

"HMS Whitethorn"

Length 164 ft., 530 tons, 850 hp, Max speed 11.5 knots

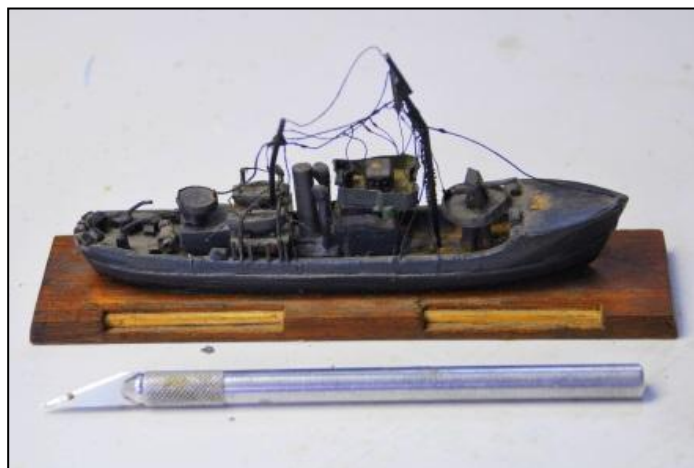
Armament: 1 x 12pdr AA gun, 2 x 0.5" AA guns, 4 machine guns

Restoration of a Miniature waterline model, scale approx. 1:330 (1" : 27')

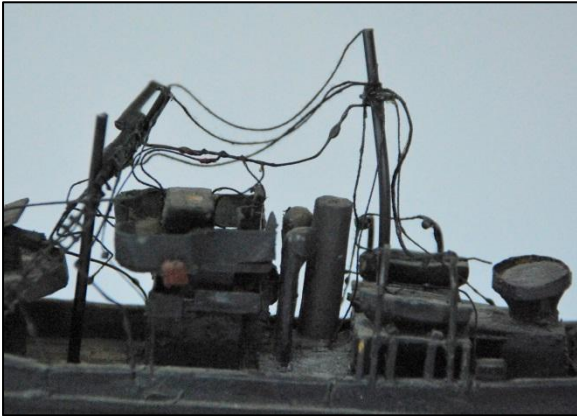
"HMS Whitethorn" was one of more than 500 ships built during WWII designed as heavily armed vessels used for the control of major ports, which could later be converted to fishing trawlers. Knowledge of local waters was well known to fishermen who understood the ship type without requiring much further instruction in their operation. They could be readily used for anti-submarine operation and minesweeping duties.

The model was made by James Berton Roy of St John, New Brunswick, Lieutenant Commander RCNVR, while serving as Navigation Officer on "HMS *Whitethorn*". In 1940 he had volunteered to serve in the Royal Navy for the duration of the war. He went on to serve on several ships, including another armed trawler HMS "*Morris Dance*", on a Tank Landing Ships (LST) in North Africa, the advance amphibious landings at the Battle of Anzio in January 1944, as well as at the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944. After serving in the minesweeper HMCS "*St Boniface*" from 27 Dec 1944 he was discharged on 9 October 1945.

Following his death in 1980 his son James inherited his personal effects, and commissioned the restoration of the model, which he then donated to the New Brunswick Museum, St John, NB. There it joined a weathered white ensign and pendant from *LST-303*, previously donated by his mother.



Whatever materials could be scrounged on board were used to make the model. The model was mounted on a 7" x 2 1/2" "rosewood" base with the ship's name written in Indian ink on the underside, and with inset decorative matchsticks. It was badly damaged and very dirty and grimy, consistent with uncovered display and lack of care in storage. The hull was carved from a piece of pine with superstructure blocks and armament. The masts were wire and the rigging cotton. The model was painted grey with several deck areas which were bare wood. The paint colour was darker than shown in the accompanying photo of the ship, taken by a crew member whose name was written on the reverse. A suitable method of displaying the photo with the model was requested. For the restoration I hoped to be able to salvage most of the structure.



The tangle of masts and rigging were first removed, then the smaller items such as davits, pins and other unidentified items, holding them on masking tape to prevent loss.



The deck structure blocks had remained secure and required careful levering to remove, adding judicious drops of water to soften the glue. Paint removal was accomplished by careful scraping with shaped X-Acto blades, needles and fine sandpaper. As this process continued a strong smell of old cigarette tobacco smoke became apparent. This must have been trapped in the paint layers at the time of making the model.

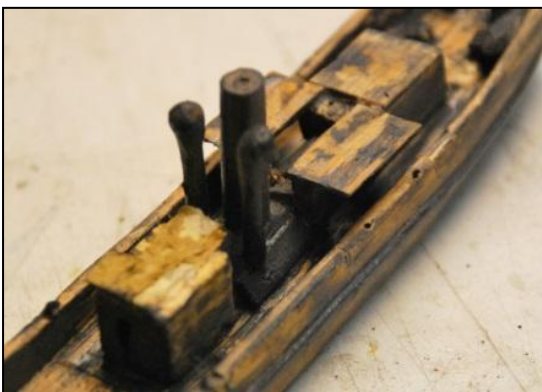


The bridge block was surrounded by a barrier made of thin paper, but damage to this proved irreparable, and I decided therefore to replace it with new material.



