

Episode One

After trying a couple of times to upload content direct to the project system and losing everything, I have decided to type it all up in MS Word, as the likelihood of my laptop taking flying lessons are vastly reduced!

So where to begin, well those that know me are aware of my previous military experience in the Royal Engineers (RE), so it seemed only logical that my first leap into project system and also participation in the Spring-Cleaning Challenge should be around something RE related.

I have been a fan of Flames of War for a number of years and always planned to do a D Day British force at some point (I blame @silverfox for being my Sherman tank dealer!). I have always been interested in Percy (Cleghorn, Stanley) Hobart and his Funnies since seeing the collection of vehicles at the Royal Engineers Museum in Chatham, Kent. Most of these now reside in the Chatham Historic dockyard (birthplace of many a fine ship including HMS Victory) and it is a fascinating place to visit if you ever want a weekend away. Just be wary of the pubs and the locals, you have been warned!

So, I decided @ two years ago to build up a Royal Engineers Armoured Assault unit from one of the two squadrons that landed on Sword beach on D Day (77 & 79 AASRE). In fact, 77 Sqn are still in service today and are part of 28 Engr Regt carrying out specialist C-CBRN (Counter-Chemical, Biological, Radiological & Nuclear) support for the MoD. These Squadrons were part of the 5th Assault Regiment RE, who in turn were part of the famous 79th Armoured Division and detached to support the landings of 3rd (infantry) Division. Alongside 77 & 79 were 22nd Dragoons in Sherman Flails (A & C Sqns). They were also part of 79th Armd Div and were one of the three flailing regiments in 30th Armd Bde. This seems to be a bit of a theme in 79th Armd Div, in that specialist vehicles were set up in brigades of three regiments of three squadrons of three troops. This would appear to be easier to detach usable forces to infantry, or armoured units as required to support a particular action. There would always be a liaison officer attached to the HQ as well, to make sure that once the task was complete the assets were released back to 79th Armd Div for redeployment and not hoarded by any particular General. I've gathered quite a bit more background information so will most likely come back to the historical side of things in another episode, but for now, on with the shiny!

First Gathering

In true gamer tradition I went ahead and bought a load of shiny things before I even started looking at a likely ORBAT and being historically accurate (the rule of cool is hard to fight).

Knowing that I wanted to start a British force (to add to my many Sherman's) I picked up the British starter force from Battlefront. This had the added bonus of three Churchills, which I immediately built as Armoured Vehicles Royal Engineers (AVRE's). The Churchill AVRE is the backbone of any 79th Armd Div force and there were multiple varieties throughout the later stages of the war. The basic version had the 290mm demolition gun, more commonly known as the Petard Mortar, or flying dustbin, as you are actually able to watch the rounds as they head to their target. The front of the tank is up-armoured, mainly as the AVRE needed to get within 80yds of its target. The hull machine gunners hatch was also modified to allow the crewman in that position to load the mortar externally (not an easy thing to do when under fire). Most AVRE's also had special fittings added to the sides of the tank to allow the fitting of the various Funnies to it. Having built two AVRE's, I decided to make the third into a Churchill Crocodile flame throwing tank. These vehicles were crewed by the 141th Regt RAC on D Day (Originally the Buffs). Whilst not strictly part of the initial gapping teams on the beaches, they provided essential support in dealing with fortifications inland.



My first three tanks built and primed in cheap Halfords black primer (hence the colour changes). I also built the 75mm MkVII turrets to be able to run them as late war infantry support tanks.

Where Next?

Having looked at Battlefront, I decided to see what PSC had to offer and snatched up a box of their 15mm Churchills. This was fortunate as having started to look at T'internet I found a great company called S&S models, who do some great conversion bits for PSC Churchill tanks to create more Funnies. From S&S I managed to pick up a conversion set for the Small Box Girder Bridge variant and the Fascine carrying one (more on these two lovelies in a later episode). S&S also do the adaptors so that I could go back and convert the Battlefront AVREs as well as the PSC ones. I finally picked up a set of wading cowls for the Churchill tank and in hindsight I will probably need to buy a few more!





MANY THANKS FOR YOUR ORDER.
I HOPE THAT ALL ARRIVED OK AND UNDMAGED.
IF THERE IS ANY TRANSIT DAMAGE, AND YOU WOULD
LIKE REPLACEMENT PARTS, PLEASE RING OR EMAIL US
AND WE WILL GLADLY REPLACE ANY PART.

