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A riveting idea

This document was written by Norman Barber and was originally published by The Colchester Society of Model and Experimental Engineers in September 2006

I am rather reluctant to write about techniques that I have developed to assist me in my workshop because I am quite sure that other people must have already thought of any ideas I have dreamed up and I shall be telling my grandmother (or father) how to suck eggs. At the risk of doing just that the procedure I adopt when flush riveting to a flat panel may be of interest. The sort of scenario I am referring to is closing small rivets (1/16" diameter copper, for example) into countersinks - say a tender side panel or a locomotive running board where the prototype had flush panels with no rivets showing. Unless you are rather more skilled than me there is a high risk of the hammer ball pein occasionally missing the rivet and landing on the panel (probably brass) alongside the countersink. The result is a small dent in the plate work which, unless carefully filled at the painting priming stage, will assume the appearance of a massive crater when the gloss finish is applied. Filling and rubbing down is a tedious and time consuming activity and in my experience requires at least two attempts before a satisfactory finish is obtained. Better not to have a dent in the first place, or at least to minimise the damage. Cardboard Shield The procedure I adopt is to cut a small hole (about 5/32" diameter for a 1/16" rivet) in a piece of soft cardboard and place this over the rivet. If (when) the hammer does miss the rivet or glance off it is cushioned by the cardboard and damage to the underlying panel is avoided. I have found the ideal material for the shield is the cardboard used for the backing of A4 writing pads. I have tried brass and steel shim stock but this does not work. The cardboard shield will only last for a few rivets, the edge of the hole becoming compressed when the closed rivet is finished off by planishing with the flat face of the hammer. No matter! Simply cut another hole half an inch away and you have a brand new shield! Clearly the technique is only suitable for small rivets being closed with a lightweight "toffee" hammer. If you intend to attack a 3/16" rivet with a 1 lb. hammer improving you aim is the best way to avoid surface damage!

