

THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

Workbench notes

MORANE SAULNIER 406 IN 1/72 BY RS MODELS

(June 2013)

I didn't plan for it to happen, it just sort of grew like Topsy.

As you may have noticed, I have an interest in French aeroplanes and the little Morane Saulnier 406 fighter was one of the most important with around 1000 in service by the beginning of the Battle of France in May 1940. History does not have much nice to say about the 406 but it was a reasonably capable though underpowered aeroplane. It would have performed much better against the early Bf109 models which also lacked power, but faced the newly introduced and more powerful Bf109Es that were beginning to enter service in numbers around the time the Battle began.

Later developments of the basic 406 with more powerful engines in Switzerland (the Doflug 3802) and Finland (the Morko Morane) show that it benefitted as much from more powerful engines as the Bf109E did, and created a fighter with very good performance for that time.

So, despite its failings, the Morane is an important French aeroplane and, due to the nature of the times, appeared in a number of guises and markings.

There have been, so far as I am aware, four kits of the 406 in 1/72. The first one was released by Heller in the 1960s and was a good kit for the time, but times have changed. The next kit was



produced by Hasegawa and has a very good reputation, but I've never seen one. The following kit was from Hobby Boss and was one of their cheap and simple to assemble products. Strangely its decals are for Finnish and RAF aeroplanes, but not French. Finally, RS Models released a kit which is available in four versions with decals for French, Vichy French, Luftwaffe, Finnish and Croatian aeroplanes. In addition RS also released a kit for the Finn Morko-Morane, which is the standard 406 kit with an additional new fuselage, and the related Doflug 3802 which is an entirely new kit.

I made a model with the Heller kit many years ago, and we pass over that quietly without further comment. When the Hobby Boss kit was released I bought one to see what it was like and made it using the Finn markings. It was far superior to the Heller kit so I bought a further two kits, presumably to make using aftermarket decals, and then forgot about them.

When Earl of NKR brought in the RS Models kits I bought four of them and began work immediately. They are not as simple to make as they should perhaps be with a fiddly little cockpit that would only be visible with the canopy open, which it is not in this kit. So why bother since the French dark blue-grey interior colour makes everything inside virtually invisible.

It is not difficult to turn a 406 into the slightly more advanced 410 and the kit includes parts to do it so one of the kits was made up as one in standard French colours. Another was made in the Croatian 406 version which has an interesting German colour scheme. The next two are being made as a Swiss EKW D3800 which was the licence built version of the 406 and my final RS kit is being made as a Vichy French version with yellow nose and tail (before the red stripes of shame were added to Vichy aircraft).



Originally I had thought that five Moranes were enough but then I found the two Hobby Boss kits that I'd forgotten. Why not use them too? Why not? The work is in the painting, not in the making. So, I will delve into my decal box and find something from the Battle of France period, though I have yet to decide whether it will be a French air force or navy version. Most shameful of all, the other will have to be completed in Luftwaffe markings, but with a French colour scheme. To finish off will be the RS Morko-Morane and D3802 kits. How many is that? Nine?



The question is, will that be enough? The 406 also flew in Italian, Turkish and Thai markings. I wonder ...











THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

W111