(01278) 780193 OR

sales@sandsmodels.com

For instruction please go to:-

<http://sandsmodels.com/assembly-instructions/>

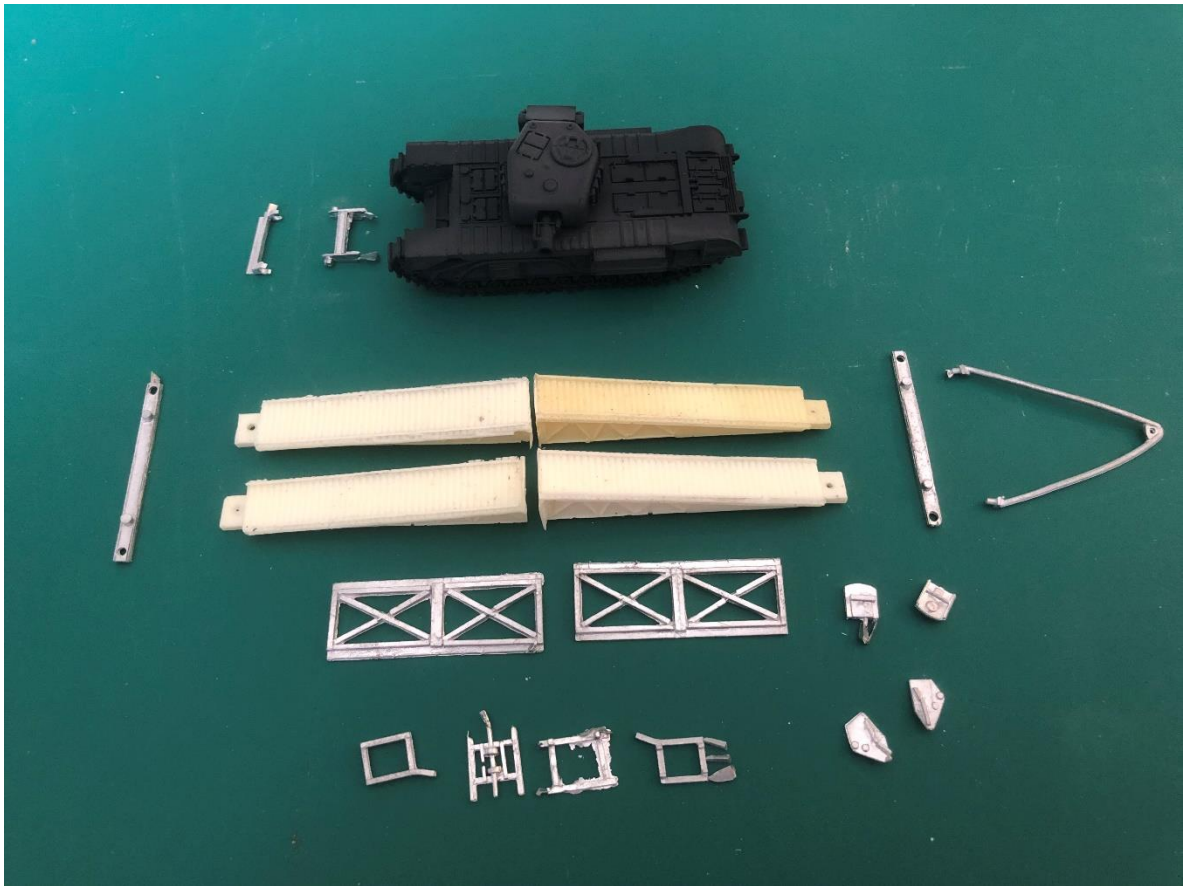
SAFETY

THESE MODELS ARE NOT TOYS AND
THEREFORE SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO
PERSONS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE.
CONTAINS LEAD, DO NOT BREATHE IN
RESIN DUST, ALWAYS WEAR A MASK.
WASH HANDS AFTER HANDLING PARTS.

S&S models goodies!



First up the wading cowl set and the AVRE adaptors (4 sets), they also size up well against the Battlefront model.
The flash on one set, as you can see is considerable!



Next is the Small Box Girder (SBG) Bridge part, there's a bit of flash on these but nothing too much to worry about.



And finally, for S&S, the Fascine variant, A Fascine is a large bundle of pipes, branches & poles to fill in an obstacle, or help get over it.



