



Vampire FB31 conversion for the 1/48 Airfix kit. (Redux 2022 edition)



Here's my finished model with the conversion set applied. Check uncles.net to see the full story.

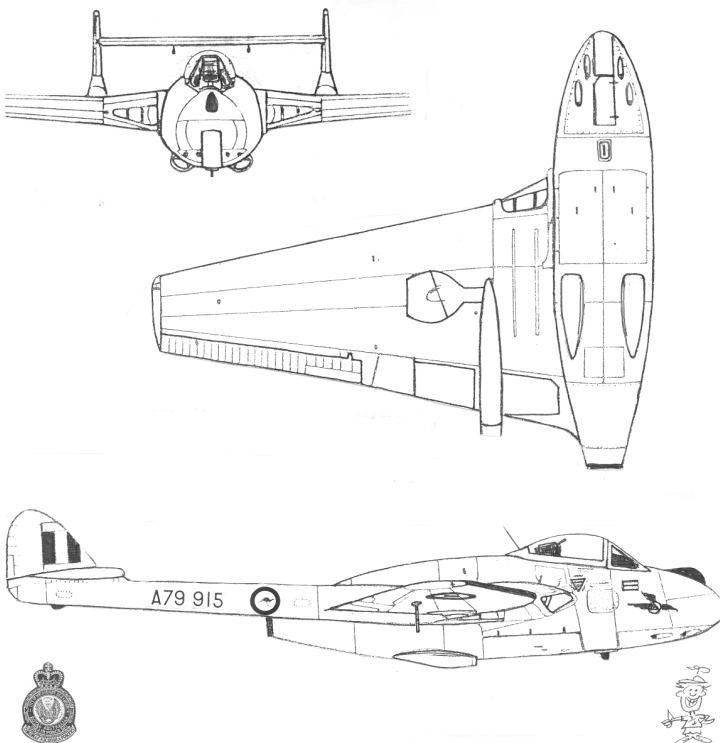
With the advent of the new Airfix 1/48 Vampire I was compelled by a certain fellow at Metro Hobbies to revisit something I did for the Hobbycraft kit 20 years ago, to make a simple FB.31 conversion to make a RAAF version out of the F.3. So, here'tis. Some details of the set here and on the following page I'll point out some things I found when building the kit and adding the conversion.

What you get in the set:

Decals Set A on clear sheet, Set B on white. Polyurethane cast nose section. 3D printed adjustable stand, intakes, 2 chocks, bomb slip and Mk2 MB bang seat. There may be spare intakes as I found them to be the easiest bit to chip. There's also a spare nose bump in there.



These are the drawings I made as used in my original cast set from back last century.



Images not to scale.

So, onto the conversion: Assemble the kit as per Airfix's instructions with the following mods: Before you start be aware the polyurethane part is a bit malleable (on purpose) and the 3D parts are brittle. So careful as you go. This is the reason I supply two sets of intakes as the first thing you'll probably do (if my experience is anything to go by) is chip the trailing edge as it's quite brittle and thin. These steps are presented as a basic outline but have a read of the following page before beginning so you learn from my mistakes!

- STEP 1:** At step 14 omit seat D25 or D35.
- STEP 2:** At step 15 trim the headrest section from part C54 flush with the rear cockpit shelf.
- STEP 3:** When the fuselage is assembled after step 32 trim the ejection seat from the 3D support structure and drop the seat in and adhere against the rear wall.
- STEP 4:** At step 33 trim the resin conversion nose piece from the frame and replace part D30. Massage it in place and achieve a neat fit. Less is more, go easy with trimming and sand carefully. Continue with assembly until complete.
- STEP 5:** Choose which FB31 you're doing (or an FB30 if you want the elephant ears on the top), remove the intakes from the 3D support structure and adhere with Cyano Acrylate glue using the guides here to show where they go. You can use a smidge of Tamiya putty to close any gap and I recommend using a liquid cement or MEK to smooth it out. Alternatively you may have some of that water based filler which is better on the nostrils.
- STEP 6:** If fitted on the airframe you're doing, there's a bump underneath the cockpit which is represented by a 3D piece. Now's the time to whack it on. Then you can use a combination of the decals from the kit for national markings and stencils and the decals provided here to make your RAAF masterpiece. Note that the markings I provide are printed on solid sheets, one clear, one white so items will need to be cut out separately. Experiment with a strip from the edge if you need to but be aware they behave like normal waterslide decals, are relatively thin, have a higher resolution and behave better than the aftermarket set I was originally going to recommend.



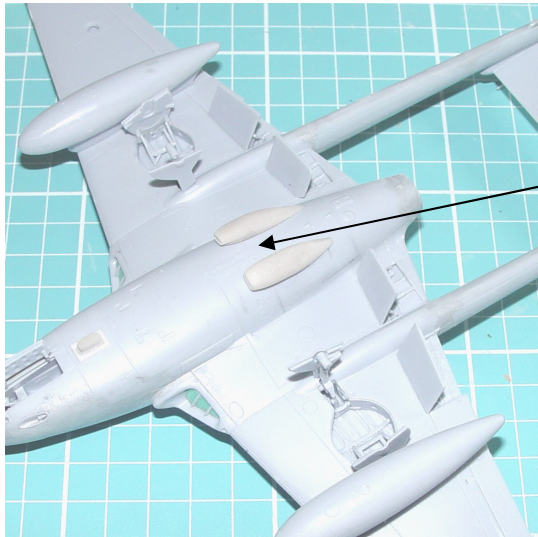
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Here's some notes you'll want to pore over before assembly.

