

The following is a collection of my posts to the Modelwarships.com message board during the build of the USS Luzon gunboat. I have only included my posts, not all of the replies and questions from others.

Friday, June 29th, 2012

Because I don't have enough projects going on (currently 4 underway, 2 of which are ships), I thought I'd add a thread on the Niko USS Luzon. This is the first 1/700 kit I have built in over 20 years. Man, this thing is tiny!

Out of the box this looks to be a really nice kit, but upon closer inspection there are some issues. The copy I have is rough in places, the decks in particular had a lot of scratch marks, sure signs of sanding the master with a coarse file or sandpaper, but not following up to sand them smooth. The sides of the superstructure have some roughness as well, but it's mostly passable as long as you aren't looking at it through a magnifier or through macro digital photography. I primed, puttied and sanded every deck at least three times to get rid of the scratches. Another issue is that while the main hull seems fine, the upper superstructure and the stacks do not want to hold paint. I've cleaned them with Bleech White and straight lacquer, and still masking tape pulls away the paint and primer.

The captions on the photos tell the story so far.

Attachments:

File comment: Major resin parts mounted to wood blocks for handling during construction.



IMG_3081.jpg [142.4 KiB | Viewed 1170 times]

File comment: The bridge windows have their own PE in the kit, but it's so fine that regular handling bent to be unuseable. I substituted some 1/350th scale ladders, and they fit like a glove.



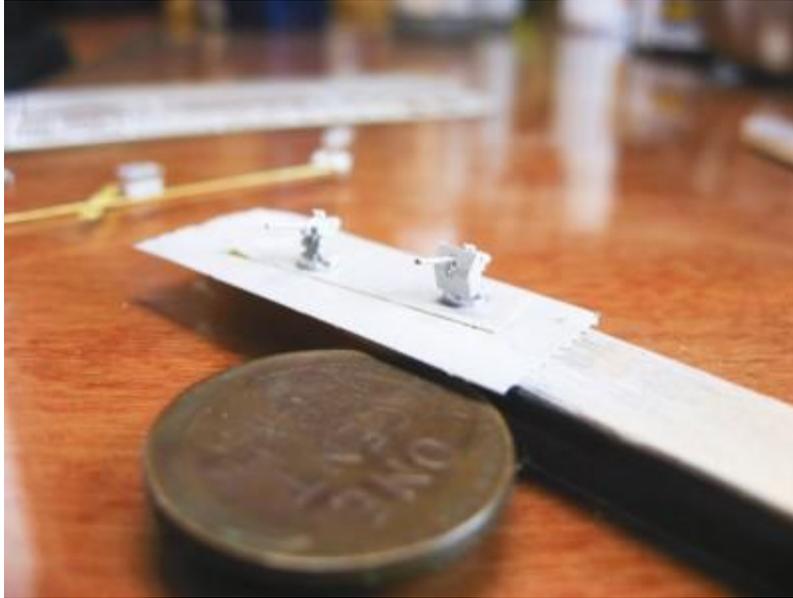
IMG_3787.jpg [94.98 KiB | Viewed 1170 times]

File comment: I primed the entire model with Mr. Surfacer 1200 primer. This is very close to the deck color, so I masked off the decks. This is about 2 hours of work, with many many breaks during the process to uncross my eyes.



IMG_3791.jpg [128.66 KiB | Viewed 1170 times]

File comment: The 3" gun mounts are quite nice. They consist of a base with the upright trunnions, the gun itself, and the shield, which is bent from PE (surprisingly easy to do). One of the mounts had the barrel broken and the base cracked, so I replaced the barrel with wire, and punched a disk out of styrene to replace the base.



IMG_3795_1.jpg [104.21 KiB | Viewed 1170 times]

File comment: Upper deck glued on, stacks attached. I had to paint the black piping on the stacks free hand (since I can't mask), but I think they look okay with the naked eye. Here you can see the portholes, which I had to fill and re-drill in a straight line (fairly common on a resin kit). I need to work on the anchor hawse pipe on this side, the starboard one looks much better.