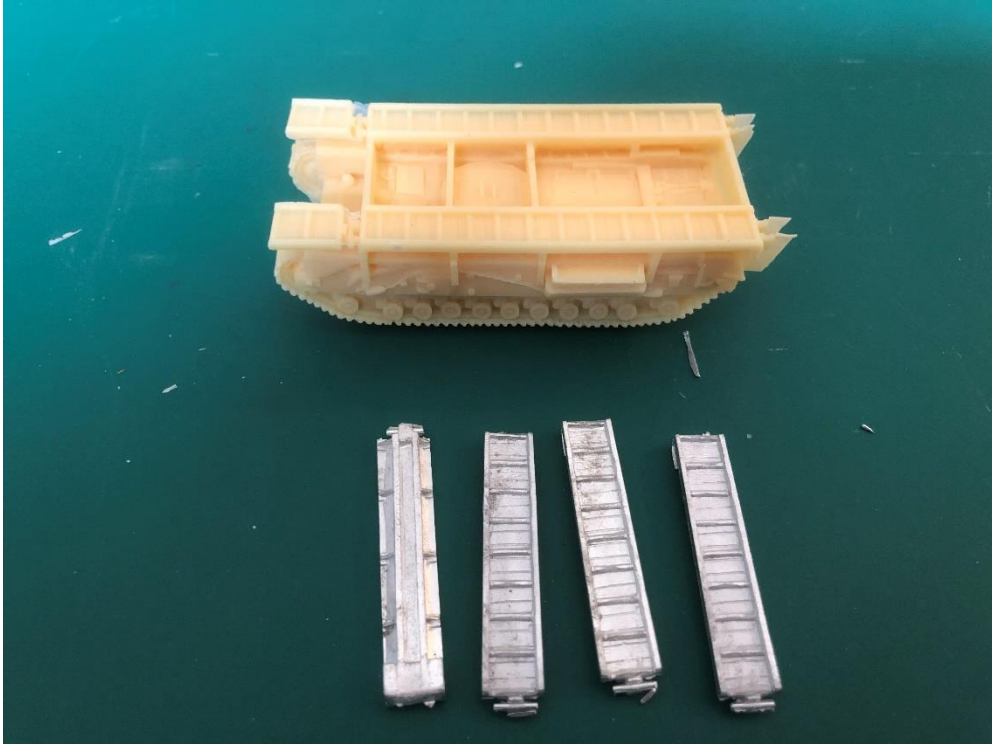
As it would look when fitted to the tank.



And after being laid down.

And finally...For now!?

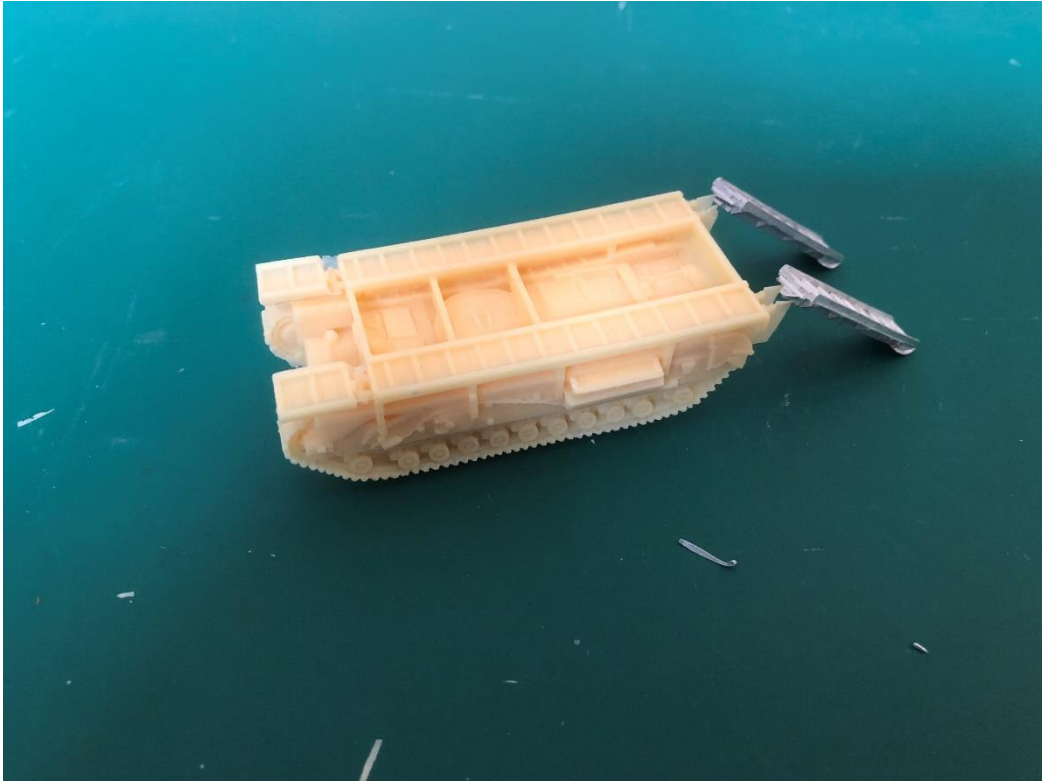
Following on from an announcement on BoW, that Warlord had gone into partnership with SkyTrex to advertise their range of models (including 15mm) I went looking and found yet another honey pot of Hobart related joy!! I'll be honest, I went a bit mad and bought one of everything (or maybe two) all except the armoured bulldozer, which I am regretting now. I managed to snag the following:



Churchill ARK Mk1, identifiable by the equally sized ramps.



