

# THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

## *Workbench notes*

### ILYUSHIN IL-96-300 IN 1/144 BY TUPOLEV

(April 2014))

At a swap-n-sell I managed to pick up a 1/144 kit of the Ilyushin Il-96 airliner. Never heard of it? I'm not surprised. It was a Russian attempt to develop a long range airliner in the class of the A.340 and Boeing 777 but the company soon discovered that it could not compete with the Western airliners and so only about twenty were made. They seem to have been used mainly by Aeroflot and the Russian military, with a handful going to other airlines.

The kit was not made by your usual manufacturers, it was made by the aviation company Tupolev. So far as I can find out, the only other kit they made was the Tu-334 that you can now get under the Eastern Express banner. Even by 'iron curtain' standards, this is a primitive kit, but really no more primitive than some resin airliner kits. The main advantage of the kit was that I only paid \$12 for it, the main disadvantages were that it had no undercarriage and the decals were dreadful.

This was not the kind of kit that could be made easily, so the kit sat in a box, waiting for the kind of madness necessary to embark on such a kit overtook me. A year or two later I came across a web site offering a kit of undercarriage parts for the Il-96 and managed to acquire one. Well, the kit did have all the bits needed, but it was fairly dreadful, in particular the wheels that were very poorly formed. It made it possible to make the Il-96 kit sitting on its wheels but the work would be rather difficult. In any event, I still needed a decent decal sheet to finish the kit off properly. Finally, I came across a decal sheet for the kit on eBay and it came in the post. However, it had no instructions that told where all the bits and pieces went on the model. I now had all the bits I needed to make the model, but not that mental state of madness necessary to embark on the task and the kit went into the 'extremely too hard' basket.

A few weeks ago that fit of madness came over me, inspired partly by looking up the Il-96 on Airliners.net where there were a lot of very nice photos. I also happened to be looking at piles



of old kits that I'd acquired and the kit box was longer than the rest and stood out. 'I can make that', I said to myself, and picked it up.

If I was writing a review of this kit for one of those modelling web sites I'd say something like, 'Only attempt to make this if you think you can achieve the impossible'. There was no part of the process that was simple and easy, apart from gluing the two fuselage halves together. The slip of paper that pretends to be the instructions for the undercarriage had been cut off before the instructions finished so I had to guess where to cut the undercarriage doors and the location of the legs. The wheels were so badly formed with the axle holes so far off centre that I had to fill them in and drill new ones. That's only one example of what had to be done at every stage of the construction process. I have just about finished painting, I hope that the decals at least will go on easily. Something has to go right.



## THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM