

# Fairey Gannet A.S. Mk. 4

XA414: 236/C, 810 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, HMS Centaur, 1960

By Colin Ovens

Kit: Trumpeter TU01629



## Background

This model is something of a "Golden Oldie" for me, as although it was constructed about six years ago, it brings back memories of the ancient Frog kit (and the awful mess that I made of it) very many years ago.

This kit preceded the equivalent offering from Revell by a few months. I recall that reviews of both kits warned prospective buyers that they were both tail-sitters. I had already built the Trumpeter 1/72 Westland Wyvern and was very impressed with the engineering that went into that kit (in spite of having to construct the gearing for the contra-props, inside the spinner...), and therefore chose to build the Trumpeter Gannet.

## The Build

The kit went together very well- the instructions were very clear and there were no "fit" problems. However, for a "wheels down" option the instructions recommended that the ventral radome be placed in the extended position to prevent tail sitting; I have since seen several of these models at various shows sitting quite happily on their radomes- and frankly it looks horrible, ridiculous, and just plain WRONG! I decided that there was enough space above and behind the nose-wheel bay to "stuff" enough fairly fine lead shot to put the nose-wheels firmly on the deck... How much weight? Goodness knows- it was all done using that well known technique known which involves keeping one's fingers firmly crossed...! It worked.

I was rather taken with the fact that the eight propeller blades, when installed, could be set in the feathered position, something I had never encountered before in a model. I think that it looks rather effective; a few times, at shows, I have been asked whether I had to modify the blades to achieve this effect.

The Trumpeter kit, however, does not have the option for an open weapons bay that is offered in the Revell kit, which probably explains that kit's greater popularity- that and the fact that the Revell

offering is a few pounds cheaper! I was not bothered by the lack of this option in my choice of kit.

One thing that I would draw to the attention of anyone contemplating building this kit (or its sister kit, the Gannet T.Mk.5) is the extreme fragility of the three cockpit canopies. They are beautifully clear- and are VERY THIN. I managed to remove the pilot's and radar operator's canopies carefully from the sprue and fit each over its respective cockpit; I then proceeded to do the same for the observer's (middle) canopy, but, just as I was fitting it to the cockpit, I held it a little too firmly- and split the thing. However, it did not fall in two, so I made a quick decision to carry on with fitting it, leaving it to set firmly in place for 24 hours. On returning to the model, I found that the problem canopy had set very firmly in place, but there was a very visible hairline crack along its length. I very carefully applied a tiny drop of Slater's MEK-PAK to one end of the crack and left capillary action to do the rest. After a further 24 hours, I carefully polished the canopy, finishing it off with a 12,000 grit polisher (a freebie from Scale Aircraft Modelling- the publishers of which I have some little connection). The end result is that although one can still see the crack, it is nearly invisible.



## Finishing

Painting was done with Xtracolor paints, in the standard Fleet Air Arm scheme of Extra Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces, over Sky fuselage sides and under surfaces-a simple, but attractive scheme in my opinion. Paint was applied by airbrush.

The kit's decals are good. They were ignored in favour of an example from 810 Sqn, based on board HMS Centaur, from Xtradecal sheet X72070. I chose this example as this was the final squadron to operate the Gannet in the anti-submarine role. 810 Squadron was the last Gannet A/S squadron to be formed, on April 20th 1959, at RNAS Culdrose, with six Gannet AS.4s. By this time, the Westland Whirlwind HAS.7 had replaced the Gannet as the FAA's anti-submarine platform; however, the Whirlwind was experiencing major engine problems, thus 810 Squadron was formed on Gannets, and embarked in HMS Centaur, in June 1959, for a cruise through the Mediterranean to the Far East and Australia, returning to RNAS Culdrose in April 1960. The squadron re-embarked in Centaur in June 1960, when the carrier carried out exercises around Scandinavia and in the Baltic, returning in July. 810 Squadron disbanded on July 12th 1960, bringing the Gannet's anti-submarine warfare career to an end.

I would thoroughly recommend this kit to anyone with an interest in the Fleet Air Arm during the Cold War.

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