IMG_3799_1.jpg [107.38 KiB | Viewed 1170 times]

Sunday, July 1st, 2012

I've made a little more progress. I have to admit that when I started working on the masts I thought I was done with this build. Holy crap what a pain working with these tiny tapered brass wires. I cheated a bit on the forward mast and put in a lookout platform as extra bonding surface for the two vertical brass pieces and the cross member. The after mast I made from a single piece

of wire, I'm done dealing with making two-piece vertical assemblies until I get a resistive soldering setup!

Also added are the 3" gun mounts, and the ventilators. There are a few more items, such as searchlights and ammo lockers to add, and then I'll gloss coat everything so I can do a wash on the portholes and doors on the superstructure. I want to do that before I put on the railings, boats, davits and machine guns, as it'll be too tight with all of that on the decks to get a brush in there without snapping a ton of stuff off.

Attachments:

File comment: The gun looks like it might be a little large (would it really be so tall that the shield would interfere with the view from the bridge?), but it's attached. Note that I got the inside of the ventilators painted red.



IMG_3800_1.jpg [118.09 KiB | Viewed 1097 times]

File comment: I used the kit supplied wire for the masts. I think it's a little over scale, but after all the trouble I had getting these things assembled, they stay as they are!



IMG_3801_1.jpg [129.88 KiB | Viewed 1097 times]

File comment: The rake of the masts is pretty much spot-on. The trick is to not obsess with them being the exact same angle as they appear in photos, but to get one of them so that it looks close, and then match the other exactly. Also, always look at ships with multiple masts from directly forward, as that's the first thing a judge will look at in competition: they need to be exactly in line and perfectly vertical.



IMG_3802_1.jpg [118.59 KiB | Viewed 1097 times]

Tuesday, July 10th, 2012

I've slowed down a bit on this build. Started a new job late last week, so the learning curve is taking a lot of time, even though it's a work-from-home position.

Basically all that I've accomplished is a little paint touch-up here and there, and a couple of small

items added. There's this screen roofing bit that goes on the stern. Not sure what it is. I also added the line spool and painted the "rope" a tan color. The spool has a little shape issue on the inboard side, as you can see, but it's passable. I have a GMM 1/700 PE set with these things in stainless steel, but I spent a half-hour to an hour trying to assemble even one of the things, and it was beyond my patience level and it just wasn't any fun.

Looking at this photo I can see how bad the superstructure windows look. Oy. It looks like maybe I can score/clean them with a fine needle, though, before I do a wash to darken them.

Attachments:



IMG_3815.jpg [114.02 KiB | Viewed 1022 times]

Thursday, July 12th, 2012

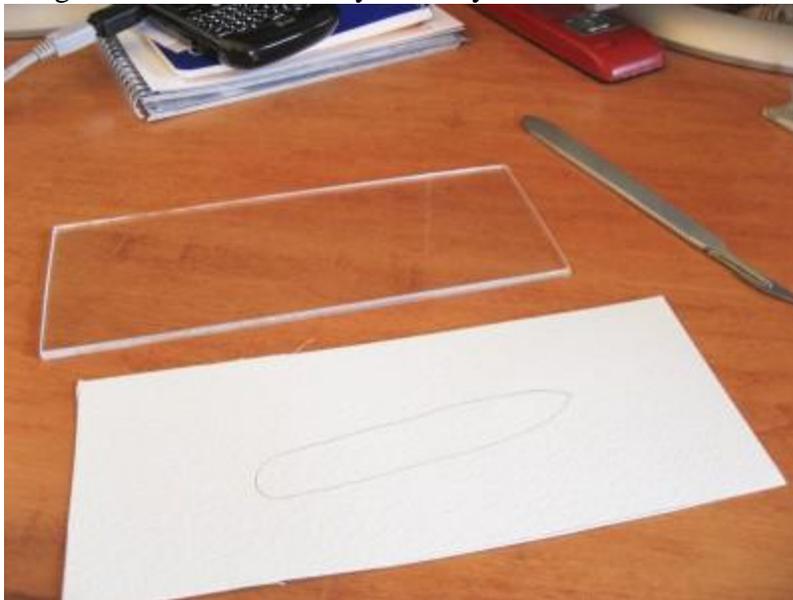
I'm at the PE railing part. Man, do I HATE doing railings in 1/700! I have to admit, though, that I haven't put PE on anything this small in over 25 years, so there was definitely a learning curve. I initially started with really long runs and using CA glue (things I know not to do even in 1/350th or 1/200th scale), but have started making more cuts in the rails and am using Gator Glue to attach the. I've also started on the base, using Jim Bauman's method from the Tips section of this board. I didn't get the swells very well (rhyme!), but that's because the paper I bought is more of a cardboard. Next time I'll go thinner.