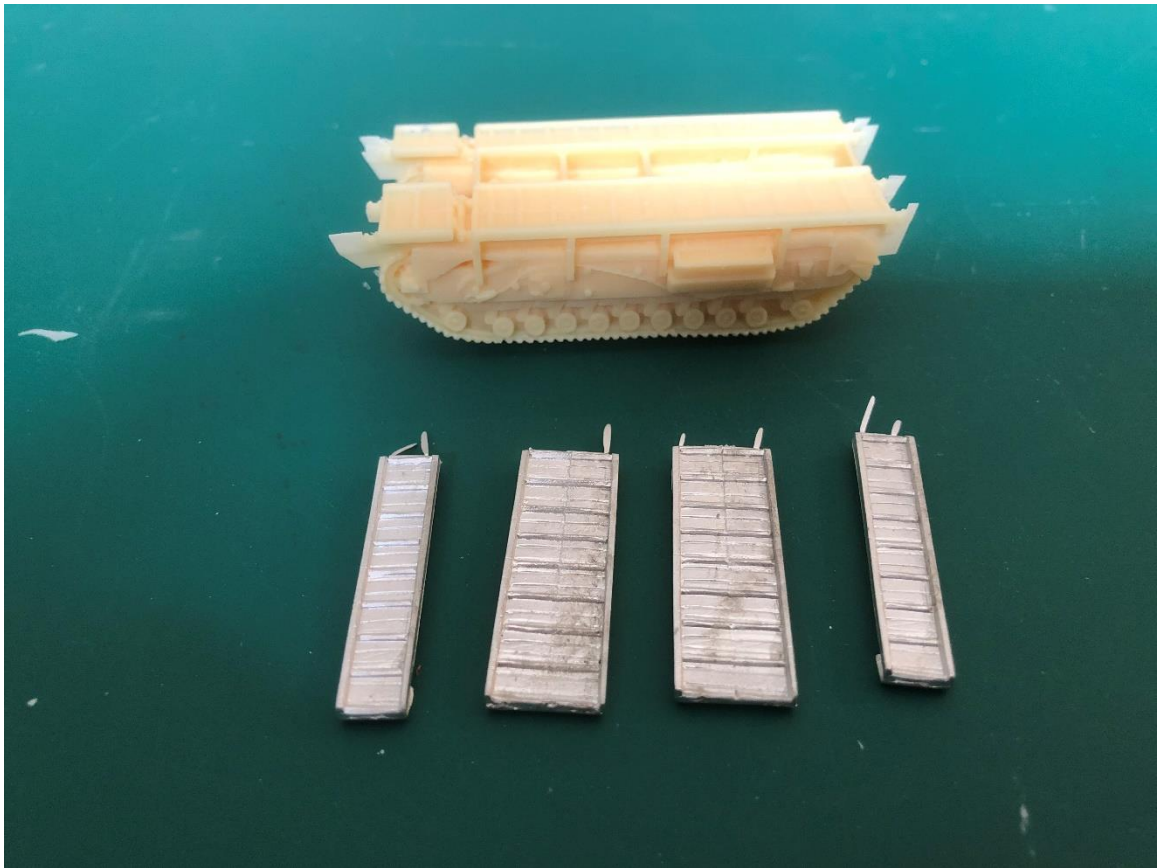
Ramps fitted.



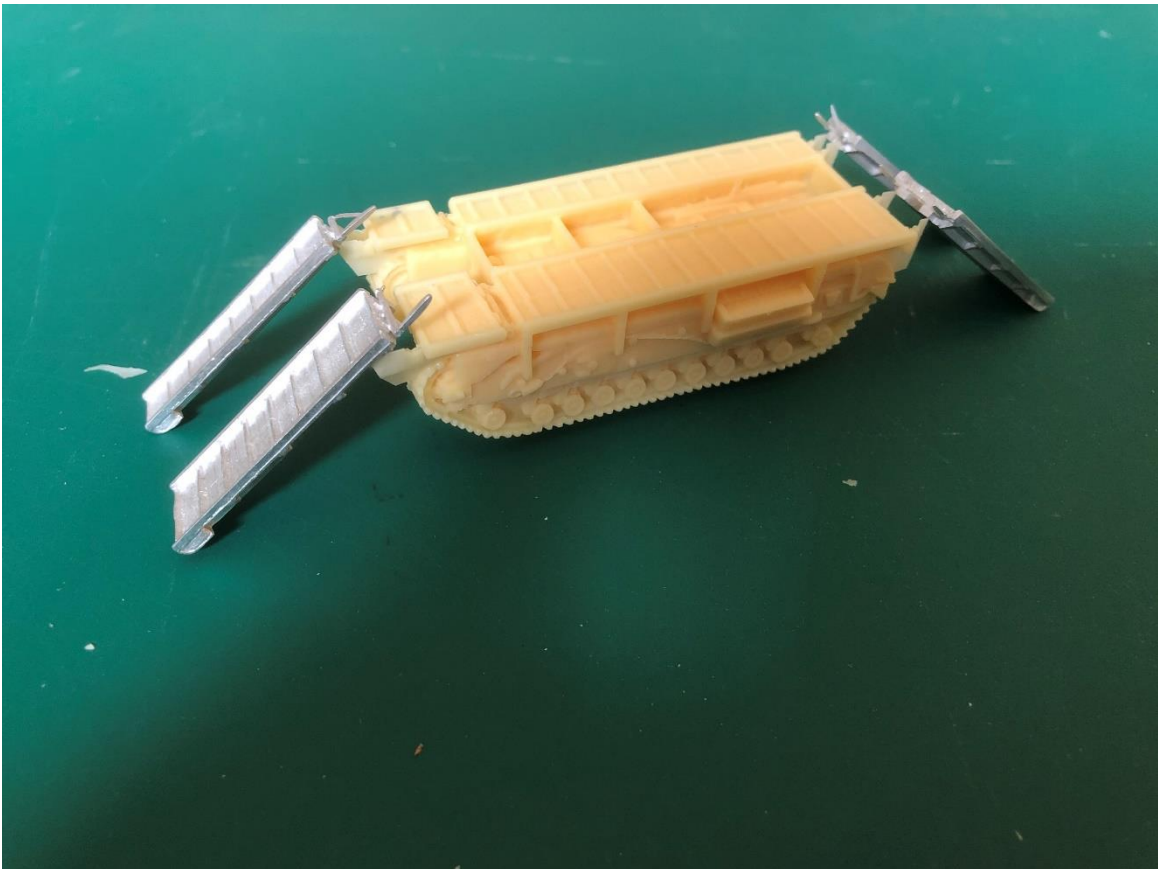
Alternate ramp option for tackling sea walls



