



sail the Irish Sea. She was scrapped in 1963. Mount Fleet Models' kit is at 1:32 scale and measures 47ins overall by 8ins beam.

The Kit

Having received the kit and gone through the preliminary stages of inspection and familiarisation I acquired a list of notes ready for the build. My main thought was propulsion, whether to use an electric motor or go for steam and in this case the latter won.

I had a new Puffin steam plant not yet assembled waiting in my workshop for the right project to come along and I thought this could be it. A lot of measuring then took place to see if installation was possible and the end result was a resounding yes. One of the main alterations would be the length of the propeller tube for this would have to be shortened to approximately 2ins overall. Having talked to Mount Fleet Models about this point, they themselves set to and made me a shortened version of the prop tube, and they also have made them available to other future builders who want to install steam into their model.

As I am always stating in my articles, pre-planning a build is very important, and when going through this stage with this model a few small discrepancies appeared on the plan. After relaying this information back to the manufacturers they decided to introduce a new plan which has been actioned.

My final idea on this build was to add a steam whistle, but not to have it activated by the steam plant, but electronically. To achieve this I obtained a steam whistle sound, relay switch and a speaker from ACTION.

Hull and Decks

Now all the planning was done it was time to start the build. As normal, the grp was cleaned, washed and then left to dry. To the well-detailed hull I added the prop tube and with this being a short item it was essential that it was installed level. The stern frame and rudder were the next to be added and by carefully following the instructions provided no, problems arose.

Before progressing on to fitting the decks I had to install a wooden base for the steam plant, and for this I used 3mm plywood. I also removed a circle from the base to accommodate the gas canister. After the base had been fitted to the interior of the hull any gaps around the joints were filled using car body filler.

In the instruction book there is a sketch of a small marking-off jig that is very handy for locating the positions of the stringers around

BEN AIN

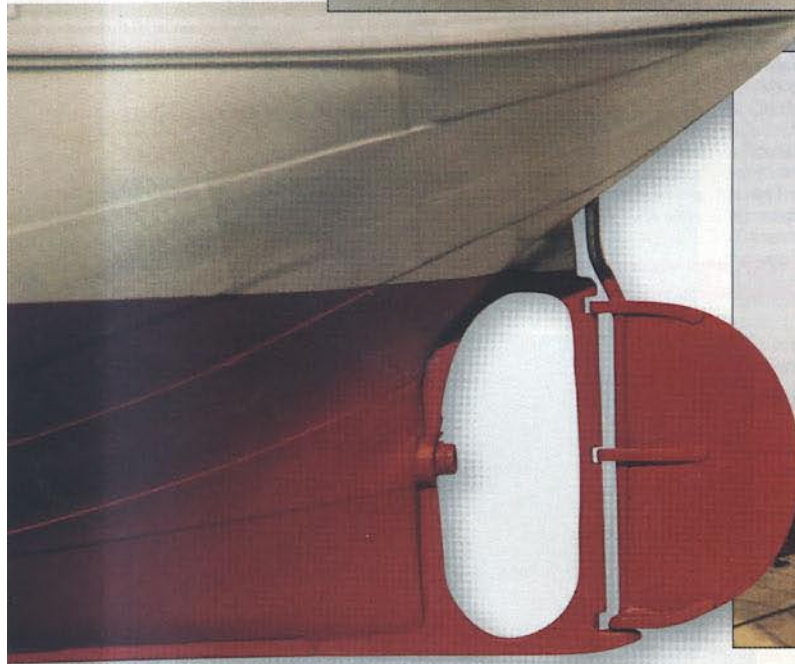
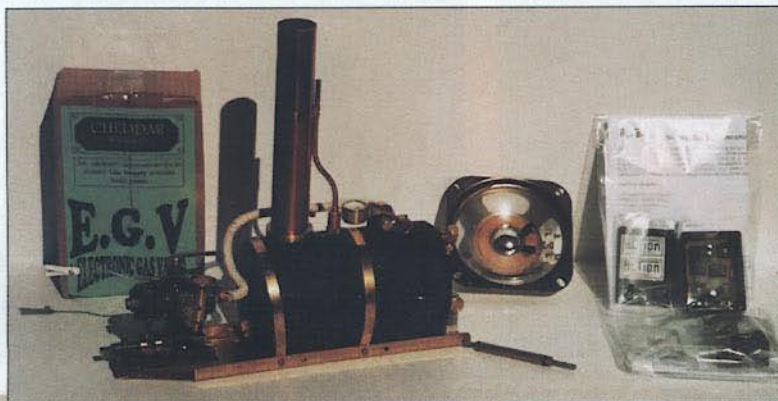
She was launched on 5th May 1924 and named 'Doris Thomas', owned by the Thomas Brothers Shipping Company Limited, and in 1930 she was taken over by Thomas Coasters Limited of Liverpool. In 1936 she was sold and renamed 'Dennis Head', then sold again in 1938 to the Rainsey Steam Ship Company Limited of the Isle of Man and renamed Ben Ain in 1939 - one of the last single hatch steam coasters to