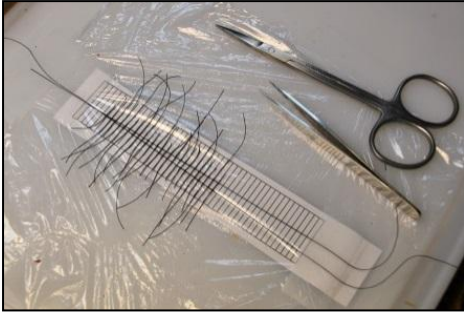
The bridge decking was left unpainted, as on the original. The bridge barrier was formed of a strip of regular 20lb paper that was slowly fed along the curving perimeter of the bridge and a spot of CA applied where bends occurred, followed by a thin fillet of yellow glue to secure the whole structure.

The photo below shows the midships section after removing the bridge block but before removing the funnel, the two ventilators and the remaining deck structure blocks. Each of these items was removed from the deck for detail cleaning and then restored to their original position using yellow glue.



The rigging was a tangle of wire and cotton which I considered to be irretrievable. The masts were replaced with short lengths of brass wire of the same diameter (0.28") as the original.

To make the shrouds and ratlines a grid pattern of the same spacing as the original ratlines was drawn up, and a sheet of Saran wrap was placed over it to prevent sticking. The distance from the cross trees on the mast to the attachment point on the hull was measured to help generate the correct angle. Black cotton (Gutterman, measured at 120TPI, 0.0083" dia) was stretched over the grid at the appropriate angle to form the shrouds. The ratlines were pre-cut lengths of cotton stretched across the shrouds using the grid marks for guidance, with a tiny spot of CA glue to attach them to the shrouds.



The remaining "tails" were then snipped off.



The surfaces of the hull and the superstructure blocks were painted with three coats of dark grey thinned acrylic paint to match the original colour, leaving relevant areas of the deck unpainted as on the original model and ship.

The masts and rigging were then fixed in place. Three vertical antenna wires with a small blob of white glue painted red representing insulators were rigged from the triatic stay down to the wireless cabin. A spot of red and green paint were added on the navigation lights on the side of the bridge. These were followed by replacing the rear deck depth charges davits, the depth charge rollers on the

transom, the lifeboats, funnel and ventilators, the gun on the forward gun platform and the remaining unidentified “bits and bobs”

The “rosewood” base was cleaned and polished and the matchsticks were replaced - It was necessary to remove the originals to clean their recesses properly - and then the completed hull was glued back on.

Baseboard and case construction:

The acrylic cover was first made from 0.075” acrylic, using solvent cement to join the pieces. A baseboard of 5/8” Baltic birch plywood, selected for its uniform colour with a little wavy grain, was cut to size to fit inside the cover. Surrounding pieces of 0.10” thick pine 3/8” wide were then glued to the outside rim of the base, and pieces of 5.8” x 3/8” clear pine were glued and pinned outside these pieces resulting in the formation of a groove that accommodated the cover. The outer pieces were drilled and pegged to the baseboard for additional strength. The baseboard was given three coats of clear water based varnish, and the outer pieces were given a contrasting “Colonial Maple” varnish. Small bumper feet were screwed into the underside of the base to raise it from its standing surface and to allow clearance for the addition of the storyboard mechanism. A simple sloped stand was made of acrylic to display the photograph.



HMS Whitethorn - Armed trawler – 1940

A blue-colored paper nameplate, giving the name of the ship and a decorative photo of whitethorn blossom, was glued to the inside of the base

Decorative brass security pins of T-shaped cross section were made up on the lathe. After the case was positioned a 1/8” hole was drilled through the end pieces of the outer surround, through the acrylic cover and into the baseboard. The security pins were then pushed through to lock the cover into the groove. These pins prevent separation if the unit was picked up inadvertently by the case.



Storyboard

A piece of 0.075" acrylic was cut to size. The text of technical details of the ship, printed on white paper, was cut to size and spray glued to the side that would be uppermost. The text of the naval experience of Lt Cmdr. Roy was spray glued to the other side of the acrylic. Both exposed paper surfaces were then given several protective spray coats of clear varnish. A piece of brass channel with a ½" finger-hold tab was slid onto the front edge of the acrylic to complete the storyboard.

A piece of brass angle with a soldered extension piece was screwed into the base at each end of the baseboard at a distance apart that supports the storyboard and allows it to slide between them. A "stop" piece was glued to the back of the baseboard to prevent the storyboard being slid too far back. The suspended storyboard could thus be slid out completely to allow the underside description to be read.



This completed the restoration and display case for “HMS *Whitethorn*”, which as stated earlier was donated to the New Brunswick Museum in St John, NB.



Ray Peacock
Oakville, ON
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