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Ensign's report 1st February 2014

Three weeks ago the water at Northcorps was the clearest it's ever been. Operating my Type 212 submarine, I was able to see and steer around the rubbish on the bottom whilst the shadow of my model provided a good indication of the depth (photo). Greatly encouraged, I rigged up an attachment for my waterproof video camera on the foredeck and went back a week later to record - 55 minutes of impenetrable grey murk, with just the occasional tiny fish swimming past!



A pair of pickets

The US Coast Guard 1930s 38-foot picket boat provided the inspiration for this pair of models under construction by Alan and myself. Alan's version in the foreground is for a proposed Police Boat variant of the basic Eldredge-McInnis design that was built in large numbers for patrol and general duties along the coast line of the USA during WW2.



Scale 1:12

965mm x 255mm

The Making of Mars by Don (part two)

Mars has free standing bulwarks on posts so I had to cut holes in the deck and glue posts (3 x 4mm) in position, then clamp and glue the bulwark strips to the posts, four at a time. As these have a compound curve, I pre-curved them by wetting with a wet rag then used a heat gun (effectively steaming them), holding the required curve until cooled. The cap strip was glued on last, front and rear sections cut from sheet, the side sections of curved strips.

(right)
*Signs of life
on Mars!*



The cabins were made from ply with strips of basswood for feature framework, and fit over a ply coaming. The sliding hatches were made from 0.4mm ply glued to litho-plate (thin aluminium) bases rolled over at the edges to slide on the cabin rails. I made the bollards from wood dowel, bought cowl vents and rail posts, but I turned the brass lamps, lit by LEDs, and the portholes. The navel tube at the bow I made by coating a Blu-tack mould with epoxy resin, a method that is suitable for one-off complex shapes.

I made a scale size propeller and used Tamiya model car gears to get about 2.8/1 reduction drive, with a 6-volt brushed motor and 4AH gel cell battery giving a good speed range and long run time. Mars looks good on the water and is very stable. The gear drive is a little noisy at full speed but acceptable at more realistic pace. A multi pole motor or a suitable brushless motor would allow direct drive to the large prop, or a steam plant would be more scale but a lot of complication compared to electric drive.

This project took a long time (about 13 months total) but not full time; I thought a lot about how to tackle each stage, working out a sequence to avoid "painting into a corner" syndrome, how to make details which are realistic but not too fragile; I solved a lot of problems while in the shower or in bed before nodding off. Scratch building can be very satisfying, but not if you are impatient; you need to have other interests or you can go stale or make rash decisions, wasting materials or producing a finish you regret later.

