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Deck Fitting and Finish

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Sundowner – 10

You can only think a certain amount, so I got the glue out for the deck. The deck is a slight compound curve (abeam and fore and aft) and the plywood is flat, so I was hoping that there was enough give in the plywood to accommodate the curves (and the glue is strong enough to keep it there!), but I did anticipate a lot of clamps and tacks while it glued.

With some paper inside to stop some glue drips onto finished items, I followed the instructions for the glue (apply liberally...) and placed the deck. It was a hot day and I had to work reasonably fast before the glue lost its absorption powers, but 20 minutes later it was all done... using all my clamps (must get some more).

While waiting for glue to dry and musing, I reconsidered the anchors, and tried rescaling the photos I had. I thought they looked large, but a lot depends on the photo angles, from some positions they look OK, from others about 20% too large and that might be too much to get away with. At this stage, I can either go back and rewrite the anchor bit from earlier and pretend it didn't happen, or leave it in and be honest. I elected to be honest: if these articles are at all supposed to encourage people to have a go, it is no use pretending nothing goes wrong. I will put off a decision about the anchors for now. If I elect to remake them, unless anyone wants a pair of nice anchor shaped earrings, they will join my 'box of embarrassment' under the bench...see later (presumably).

The glue dried and nothing moved, so I trimmed the deck edges and sanded it smooth. If you look at photos of the real thing, you will see that the deck is finished with, presumably, something like tarred canvas, both to seal the deck and to provide grip underfoot. It is very difficult to mimic this surface with paint, and so I decided to resort to a tactic I have used successfully for a few other items like this: a small traction engine canopy, the roof of a 5" gauge coach and the roof covering a wooden cab for a 7.25" US loco. These used a fine woven old bed sheet for material that was stuck directly to the unpainted wooden roof with thinned PVA glue (about 2:1 glue to water with a bit of stuff that makes your *fairy* hands soft to break down surface tension). When dried hard and trimmed and painted, this looks realistic and has been robust. Since this model is a marine animal with water intended to be around, I thought I would use the epoxy resin (and yes, with a long curing period!) to stick down the finest cloth I could find that was otherwise useless except as decorators sheeting. I am hoping that when finished (with thin paint and probably satin finish to try to avoid clogging up the weave too much)



this will mimic the real deck. This was the best time to do it as the finish will then be under the deck fittings as it should be. The cloth went on fine without bubbles and wrinkles in spite of the gentle compound curves: just a long wait now until it is hard! On the subject of bubbles etc, one thing I had learned with this method and using PVA is that if you start with dry cloth, the water in the PVA causes the material to swell a bit and this makes bubbles when you are not looking. It's a bit like wall papering: if you apply the glue and wait until it has soaked in (or, better, wet the cloth and wring it out first), it will not expand more and will in fact contract a bit as it dries to make a nice tight finish. Here, there is no water involved and the cloth does not appear to have expanded. Just to be sure, I did try a couple of test pieces of cloth covered ply first: these stuck down well and did not have bubbles.



When it was *nearly* hard, I was able to use a sharp blade to trim the excess, and when it finally was hard, I was able to finish the job with fine sandpaper around the edges. This worked well and I was pleased with the eventual deck covering. I then painted it with some oil based white primer by Rustoleum (it is quite thin and does not fill up all the weave) not that the photo shows the finish that all the palaver was about... The holes you can see at the bow end are brass flanges I made up with about 10mm of brass pipe soft soldered to them at the right angle to insert into the previously fitted anchor pipes (and still leave enough space for the anchor chain I have from an old clock that I intend to use to fit the anchors as it is chemically blacked and the right size). Making them at the right angle to sit flat on the deck took a few goes to get right but these are now epoxied – araldited – in.



The next task I think is to apply some paint to the hull prior to sticking the dark wood varnished trim pieces down. In that order so that I do not have to mask up all the trim to paint the hull. Since the paint will impair the glue fixing the trim down, I intend to use more araldite glue with small brass screws to hold it there.