

ELF ASSEMBLY



Above. The assembled Elves.

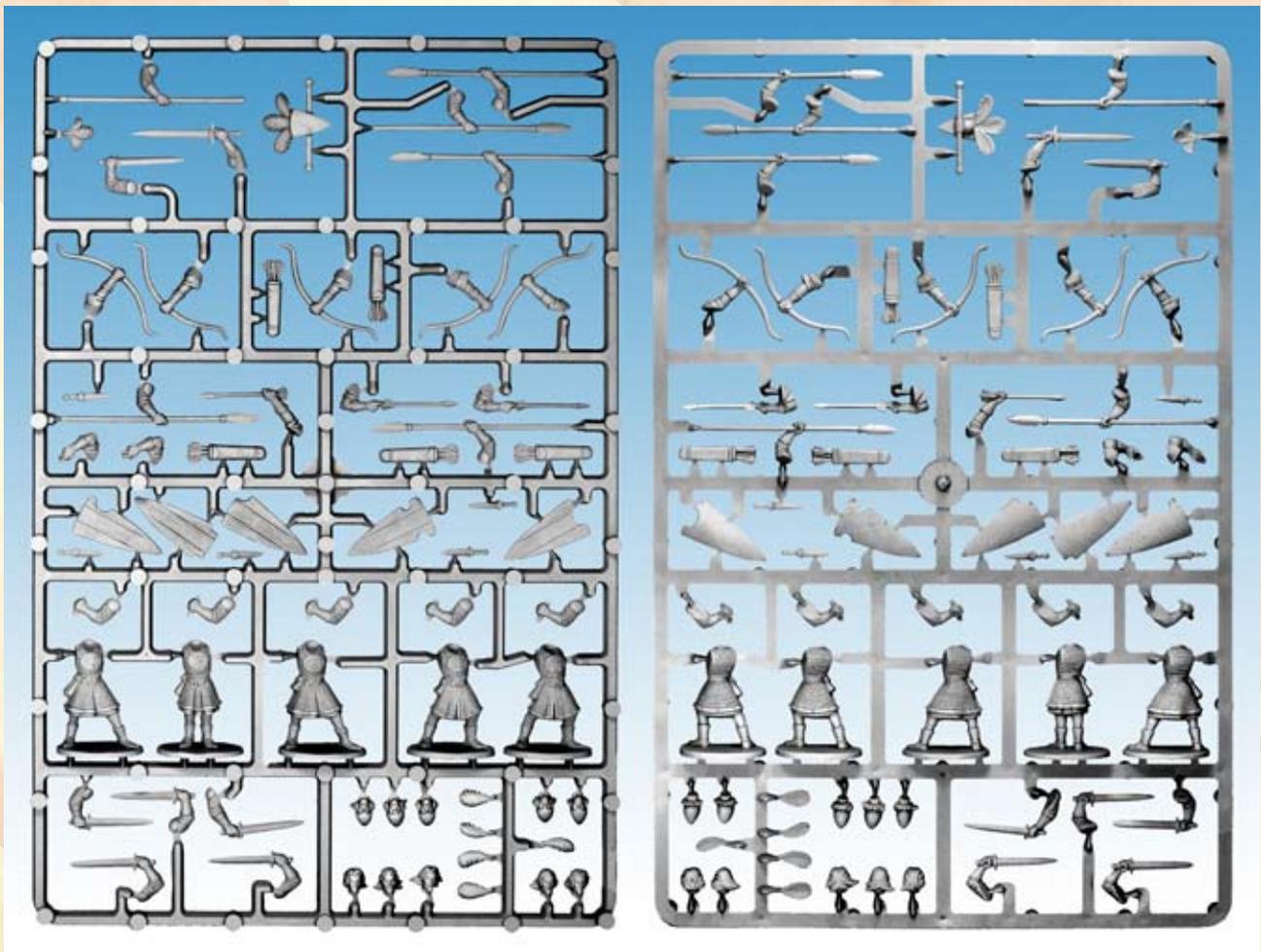
ASSEMBLING THE OATHMARK ELVES

In this short article I will go through the approach I have to putting together plastic kit soldiers, specifically the *Oathmark Elves* but the techniques would apply to any of the numbers plastics now available.