Have a good look at whatever reference material you have for the RAAF Vampires as the wing tip shapes vary. The positioning of the elephant ear intakes are indicated below and not that the exhaust differs from the kit insofar as it has a larger diameter and is a shade shorter. I chose to omit the kit exhaust can, shave a mm off the rear of the fuselage and fashion a FOD cover out of a plastic bread tag to be inserted and cover up the hole. I also made FOD covers and gust locks from plastic bread tags (is there anything they can't do...) as seen here to cover up the holes.

If you do choose to do this make the decision before you start assembly.

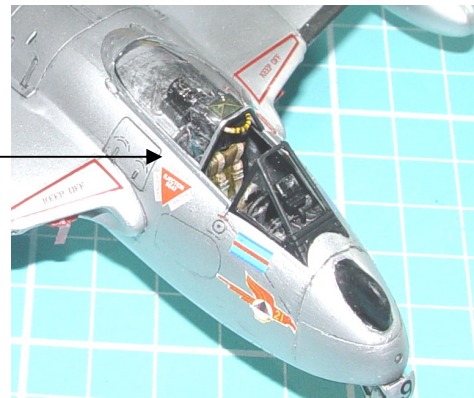
Plastic bread tags are an excellent source of cheap plasticard and are susceptible to solvents and so will take glue easily.



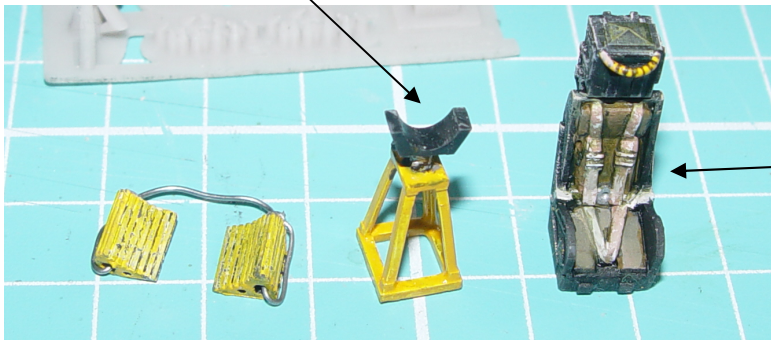
The elephant ears are located mid way on those panels underneath and in a similar position on top for the previous version. The distance between the intakes is 8mm at the closest point between them.



Cut the headrest from the standard kit piece and just drop the seat in hard up against the rear wall.



I've included the chocks and a stand to assist with display of the model. If you don't manage to get the prescribed weight in the nose (see the kit instructions) you can use the stand I've provided to hold up the tail. The trestle position as seen in many photos out there will show you where the stand should go. I made it so the top will click in place and you can adjust accordingly.

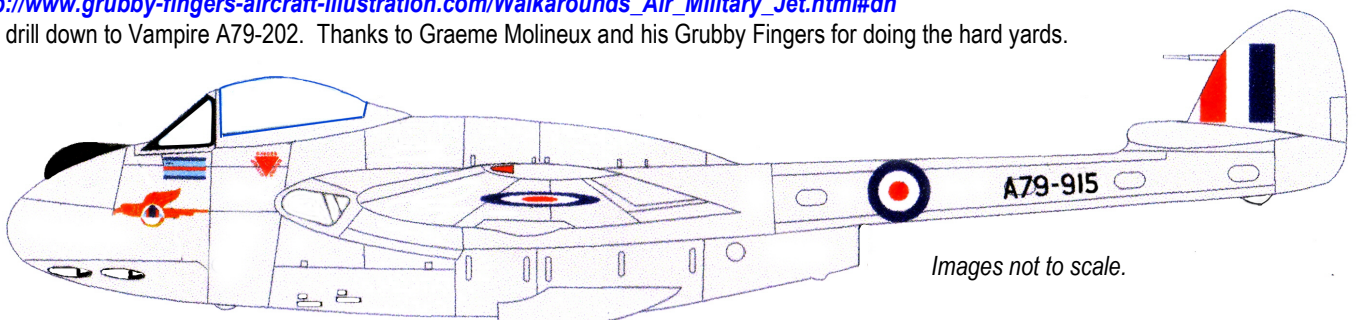


The seat is best just painted overall black, cushioned areas in dark brown, straps in tan, ejection handle yellow with black stripes, all dry brushed lightly with a lighter grey and then ink washed with black over the seat and green over the cushions. (at least that's how I did mine).

If you want to see an excellent walk-around on this subject go to

http://www.grubby-fingers-aircraft-illustration.com/Walkarounds_Air_Military_Jet.html#dh

and drill down to Vampire A79-202. Thanks to Graeme Molineux and his Grubby Fingers for doing the hard yards.



Images not to scale.