

## Introduction

I was disappointed when I picked up Osprey's *Nieuport Aces of World War I* by Norman Franks; there wasn't a single photograph or colour profile of Billy Bishop's aircraft in there. In fact, the only mention of Canada's top fighter ace was a tiny paragraph in the 60 Squadron write-up. Hardly seems appropriate for the second-highest scoring ace of the Royal Flying Corps.

Admittedly, Bishop has always been a controversial character. The debate rages on about his Victoria Cross for a solo raid that can't be substantiated by



# B.1566 – Billy Bishop's Nieuport 17

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in 1/72 Scale

eyewitnesses or German records. Many of Bishop's fellow pilots were angered by his grandstanding and doubted his claims. Bishop's reputation suffered another blow many decades later by the dubious television docudrama "The Kid who Couldn't Miss." Regardless of opinion, Canada's top-scoring First World War ace deserves far better.

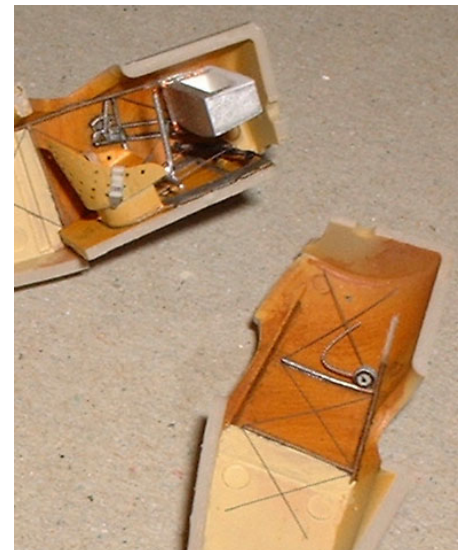
B.1566 has always been high on my 'must build' list, but the amount of work needed to bring Revell's ancient kit up to snuff has always put me off. The release of Eduard's excellent 1/72 Nieuport 17 was the kick in the pants I needed. It has to be one of the easiest biplane kits I've ever built. Moulding is superb, fit is excellent and the top wing - usually the biggest source of frustration - lines up exactly as it should. There are a few things that require tweaking, but what kit is perfect?

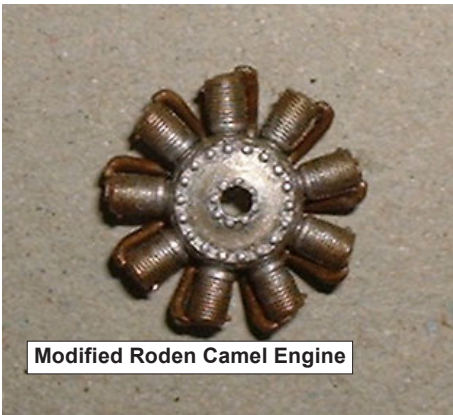
## Construction Begins

The fun begins in the cockpit. As supplied, there is enough detail for a nice representation with careful painting. I added a bit of extra detail: a scratch built fuel tank, contents glass and rev counter. The lumpy, moulded-on rudder bar was sanded off and replaced by a separate item, along with a new control stick and linkage. The heel plates moulded on the

cockpit floor and the rudder bar are too wide but it's not easily seen in the tiny cockpit. I discarded the solid kit seat and replaced it with a photo-etched item from Tom's Modelworks French interior set. Seat belts are from Eduard's pre-painted French WW1 etched set. Eduard include a rear bulkhead to go behind the seat but as far as I can tell from photos there was no such thing. I left this out. The propeller was carved from two pieces of 1/32 inch plywood laminated together with a photo-etched boss. The Aldis sight is from stainless steel tubing and the windscreen from acetate.

My only complaint with the kit is the engine. Other than a few very faint grooves, each cylinder is smooth. I tried wrapping them with fine wire in a vain attempt to portray cooling fins. After





the side ribs was moulded off-centre. So I used the smooth cowling and added the ribs from .005 inch plastic strips. The two oval exhaust/cooling holes were missing, so I drilled them out and filed them to shape.

### ● Elevator Error...

The fuselage exit holes for the elevator control wires are moulded asymmetrical; one side has the upper hole forward with the other side the reverse. I originally thought this was a mistake. After checking photos I discovered that this is actually correct for some aircraft — unfortunately not this one! Naturally I didn't discover this until it was far too late to correct without major surgery, so I left it as is.

