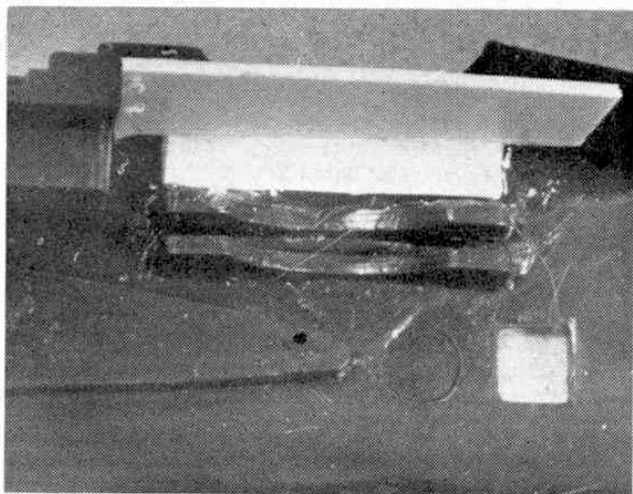


Doug's completed Grumman Avenger decked out with twin barbette guns and Royal Navy markings.

**I**N MODIFYING plastic models, it is often necessary to fabricate new components and alter the outline of an existing part by adding to the basic form.

Because of the ease with which it can be worked, balsa is often chosen for this purpose, but although it is certainly easy to carve, it is by no means easy for the average modeller to achieve a really good, grain-free finish to match the flawless surface of the plastic kit components.

## A JOB FOR PLASTIC PADDING by Doug McHard



A view inside the right fuselage shell. Make a platform from thin polystyrene sheet (Plastikard) to block off the turret opening. Narrow strips of plastic at either side will cover the lower edges of the hole.

Plastic Padding is mixed on the palette provided with the material. Prepare it just before you need it because it starts to set a few minutes after mixing.

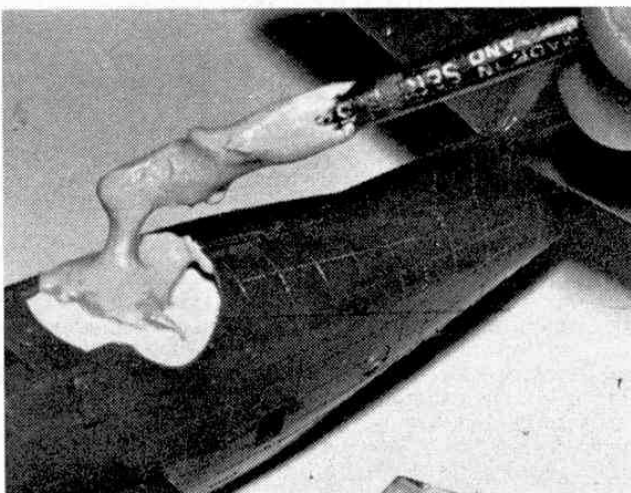
Moreover, balsa is not easy to attach securely to plastic and its soft texture is sometimes a disadvantage when local strength is required. Thin sections are invariably weak. The very softness of balsa which makes it so easy to cut also presents problems when a nice sharp edge is required—it always seems to finish up rounded to a greater or lesser degree.

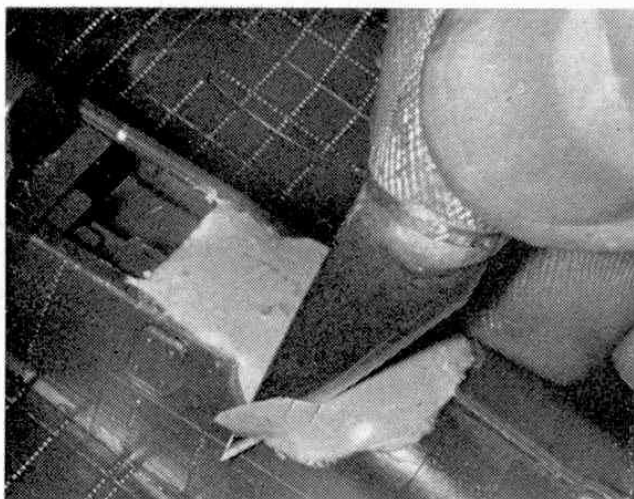
A far better material for small to medium size fabricating is Plastic Padding. This remarkable medium comes in two tubes of a "thin putty" like consistency which, when mixed together in the correct proportions forms a compound which sets hard in about ten minutes.