Below. The Elf frames front and back. The box set contains six of the frames, enough to build 30 Elves.

FORGED IN THE FIREFORGE

I was converted to these multipart plastic soldiers by *Frostgrave*, not the *Frostgrave* plastic figures themselves, magnificent though they are, they were not yet made. But it was the *Fireforge* medieval plastics I built, converted and painted as surrogates for the *Frostgrave* soldiers, to use in my photography for the *Frostgrave* book itself. These little chaps opened my eyes to the potentials and pits fall of multipart plastic soldiers.





Above. The work surface and tools.

PRETEND SCULPTOR

The main benefit for me is I can pretend to be a sculptor by trying out different arm and head positions and seeing what looks good, but with the skill level dramatically reduced, I should point out I have no sculpting chops whatever, so they allow me to get a bit of a thrill from “creating” a unique model. I think this significantly adds to the creative experience of our hobby, even if it costs you a bit of extra time. (Only slightly spoiled when you see a real sculptor, like Mark Copplestone, put one of these kits together and start to add things...).

DUBIOUS PLEASURE

So now I have built and painted many multipart plastic soldiers most in 28mm, but I have also had the dubious pleasure of building and painting some of the “3up” prototypes that are the fathers of the smaller final production models. (When being made for production these models are made three times the final size by the sculptor, resin casts are sometime taken at this stage, then they are reduced in scale size during the final production mould making)

THINGS YOU WILL NEED

As follows: A very sharp knife or scalpel; liquid polystyrene cement; small modelling side-cutters (which always seem to have yellow handles); preferably a cutting matt or gash card to work on; old stiff paintbrush; sticking plasters.

HAVING A LOOK

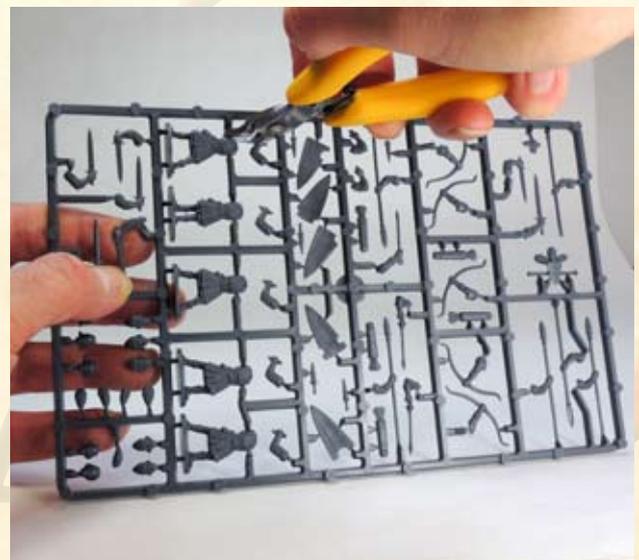
When I am going to put together some of these multipart models plastic figures the first thing is to have a proper look at the sprue and see what you have got. I usually start with a body and then try various parts out to see what I

like, or copy an assembly someone else has done that looks good. (Some people will wash the sprue before attempting assemble, but I have never done this).

DO NOT TRY TO SNAP PARTS

I carefully snip the parts off the sprue with small modelling side-cutters (the one with the yellow handles), the sprue is fairly chunky so be careful, but the plastic itself isn't brittle. Best not to try chopping at it with a knife however, as it may snap in the wrong place, and you may damage other important parts on the sprue or even yourself! Once you have chopped all around the part it should fall out, without needing to be snapped off. I cut off just the bits I think I will for a whole model, body, arms, head and shield. Definitely do not try to snap parts off with your bare hands.

Below. Carefully snipping the parts off the sprue.





Above. Scraping along the mould lines to remove them.