ALLAN MILLER builds Mount Fleet Models' Raised Quarter Deck Coaster

Right: The steam plant and sound unit ready to be installed in the model.

Below left: Running gear fitted.

Below right: Forecastle deck being fitted out.



the interior of the hull. After marking and fitting the stringers I installed the cross beams and again there is a sketch in the instruction book that shows the positions of these beams. Before trimming and fitting the plywood decks I installed the speaker under the forecandle deck. The reason for positioning it here was that I needed an uncluttered area under the main hatch for the radio gear and the gas canister. The area under the quarterdeck superstructure is the area where the steam plant will be situated.

When the decks had been fitted the coamings around the access hatches and also the detail under the forecandle deck were added. All four doors under the forecandle deck were installed in the open position to allow the steam whistle sound to be heard.

One point I have not mentioned is that before the quarterdeck went on I added two extra beams aft to seat the rudder servo on. I had planned on using a 3-channel system for this model - one for rudder, one for controlling the steam plant and the third for the sound unit.

Steam plant tested

At this point the model was placed aside and the steam plant was assembled and tested. With the steam plant being positioned well aft I had to remove part of the brass base so it would fit to the contour of the hull. The plant was then temporarily installed together with an electronic gas valve, and when happy with its positioning they were removed until later.

Bilge keels

I fitted these using the following method. The shape of both keels is already marked on one of the plywood sheets provided and from these sheets they were removed, allowing extra material for trimming so I could obtain a neat fit against the hull. After fixing a length of 2 x 2mm strip to the hull for the keels to butt up to I glued the keels in place. Then car body filler was added to the underside of the keels, wide at the joint and tapering towards the top edge. There is a diagram in the instruction book to help the builder with this method.

Hull fittings and Painting

Once the capping rail had been introduced it was time to add the outer hull fittings and also the inner bulwark fittings. Mount Fleet have bagged the fittings for each area separately which is a great help and very convenient.

After the wheelhouse and front sidings were attached I decided it was time for a spell of painting. I used car spray paints for the hull and decks but the bulwarks and wheelhouse I sprayed with enamel paints mixed to the recipe stated in the instruction book. When the paint had dried I started to add the detail working from bow to stern.

All the fittings were painted before fixing them in situ but the railings were assembled on the model and then removed for painting. The overlay decks were cut from the plywood sheet and stained using a light oak colour. After this they were washed using a mixture of black oil paint and turps and this gives them a weathered look. This operation is carried out before introducing the overlay decks to the model. Both the steam anchor windlass and the cargo winch were assembled, painted and then weathered. I used the dry brushing and washing method and done correctly it really does bring them to life.

Masts

Once the forecandle deck had been completed I progressed onto the foredeck and decided at this point to assemble both masts. Again, as I have done in the past I substituted the wood dowel provided in the kit for brass tubing.



This is just a preferred method of mine and, as on other models, the tubes are simply sleeved to obtain the correct diameter on a specific part of the mast. After they had been built and the fittings added they were all painted their respective colours. The forward mast and boom was then introduced to the model but the aft mast was to be fitted later.

Note no rigging is attached to the model until after the matt varnishing operation has been completed.

Main Hatch

The next part to be made was the main hatch. I found no problems at all during this operation for the instructions are very simple to follow. There are just a couple of points that I will mention; firstly I made the hatch to fit around the coamings on the deck rather than rely on measurements and secondly, I left all the hatch planks in situ, because using steam means I may need access in a hurry and anything delicate could get damaged.

