



Vampire FB31 conversion for the 1/72 Heller/Airfix kit. (Redux 2022 edition)



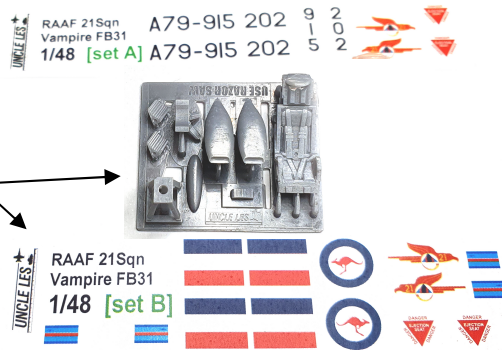
Here's my finished model with the conversion set applied. Check uncles.net to see the full story.

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. As a result of this success there was a request to do the same for a smaller 1/72 kit so I scaled things down and created this set. It's based on the 1/48 set but with only a 3D printed parts and scaled down

What you get in the set:

Decals Set A on clear sheet, Set B on white.

3D printed adjustable stand, intakes, 2 chocks, bomb slip, nose bump and Mk2 MB bang seat. There may be spare intakes as I found them to be the easiest bit to chip. .

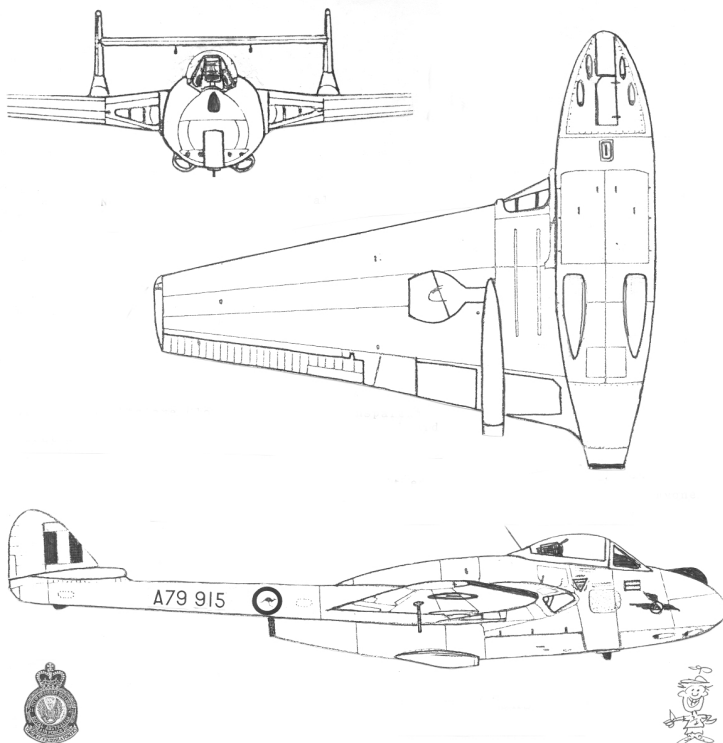


So, onto the conversion: Assemble the kit as per Airfix's instructions with the following mods:

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. I recommend you use a razor saw to remove parts from the frame. They have not been post-cured so they should have at least a little flex.

These steps are presented as a basic outline but have a read of the following page before beginning so you learn from my mistakes !

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



Images not to scale.

STEP 1: Omit the kit seat.

STEP 2: Trim the rear of the cockpit to take the bang seat.

STEP 3: When the fuselage is assembled drop the seat in.

STEP 4: Trim the resin conversion nose bump from the frame and pop it on the nose. 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.



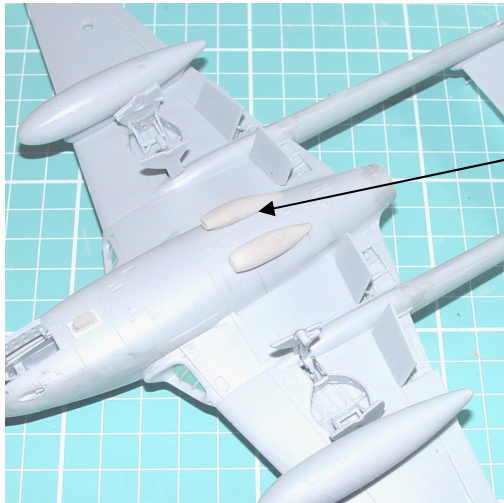
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Here's some notes you'll want to pore over before assembly. I include this but from the 1/48 version simply as a guide as it's mostly the same procedure and of course, it's the same aircraft.