REMOVING LINES

Some of the parts will need the fine mould lines removing before assembly. I cleaned them up with a very very sharp (or brand new) scalpel, scraping along the mould lines to remove these and removing any marks left where I chopped them off the sprue. I have a scalpel blade that I keep just to use for this purpose, I did try having a whetstone handy to keep the blade sharp, but you can't beat a blade that has only lightly touched plastic. **BE VERY CAREFUL OF THE SHARP SCALPEL**, I wasn't and have two cuts in my left thumb from it and a chunk removed by my clippers. Once you have successfully removed any mould lines, the fine plastic shavings left should be carefully brushed into your bin with a stiff old paintbrush, otherwise this stuff gets everywhere because of the static charge in it.

DRY RUNS

If you aren't sure about how to assemble the parts, you can hold the bodies up to the arms while still on the sprue and see if those will do, or have a dry run with



Above. Plastic shavings carefully brushed into your bin.

some Blu-Tack and see what works to your satisfaction. If you are inexperienced with these kits, always try out an arrangement somehow before you commit it to gluing. You can kind of tell what's going to be successful once you have done several hundred, but seriously, do study what good sculptors like Mark Copplestone do with their models and you will soon get the hang of it. After a while you will be shelling them out like peas.



*Above Right. Holding the body up to the arms while still on the sprue and see if those will make a good pose.
Below. Dry runs with some Blu-Tack to see what works to your satisfaction, the shield is just held in place.*





Above. A tiny amount of cement applied to the arm.



Above. Press it to the body and hold for a short while.

ASSEMBLING ELVES

I usually glue the arms on first, and then I can see approximately which way the figure needs to be looking and then glue the head on accordingly. Apply a tiny amount of cement to the arm then press it to the body and hold for a short while to sort of tack it in place, you will still have a while to reposition it if you are not happy. Once you are happy with the position you can apply more liquid cement to fix it in place. Then carry on attaching the other bits to complete your figure.

THIS IS NOT ABS

You can use any sort of good polystyrene cement; I use thick and thin types as the need arises. The thicker ones can often be useful for tack things into place, they take slightly longer to cure so can be useful if you do a lot of repositioning, then do the final gluing with the thin liquid cement. This is not ABS however; you won't need anything terribly aggressive. Some people swear by superglue but that has its own issues. Any of these cements are quite

Below. Once you are happy with the position you can apply more liquid cement to fix it in place.



serious stuff, so make sure you follow the manufacturers instructions at all times.

A CHANGE OF HEART

When I had finished assembling two of the blighters I suddenly decided I would give them feathered plumes, so I went back to the sprue. The plumes are quite small and have a high risk of being eaten by the carpet monster if dropped, so I gave these a quick clean up while they were still attached to the sprue, then snipped them off and finally trimmed up the point where they will be attaching to the helmet.

SMOOTHING OUT

To smooth out the places where I have cleaned off any mould lines I go round with the liquid cement carefully "painting" over these marks just enough to soften them a bit. Do this possess very gingerly as you can easily swamp the figure in glue if you are not very careful. This painting also melts any fine dust that may have been left by the

Below. Liquid cement carefully "painted" over clean up marks just enough to soften them a bit. .





cleaning up process. The shininess of some parts of the figures in the photos is an unfortunate side effect of this glue painting. If you have any small gaps or discrepancies in the fit of any parts, try filling the gap with a tiny off cut of sprue, then “painting” over it with your cement till it softens and melts into place. You can then trim this with your sharp knife to make a clean job of it.

SOME MORE ELVES

It is difficult to stop at assembling at just one or two of these figures, it is so additive once you get the hang of it, and so I finished off the sprue and put all five together. Also it’s hard not to start to mess about with them, I couldn’t do too much here, but I couldn’t resist giving the

bareheaded elf a discarded helmet on the floor beside him. This is from one of the five spare heads I have left on the sprue, trimmed down to just the helmet and cemented in place with a matching plume.

Leave them to harden at least overnight, the plastic takes time to regain strength after having been melted by the cements.

The Next Instalment. Painting Elves.

This Page. Most of the fully assembled Elves, now just waiting for a paint job.

