

THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

Workbench notes

AEROSPATIALE SA.316 & SA.319 ALOUETTE III IN 1/72 BY HELLER

(April 2018)

I ended up with two kits of the Heller 1/72 Aerospatiale Alouette III, one the original boxing from 1980 and the other the 1989 boxing with lots of additional bits and pieces to make one with a winch and other civil additions. I never intended to have two kits of this particular aircraft but you know how it is, being French aircraft I probably saw them at Swap n Sells where one tends to get a little excited. I do anyhow.

Originally I thought I'd just make one of them and pass the other on to some lucky modeler, for a small consideration. However, a little research showed me that the kit contains options for two versions, the kind of thing Heller was doing in the 1980s when it was making some excellent kits.



The Alouette III comes in two versions, the SA.316 and the SA.319 in which the only significant difference is the engine. Since, however, the engine of these helicopters is located on the back of the airframe right out in the open, it is a visible difference, so I decided to throw caution to the wind and make both kits.

It also turned out that I had acquired decals for the three Alouette IIIs that had flown for the RAAF in a simple white scheme. I had hoped to make one of the Alouettes as a lovely deep blue Aeronavale model but since the RAAF versions were SA.316s and since I could find no decals for an Aeronavale SA.319 I was forced to make the SA.319 as one flown by the Armee de l'Air in a dull khaki scheme.



Things could have been worse, I suppose. Since one kit was made in blue plastic and the other in red I amused myself by mixing them up so that, underneath all the paint, both models exist in the colours of the Melbourne Football Club. Doing this turned out to be a tactical mistake because it confused me about how some of the details in the kit worked as the kits were not identical. However, in the end things worked out okay.



The real difficulty with this kit is the cabin canopy which comes in three parts. When I test filled them they went together perfectly but when it came time to get serious they didn't. I have no idea why, perhaps the modeling gods did not approve of my mixing kit parts for the mere fun of doing so. There are, as we all know, several ways of gluing transparent canopies together and to models. Using real glues such as polystyrene dissolving glue or superglue are not a good idea as their fumes attack the plastic and the result is hazing on the inside of the canopy.

Some folks say they use white glue, some of us use GS Hypo-Cement which is a jewelers glue and I bought a bottle of something called 'Formula 560' the last time I was in Hearn's. I don't know about the white glue but the other two that I have used work very well ... so long as there are no problems. But since there were problems, both of these glues gave me problems. The trouble is that while they can fill gaps very nicely, that only works if there are small gaps, and on anything larger it turns out that when they dry they are still a little flexible, which makes them very difficult to shape and sand. This led to some soul destroying moments that only modelers whose model has been perfect up to that point can know and the insides of the canopies are not the perfection I would have liked. If it were not for the fogging problems with superglue the fit problem could be fixed in a jiffy. Any suggestions?

Apart from this, both kits went together with few problems. Looking at photos of these two helicopters I noticed that there are exterior steps that the kit doesn't supply, so obvious that not even I could ignore them. I checked to see if there were any etched metal sets for Alouettes and since there aren't I had to make them myself.

Because of their tiny size, my less than perfect eyesight and big fat fingers the steps are only an approximation of the real thing, but necessary. In the process of trying to make the canopies look good all the raised panel lines disappeared so I had to mask them again, using the canopy on one to give the measurements for the other. That turned out rather well and I think I'll probably do it again because it looks a lot better than the hugely over scale results if the raised panels remain.



Apart from that, the real challenge for me, as a person who has no great love for things like weathering, was to make the engines mounted so prominently look good. I think I used five or six different shades of metallic paint on the engine on the SA.316 to make it look reasonable before running a couple of light washes over it. In the end, I've made much better models but the Alouette is still one of the nicest looking helicopters so I'm happy with W138 these two models, if I look at them with my eyes closed.



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