### ● N.17 or N.23?

There is confusion as to whether Bishop's aircraft was a N.17 or an N.23. The difference between the two is subtle and not always uniform between production batches so it may never be known for certain which is correct. The only somewhat reliable method of telling the two versions apart is the positioning of the Vickers gun and the altered centre section rigging to accommodate it. In the N.23 the gun was offset to one side. In the N.17 it was centrally located. Like many RFC Nieuports however, B.1566 did not have a Vickers gun. The X-shape of the rigging wires suggests that it was an N.23. The Cross & Cockade book agrees, but in one photo it can be clearly seen that the upper wings are stencilled 'Type 17' and most sources state it was a 17. For my purposes I'll side with the majority and call it a Type 17.

numerous episodes of broken and unravelled wire I gave up and substituted a spare Le Rhone from a Roden Camel. I did cut off the induction pipes from the Roden engine and used the separate piece from the Eduard kit instead. Eduard supplies three cowlings: one smooth, one with the side strengthening ribs and one horseshoe shaped. For some reason the circular reinforcement around the opening of the cowling with

### ● Colours & Markings

B.1566 is nearly always depicted in paintings with large black '5s' & 'Cs' on the wings and fuselage, with blue cowling and wheel covers. I have come to the conclusion that, aside from the blue cowling, it was never painted this way. As far as I'm aware, the idea originated as speculation based on the two known photographs of 60 Squadron Nieuports, showing black fuselage markings and some with blue cowlings. Based on these two photos, someone assumed Bishop's aircraft was painted the same way. It is my belief this idea has been repeated ever since because it is a more interesting colour scheme.

The Windssock Datafile states that there are photos of the refinished machine with these markings, but I have yet to see them in all the references I have or numerous Internet searches. Even a photograph in a 1920s newspaper clipping I have shows Bishop standing by B.1566, without blue wheel covers or black C5s. Furthermore, Bishop himself makes no mention of the black markings or blue wheel covers in his book 'Winged Warfare', saying only that it had a "blue nose." (Bishop's mechanics fashioned a spinner as a gift for him when he became an ace. In later editions of his book it can be seen in a post war photo hanging with the propeller on the wall of his study). Despite the popular, speculative and rather more attractive colour scheme, I decided to stick with what I've seen in photos.

I used Polly S 'Metalline' Aluminum for the overall airframe colour with a mix of Xtracolour Roundel Blue and USN True Blue for the cowling and rudder stripe. I'm a big fan of Polyscale but this was the first time I had used their Metalline paint. It went on very well thinned with a bit of tap water. It has a fine grain but I did find it to be a bit fragile once dry. Small metallic particles were floating around on the decals when I applied them and I had to spend a good deal of time cleaning them off. In the end I didn't get every metallic speck off but it's only visible up close.

Roundels are from Americal Gryphon with the tail codes pieced together from their No. 1 Squadron sheet. For some reason AG quoted the red outlines exactly the same size as the black numbers which kind of defeats the purpose, so I hand painted the outlines with a #00000 brush. Not fun. The final finish coat was a 50/50 mix of Gunze clear flat and gloss giving a nice semi-gloss sheen.





with strips of decal film applied before the final paint job.

### Conclusion

My little tribute to Canada's top-scoring First World War ace has finally joined my collection. Colourful schemes for Nieuports are almost limitless. Eduard's more recent releases, in both N.17 and N.23 guises, have given many interesting markings options which will keep me happily building Nieuports for some time to come. **RT**

### References

- ◆ Nieuports in RNAS, RFC and RAF Service. Cross & Cockade International, 2007
- ◆ Nieuport 17 Datafile J.M. Bruce Albatross Productions Ltd., 1990
- ◆ Nieuport Fighters Vol. 1 J.M. Bruce Albatross Productions Ltd., 1993

### Rigging

Rigging is stretched sprue and it was during this process that I did one of those idiot things. My usual method for tightening stretched sprue is to hold a burning incense stick near it until the heat snaps it tight. Every so often, a stubborn bit of rigging refuses to play no matter how close I hold the glowing incense. Usually, the only damage is melted

### Completion

Final assembly consisted of adding the wheels, engine, cowling, propeller and Lewis gun. The gun was finished in Humbrol Metalcote Gunmetal. The rudder was glued on at an angle as were the elevators (which I had separated from the wings earlier). The aileron hinge lines were covered by a strip of fabric on Nieuports. In scale, I represented this



sprue. On the Nieuport, it was the centre section rigging that defied me. I held the incense a bit closer and closer and melted the leading edge of the wing. Aaaaarrghh!

Amazingly, with a bit of super glue and talcum powder, some sanding, a paint touch-up and some cursing, I managed to repair the damage. I did lose a bit of the subtle leading edge rib detail in the process, however.



#### About the author:

Andy was born in Blackpool, England, in 1965, but dragged his family off to the wilds of Canada at the tender age of 15 months, where he was to spend the next 32 years, eventually settling in the Vancouver area. He moved back to England in 1997

and currently resides near Bolton, Lancashire with his partner Catherine and their 7 cats. He is employed as a purchaser and health & safety officer for a pharmaceutical packaging company.

Andy holds a private pilot's license and is in constant turmoil trying to decide if he should buy yet another model or add another hour of flight time to his log book. He has been modelling since the age of 5 and will build damn near anything, though has a soft spot for WWI & inter war biplanes. Andy is looking forward to his 450th birthday when he will finally have built every kit in his collection....