Attachments:



IMG_3820.jpg [109.93 KiB | Viewed 935 times]

File comment: I cut a piece of Plexi to glue the watercolor paper to for the water base. It's straight and flat and will stay that way.



IMG_3817.jpg [137.42 KiB | Viewed 935 times]

File comment: Here it is with the paper glued down, and two pieces of super small styrene under it for a couple of swells. I've since sealed it with super glue, and then gave it a good coating of shellac.



IMG_3818.jpg [118.86 KiB | Viewed 935 times]

Thursday, July 19th, 2012

A couple more photos. I've finished with the railings, also added the anchor cables, as well as life rings (not sure they should be orange, but I wanted some color) and the machine gun positions.

She's ready for gloss coat (I'm holding off on the davits and boats until after gloss coating), and then weathering and rigging. I'm also trying to scrounge up a few figures to put on her; I know I have a set of them around here somewhere.

Attachments:

File comment: The angled support for the railing on the raised bow was made by cutting away all of the rails but the top one, and then bending it downwards at a 45-degree angle. The life preserver was nearly IMPOSSIBLE to get glued on, it's so tiny.



IMG_3822.jpg [100.48 KiB | Viewed 754 times]

File comment: The machine gun mount (one on each side) are two pieces of PE. I had to build 5 of them to get two that looked good enough to use.



IMG_3823.jpg [111.82 KiB | Viewed 754 times]

Sunday, July 22nd, 2012

I'm on to the wash stage and started painting the water. For the wash I'm using Mig Pigment's pre-mixed wash. I'm still not sure how I feel about using pre-mixed washes -- seems kind of lazy to me -- but they do work well. They dry fast and are much more even than my hand-made variety. For the gloss coat I used the Tamiya gloss lacquer in the rattle can, decanted and airbrushed.

I've also stippled in the bow wave and the wake on the water base and started painted it with acrylics through the airbrush.

Attachments:

File comment: To start the wash process I put the ship on its side using my Panavise. This way the wash will sit in the windows like water in a dish.



IMG_3825.jpg [121.8 KiB | Viewed 435 times]

File comment: I go heavy in the windows so they get nice and dark, lighter on the other features. I'll let this dry, do some clean-up, and at then at least one more application. This is the "cold grey" wash, so it isn't as harsh as a pure black mixture.



IMG_3826.jpg [109.92 KiB | Viewed 435 times]

File comment: I'm doing river water for the base. My favorite dirty river base color is Vallejo

"English Uniform". Here I've airbrushed it over the entire base, leaving it "thin" in some places so that the white primer gives it some highlights, and I've also gone over the wake and up near the hull with the English Uniform lightened with Vallejo's "Iraqi Sand" for some variation. The thing about river water is it's fairly opaque -- no shadows from below as in ocean water -- so there's less variation in the painting.



IMG_3827.jpg [138.05 KiB | Viewed 435 times]

Wednesday, July 25th, 2012

Just a quick photo of the wash results in the windows. As I stated before, I used the Panavise to put the ship first on her starboard side, then on the port side, then to stand her on her bow, so that the wash would pool in the windows. I'm happy with the results. After that I set her upright and did the regular wash on deck details, guns, etc. The dark gray wash is a little starker than I wanted, but with the naked eye in this scale, anything lighter was simply lost.

A little more cleanup today and then I'll dullcoat her for drybrushing and rigging.

Attachments:



IMG_3828.jpg [134.99 KiB | Viewed 397 times]

Sunday, July 28th, 2012

Flat coat applied. I tried the Mr. Color brand Mr. Super Clear Flat with UV protection on this model. I decanted it from the rattle can. Even though decanted, it was a bit thick still and needed some Mr. Color thinner added. It went on fine, but it appears to have chalked a bit on the dark gray areas. I'll decide if I want to keep using it. I still have yet to find any dullcoat that works as well as the old-school Testors dullcoat.