Plastic Padding sets by chemical action and does not depend upon air drying—it will even set under water! Neither does the thickness of the material make any difference to the setting and no shrinkage occurs in the process.

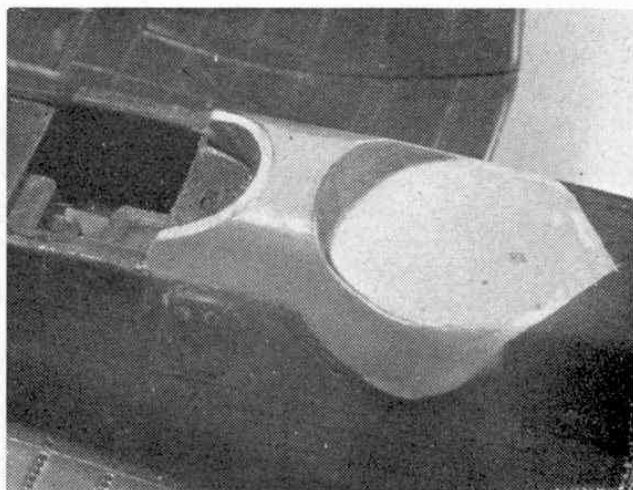
It can be bought at hardware stores in two forms—"Hard" (in a red and yellow tube) and "Elastic" (in a blue and yellow tube). The Elastic sort is particularly easy to shape, being the softer of the two types and can

After smearing the polystyrene with Body Putty, the Plastic Padding is built up, making sure it is worked well into the spaces beneath the fuselage shell. Don't try to "form" it at this stage, but try to ensure sufficient thickness to carve to the final shape later.





The "Elastic" kind of Plastic Padding is very easy to carve and sand. You can start this stage within about ten minutes of applying the soft material from the palette. Should you accidentally cut away too much, it is easy to build it up again with more Padding.



This is the final shape, achieved by carving and sanding. A satin-smooth finish is achieved using No. 400 grade Wet-or-Dry abrasive paper (used dry) and the job is then ready for painting. Great care should be taken to do as good a job as possible at this stage.

be cut with a sharp knife, filed and sanded. Where greater rigidity and strength is needed, "Hard" should be used.

An important advantage of Plastic Padding over balsa wood is that no grain filling is required. The surface, after final finishing with No. 400 grade Wet-or-Dry paper, is at once ready for painting; the surface quality will be indistinguishable from the rest of the model. The time thus saved can amount to several hours and, what's more, a better job will result.

So what are the snags, you ask! Well, there's really only one, and it is easily overcome. Plastic Padding bonds itself unbelievably well to almost every hard material except Polystyrene plastic! To make it stick

we must therefore smear the parts with body putty. The putty I prefer is the one made by A.M.T. and a thin smear will set in less than a minute. Leave the putty "rough" to provide a good key for the Plastic Padding and remember, only a *smear* to cover the plastic is all that is required.

As a demonstration of an ideal project for Plastic Padding, I have chosen the Airfix kit of the Grumman T.B.M.3 Avenger. The modified model itself represents a converted full size machine! The big rear gun turret was removed, and in its place was fitted a remotely controlled twin-gun barbette. It was, in fact a flying test rig for this armament installation which was eventually intended for the Fairy Spearfish.

The two rear bays of the long cockpit canopy are cut off with a razor saw and replaced by a rounded transparent piece moulded from acetate. If you are not sure how this is done, the process will be described later in this series of articles. If you build the Avenger with its undercarriage retracted you can utilise one of the wheels to represent the new gun barbette. It is just the right thickness and diameter and all you have to do is to fill in the hub with Body Putty and build up the lower edge to form a vertical sided "skirt" of the same material. The disused undercarriage struts (No. 44) are cut down to represent guns and their square ends are slotted into the "tyre".

When painted, it is impossible to see where the alterations have been made. This picture also shows the circular bulbous transparencies just behind the wing trailing edge. These are, again, acetate mouldings fixed in place with Evostik after the model is painted. The original kit is supplied with U.S. Navy markings but our model must be finished in Royal Navy colours so new transfers will be needed. Ours came from the unused half of a Frog Mosquito transfer sheet (the 'Mossie' being completed with the alternative S.E.A.C. markings). As we said in the December article, never throw anything away—unused bits from other makes of plastic kits always come in handy!