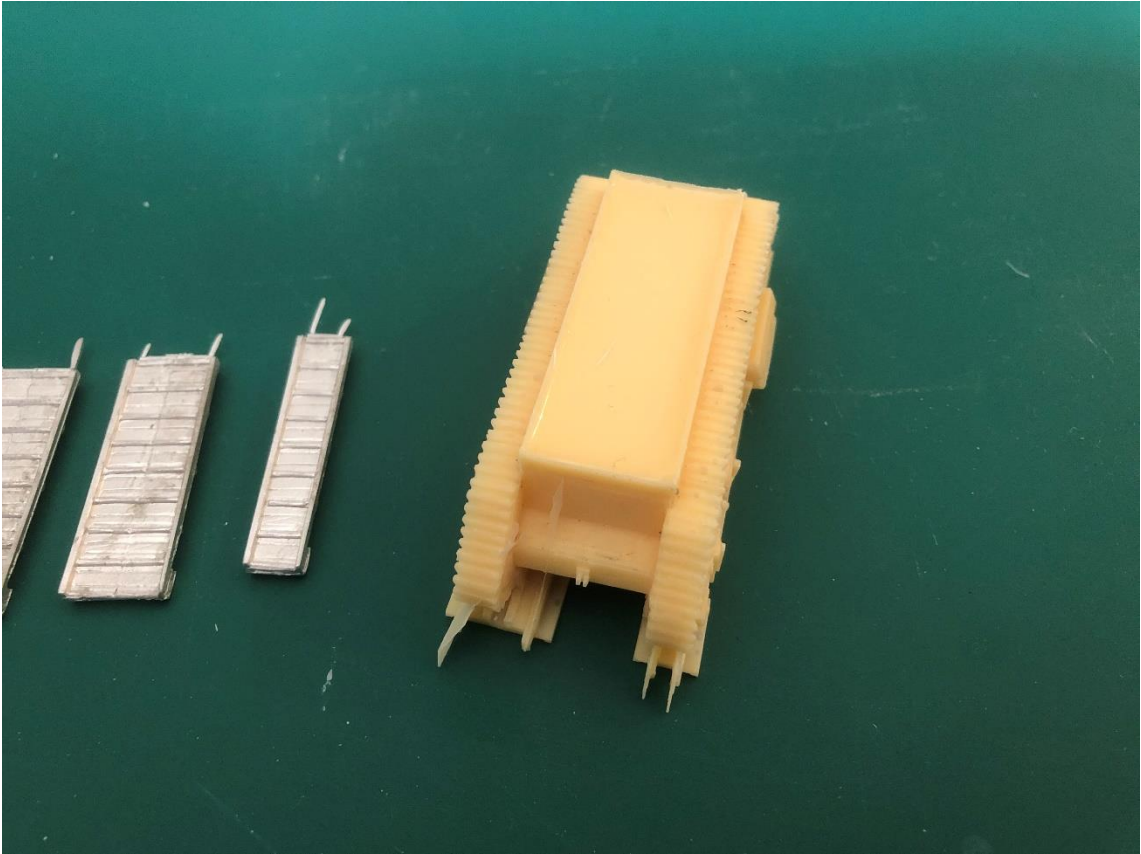
With Fascine (S&S model one), to tackle high sea walls.



