

‘Major’ Strategy?

a simple 1/35 scale vignette by
Maurice Moffett



This vignette combines my interest in the British Army, World War II and modelling/collecting 1/35 scale military miniatures.

The idea came from a photo I came across in a book several years ago, which depicted three British officers leaning over the bonnet of a Jeep during the Tunisian campaign in 1943, discussing ... what? – the next stage of the campaign? the progress of the war? or were they simply discussing what the weather would be like the following day ?!

After considering the model figures I had available, my vignette finally came out as follows: three British Army majors, one from the 2nd Kings Royal Rifle Corps, one from the 2nd Battalion Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and the third from the Grenadier Guards (1st Guards Brigade), stand beside a Jeep at the side of a country lane in Central Italy in Spring, 1944. Two of them are holding cigarettes as they discuss ... strategy? ... or is it last night's "vino rosso" at the "taverna" in the nearby village?

The Figures

The figures I used for the "Rifleman" and the "Fusilier" (with the walking stick) were slightly converted Hornet metal figures, while the "Guardsmen" was an unaltered metal figure from Cheshire Volunteer. I made a conscious effort to show the variations in uniform and equipment which were evident, even among soldiers of the same rank, in this and other theatres of World War II.

For example, each officer shown here wears a different type of head-dress but all are correct and all were used. The battledress uniform worn by the KRRC officer, being manufactured in Canada, is of a slightly greenish shade of khaki serge, unlike that of the other two officers, while the webbing pistol belts and holsters vary in shade from a pale creamy colour to a pale greenish colour. Also, pistol holsters and pouches are worn in different positions.

I used Humbrol paint for these figures, except for the flesh which was painted in oils. However, I found it easier to paint the small insignia using thinned acrylics.



The Jeep

I used a standard Jeep from Tamiya - the original version, since I had one available at the time and it was already partly built. Slight alterations were made to improve it and again I used Humbrol paints (naturally applied by brush since I don't own an airbrush!). The divisional insignia of the 46th Infantry Division was again painted on with thinned acrylics.

The load in the back of the vehicle and the binoculars on the bonnet came from the scrap box or were scratch-built from balsa and card. The maps, also on the bonnet, were actual WWII maps scaled down numerous times on a photocopier and given a slight tint with water colours to get rid of the whiteness of the paper; then they were dampened slightly with watered-down white glue, positioned on the bonnet and left to dry.



The Base

The base was made from a small piece of mahogany which was cut to size and polished. Then, after masking off the edges, a mixture of cellulose filler (plaster) with some white glue added for strength was spread over the base to create a rough road and a slight embankment. While still fairly soft, some suitable scatter material to represent grass was spread over the embankment and pressed down with my fingers to enable it to stick as much as possible to the plaster. At the same time, the Jeep and the figures (which had metal pins inserted into the base of their shoes) were pressed down into the plaster to form slight indentations into which they would eventually be glued. This was done before painting of the jeep and figures was completed.

Next, the road was painted a “dusty” grey-brown colour and the grass painted various shades of green. A small piece of fence was made from balsa wood, then painted and glued into pre-drilled holes.

Then the Jeep and figures were also glued into position and an application of powdered pastel chalks tied the figures and the road together.

Finally, a small title – *‘Major’ Strategy?* – was made from a brass plate and rub-down letters and glued to the front edge of the vignette.

(When photographing the model my son James used a couple of pictures with an Italian countryside view as a background to the vignette. I feel that this helps to give a more realistic look to the photos and contrasts with the photos shown above without a background.)



References

Osprey (Men at Arms Series) – British Battle Insignia 2
Osprey (Men at Arms Series) -- British Battledress 1937-1961
Wessex Military Publishing -- The British Soldier in the 20th Century