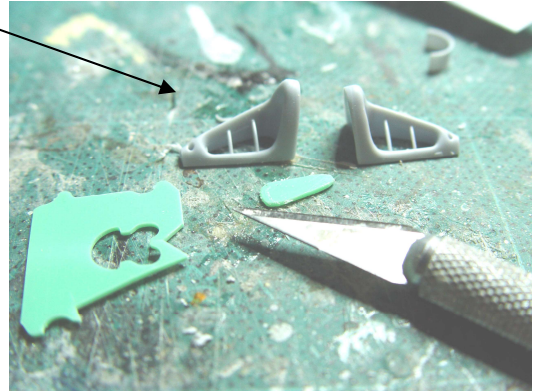
Have a good look at whatever reference material you have for the RAAF Vampires as the wing tip shapes vary. The positioning of the elephant ear intakes are indicated below and not that the exhaust differs from the kit insofar as it has a larger diameter and is a shade shorter. I chose to omit the kit 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. On the 1/48 version 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.

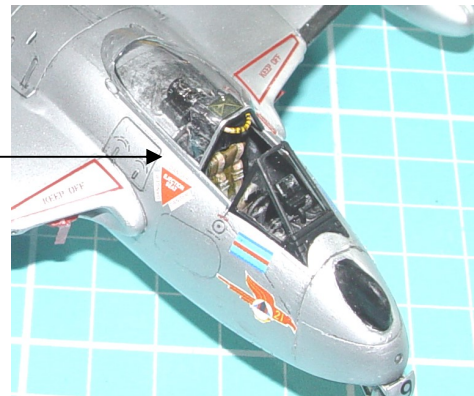
Plastic bread tags are an excellent source of cheap plasticard and are susceptible to solvents and so will take glue easily.



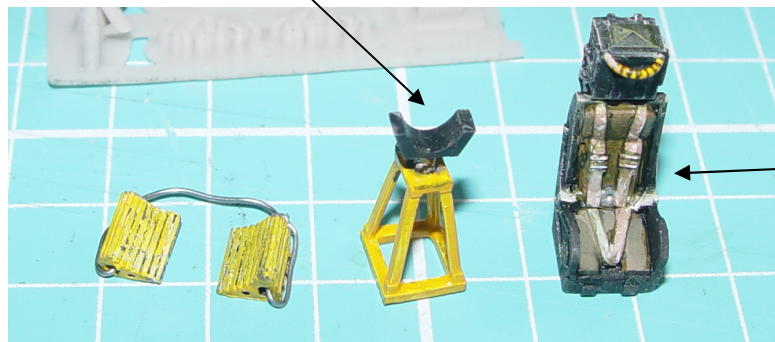
The elephant ears are located mid way on those panels underneath and in a similar position on top for the previous version. The distance between the intakes is ~5mm at the closest point between them for 1/72 scale.



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.

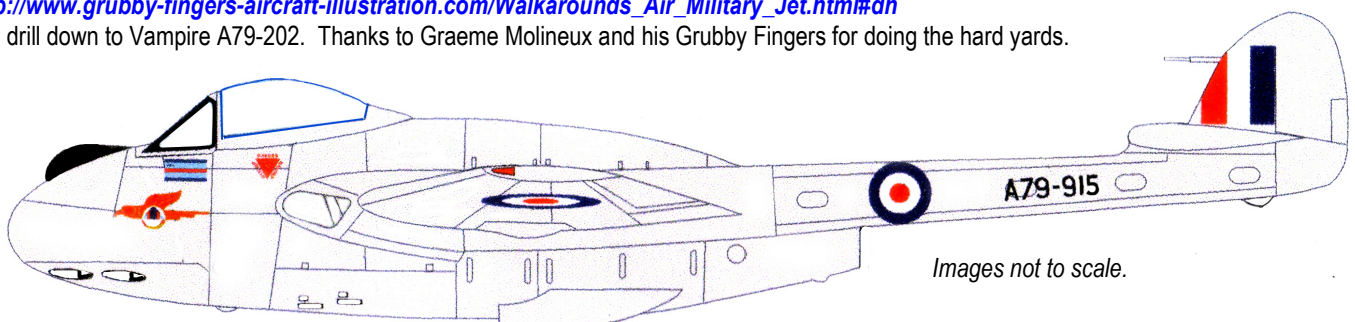


The seat is best just painted overall black, cushioned areas in dark brown, straps in tan, ejection handle yellow with black stripes, all dry brushed lightly with a lighter grey and then ink washed with black over the seat and green over the cushions. (at least that's how I did mine). The chocks are super small at this scale so go easy when removing them. They may

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.