Churchill ARK Mk2, one ramp has been made wider to accept short wheelbase vehicles.



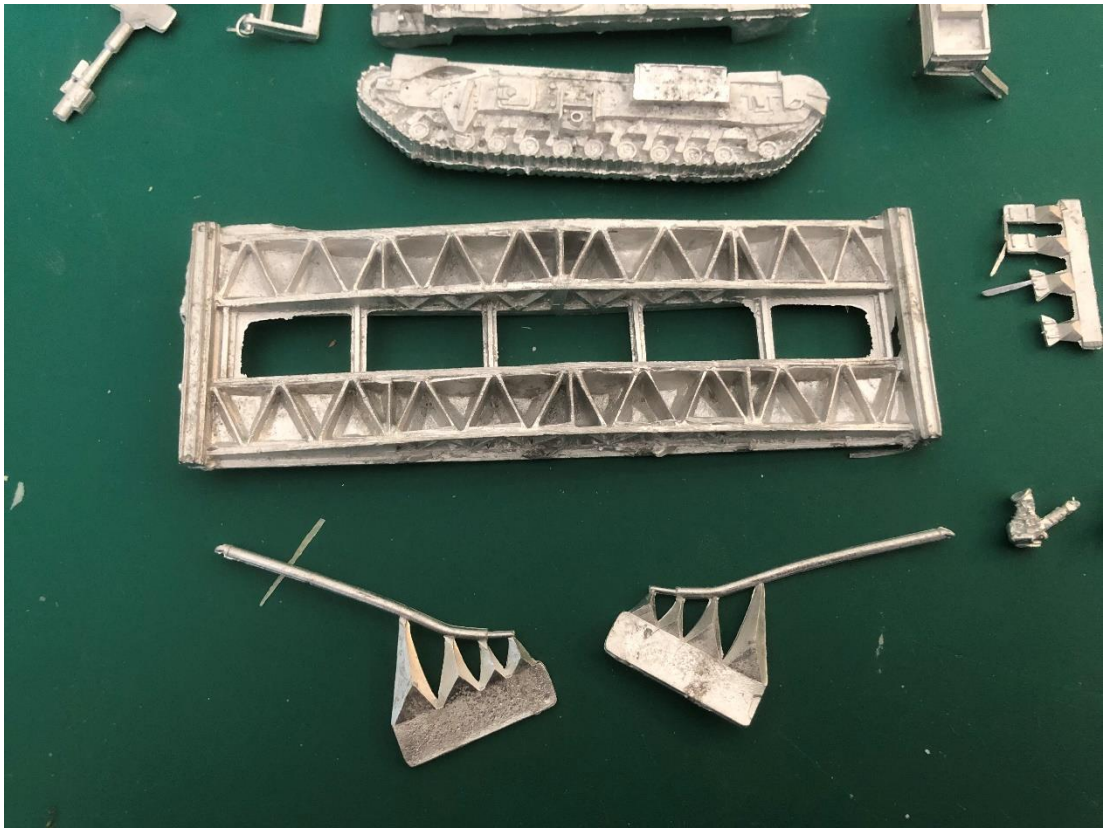
With ramps fitted.



The resin casting process has left quite a bit of flash to carefully remove but I think the plug on the base is going to be the biggest challenge, enter razor saw and Dremel!!