When completed the outer area was painted and the exposed planks were weathered before the canvas cover was introduced. This cover was trimmed to fit and I used a small amount of thick Superglue around the outer edges to help hold it in place before finally using a hot iron to smooth out the wrinkles. To give the canvas cover an authentic look I weathered it using the black oil paint and turps mixture.

Portholes

All the portholes in the bulkhead between the foredeck and the quarterdeck were not glazed because I needed an air flow through to the steam plant to help it run more efficiently.

Flying Bridge

The flying bridge was next to be built up and the first job to be done was to fit the overlay deck. All the bridge sidings were cut out and I scribed all the plank work in them using a cutter. These parts were then stained before assembly. After the capping rail had been added all the fittings were introduced.

Quarterdeck

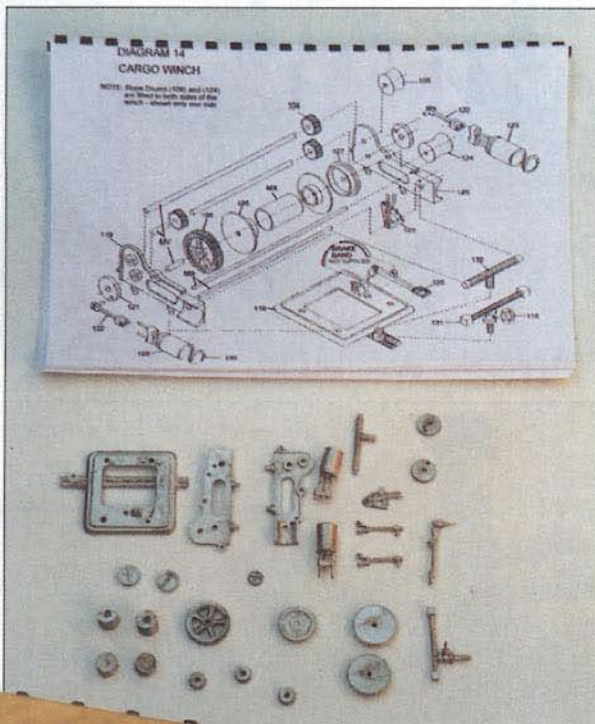
The quarterdeck was fitted out next and the main item on this deck is the steering mechanism. I temporarily fitted all these parts to the deck and when happy with the assembly I removed them for painting. These fittings were then reintroduced and glued in their respective positions upon the deck. The superstructure that fits on this deck is a one-piece fibreglass moulding and all the fittings are attached to this. It is the most detailed part of the model but again there is a good set of instructions to ease you through this build.

Superstructure

Planning when to paint is essential when constructing this superstructure. I had already removed an opening in the superstructure to accommodate the funnel; this was done when lining up the steam plant

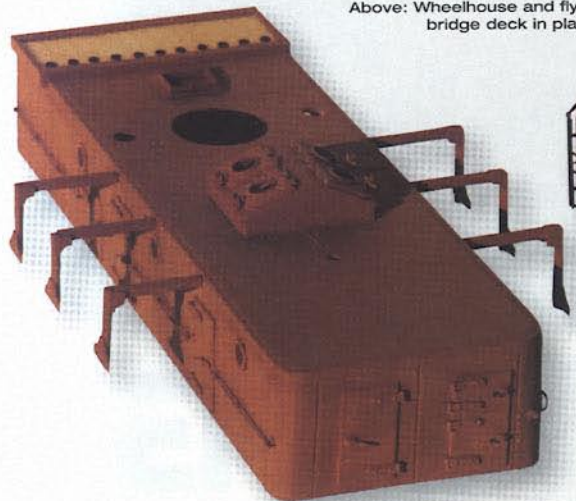
Below: Parts which make up the cargo winch.

Bottom left: Main hatch cover.





Above: Wheelhouse and flying bridge deck in place.



Above: Quarterdeck superstructure just after painting.

Below: Forecastle deck completed.

Bottom: Flying deck completed, lifeboats and rigging added.

in the model. The area below the skylight was removed and with omitting the glazing this added to the airflow to the steam plant. I also left off the glazing in the portholes but decided against leaving the doors around the superstructure in an open position because again this part may need to be removed in a hurry. Further airflow was added through

the two main cowl vents. To achieve this I opened up the cast metal heads and substituted the wooden dowel bodies for the same diameter plastic tubing. Two holes were drilled into the deck area, one either side of the funnel to accommodate the cowl vents. I also at this point drilled a hole for the rear mast to seat in.