Rigging underway. Using UNI-Caenis 20 den black thread. I attempted David Griffith's method of using mucilage glue to attach it, but I think I'm too ham-handed and it just wasn't sticking for me. Gator Glue, thinned with water, works perfectly. I'll be sticking to that method.

Attachments:

File comment: When rigging I normally use clamping tweezers or hemostats to clamp onto the line and keep it taught. That's too much weight in 1/700, so I'm using these tiny wooden clothes pins. I think they're for doll clothes or something, but they work great and provide just enough light tension to the line.



IMG_3836.jpg [107.07 KiB | Viewed 318 times]

File comment: The kit instructions would have you run the forward stays to the bow, but then they'd interfere with the guns movement. I honestly think the gun might be over scale (it's so tall the shield and barrel impede the view from the bridge), but at this stage of the game I'm just making it work and running the rigging to a different location.



IMG_3837.jpg [104.33 KiB | Viewed 318 times]

File comment: Once the glue has set up I use a pair of tiny and SHARP fly tying scissors to clip the lines as close in as possible. Any remnants will be touched up with white paint. Stays for the forward mast done.



IMG_3838.jpg [116.63 KiB | Viewed 318 times]

Wednesday, August 1st, 2012

Just realized that this has to be done a week from today at the latest (early flight to the NATS next Thursday). Rigging is done, very light weathering applied in the form of grime and rust streaks (not really visible in the photos). I have some figures and flags on the way from Freetime Hobbies and those will be applied sparingly, but otherwise I'm calling the ship DONE.

I've put her in the water. Today I'll be filling any gaps between the hull and the water surface with thinned Gator Glue. Once that dries, I can then do the white paint for the wake effect.

Attachments:

File comment: I did this photo right before putting her on the water base. Most non-modelers have no concept of how small a 1/700 scale gunboat is, so I use this photo to blow their minds.



IMG_3844.jpg [119.28 KiB | Viewed 284 times]

File comment: This side of the hull needs little filling at the waterline, it's a near perfect fit. Port side, though, has a bit of a gap.



IMG_3853.jpg [121.16 KiB | Viewed 284 times]

File comment: A close-up showing the rigging and the wake laid in with acrylic gel applied with a knife blade. I really like the water texture that the watercolor paper provides. I'll be using it from now on.



IMG_3854.jpg [131.29 KiB | Viewed 284 times]

Friday, August 3rd, 2012

Getting to what I hope is the home stretch.

Attachments:

File comment: I'm still filling gaps between the hull and the water surface. Next time I'll build up that area more before I attach the ship. This little bit keeps needing more attention. Once it's dry, I will be able to proceed with painting the wake using acrylic paints and glaze medium.



IMG_3855.jpg [141.41 KiB | Viewed 204 times]

File comment: These showed up from Freetime Hobbies yesterday. In retrospect I could have done the flags on my color laser, but these have adhesive backing, so I'm interested in seeing

how well they work.



IMG_3856.jpg [148.59 KiB | Viewed 204 times]

File comment: Eduard's pre-painted photoetch figures. I feel dirty using pre-painted materials, like I'm cheating, but I know I'd have ZERO fun painting these things myself, and I'm short on time.



IMG_3857.jpg [81.35 KiB | Viewed 204 times]

I need to do some sort of name plate, but otherwise I'm calling this one DONE.

My first-ever 1/700 scale ship build. While I enjoyed most of it, I'm still not happy with PE crewmen and other details that are too flat for my liking. It was fun, but now I need to build something BIG!

Attachments:

File comment: She kind of gets lost in the case, but it'll keep the dust off.



IMG_3860.jpg [122.54 KiB | Viewed 181 times]

File comment: I did the wake with white paint and lots of stippling with an old brush and glaze medium.



IMG_3861.jpg [141.61 KiB | Viewed 181 times]

File comment: Not completely happy with how the flag is attached, but I just couldn't get a line to hang properly from the yardarm to the deck.



IMG_3862.jpg [138.74 KiB | Viewed 181 times]

File comment: You can barely see three crewmen here. Technically there should be no khakis for this time frame, but the whites blend with the ship so easily that I wanted some contrast.



IMG_3863.jpg [131.69 KiB | Viewed 181 times]