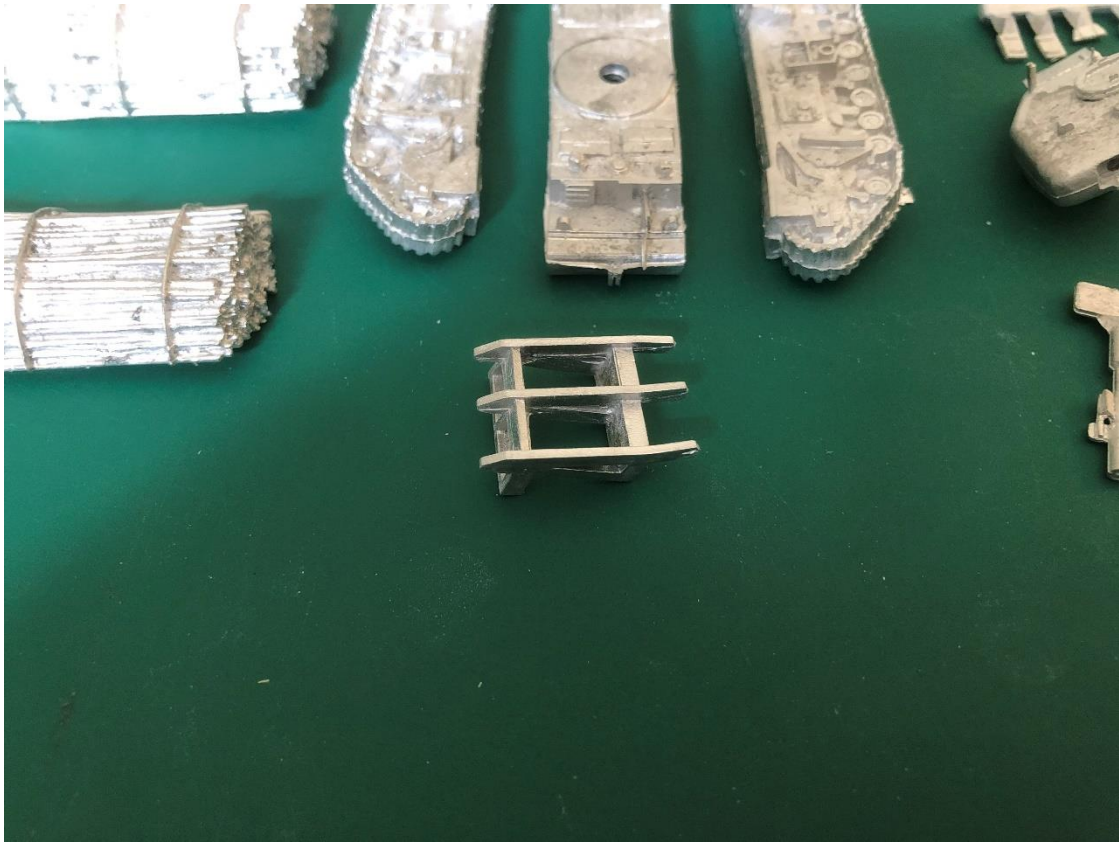
Churchill AVRE with SBG Bridge.



I like the detail added to the underside of the bridge. The story goes that when the bridge was attached to the front of the tank, the rear lower idler wheels would be off the ground. I think with the weight of the metal in this model I might have the same issue!



Basic Churchill AVRE with Fascine, nice addition of crew and hatches.



Close up of Fascine frame.



Two-part construction of the metal Fascine, it locates really nicely and I should only need minimal filler.



Close up of the AVRE adaptors already moulded onto these tanks, it will be a good reference for mounting the S&S conversion bits.



Another Crocodile, well, one would be lonely.... Burn Baby Burn!!



Size comparison with Battlefront looks really good, except the trailer.



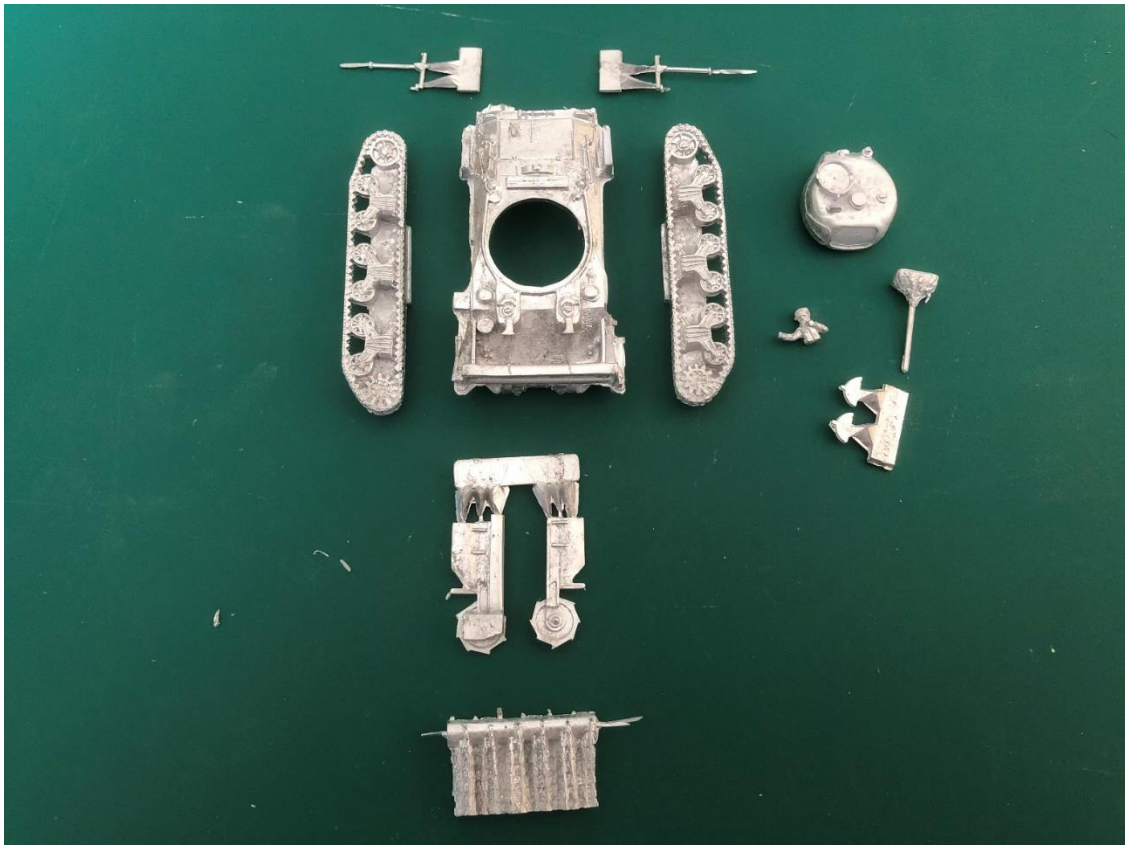
Definitely looks too big...



