don't want to get myself upset again by thinking about it too much. Even so, it's not such a bad model, and it's nice to be able to make something civil for a change. I'm sure to regret it but I'm keeping my eyes open for more of these little Dujin kits.

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