When fixing the legs to the outriggers to support the lifeboat decks it is best done with the superstructure attached to the model because these legs have to be seated upon the capping rail. Once this had been done I thought that it would be the ideal time to apply the paint.

More detail

When the painting had been completed I began to add more detail.

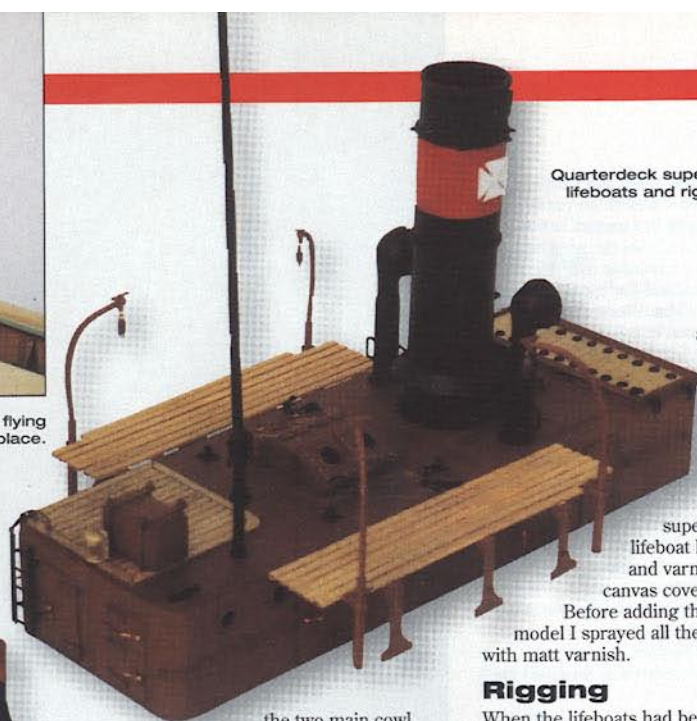
Most of these items were assembled and painted before fixing to the superstructure. Starting with the funnel, this is basically a plastic tube and to this is added cast metal rings, aluminium tubing and brass wire. Once this had been assembled it was painted along with the two cowl vents and when completed they were glued in position on the superstructure.

The strips of wood that form the boat decks were cut from the plywood supplied and again these were weathered before fixing in place.

Next the boat davits were constructed and after painting they too were fitted. I found it best to fit these with the superstructure in place for there are locating parts to be attached to the capping rail. When the remainder of the fittings had been positioned the whole unit was sprayed with a matt enamel varnish.

Both lifeboats are fibreglass mouldings and to each of these is fixed a set of cast metal bilge keels. The modeller can add as much or

Quarterdeck superstructure prior to lifeboats and rigging being added.



as little detail as they like to these lifeboats but for me I chose the latter - the reason being the frequent removal of the superstructure. Both lifeboat hulls were painted and varnished before the canvas covers were applied.

Before adding the lifeboats to the model I sprayed all the hull and decks with matt varnish.

Rigging

When the lifeboats had been fixed in place it was time to start on the rigging. I would definitely recommend the builder to read and understand all the section on rigging in the instruction book. There are some excellent tips and as stated, unsightly rigging can spoil a model.

Sailing

With the rigging being the final operation it was not time to re-introduce the steam plant, connect up all the linkages, add the sound unit and make ready for ballasting. The steam plant takes care of the majority of the weight so only a small amount needs to be added when ballasting. A small 9 volt battery like the ones used in a smoke alarm is all that is required to operate the electronic steam whistle unit.

Now it was time to take the model to the lake and put it through its paces. A fine day arrived and off I went with the model, gas canister, radio gear, hot water and lighter - oh! and the battery for the sound unit. Once steam was raised I set the controller to approximately 26 psi and with the radio gear switched on the model was placed on the water and testing began.

At a nice steady pace I sailed the model around the lake and it looked very nostalgic upon the water. I frequently kept checking on the volume of water remaining in the boiler and was quite surprised at the length of time it ran. I think sailing a model built from one of this manufacturer's kits is as pleasurable as building it.

All in all a splendid experience and although a few minor discrepancies arose during the build, they did not detract from the excellent end result.

The Ben Ain is available from Mount Fleet Models, Laurel Mount, 79 Holmfirth Road, Meltham, Huddersfield HD7 3DA. Tel/Fax: 01484 851569. Price is £325