Or maybe not, it's all a perspective thing. How far away are they??



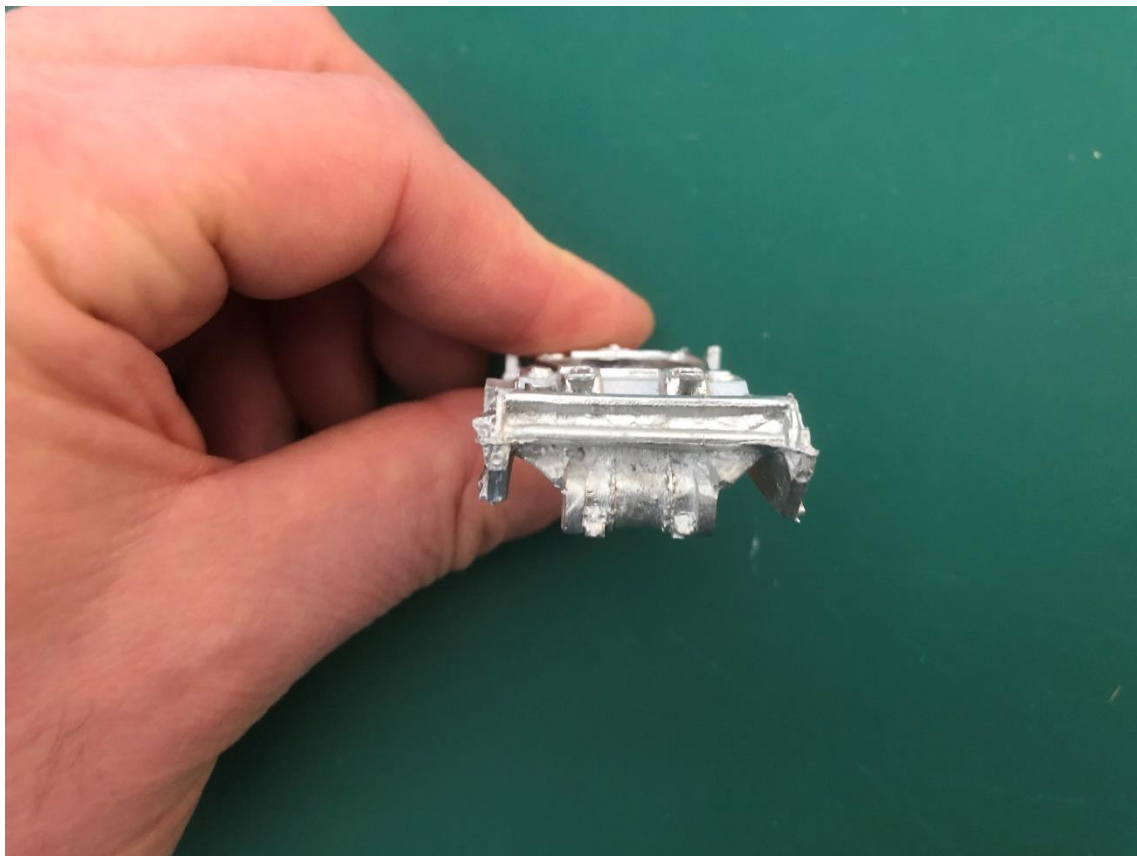
And Lastly a couple of Sherman Flail tanks.



A really nice-looking model.



There's a bit of an issue with loss of detail around the flail fittings but I am going to treat it as mud build up.



Different view showing the loss of detail under the cross arm on the final drive housing.



OK, I lied, I also bought some extra Fascines (size comparison with S&S models).



And some general 15mm stowage.

What's Next

So for the spring clean challenge I want to have the following completed by June:

1. All these models assembled, primed and base coated.
2. Research the background and form up a D Day gapping team for Sword, Queen Beach (Red, or White).
3. Try to see if I can scratch build the missing AVRE funnies for D Day, these being:
 - a. Bobbin Track layer.
 - b. Bullshorn plough.
 - c. Log Carpet layer.
 - d. Boase Bangalore demolition frame.
4. Purchase any other Hobart funny related goodies.
5. Do something in 28mm maybe... you'll have to wait and see!

I have definitely over planned for this in true Monty fashion but paraphrasing him from after Arnhem "it was worth giving it a go"