

# BUILDING A SET OF FRIGATES

As I prepared my fleets for the upcoming convention of the Seven Years War Association, I found myself suffering from the same malady that afflicted Lord Nelson when he wrote to Earl Spencer from the mouth of the Nile, that "Was I to die this moment, 'Want of Frigates' would be found stamped on my heart." I was attempting to fill out the Order of Battle for the opposing French and British fleets that met off Lagos in 1759, and I found that I was lacking a British 90, a French 80 and 74, and several small frigates (as well as the two British fireships, but as they were unlikely to play a significant role in a scenario on the open ocean, I chose to let those pass.)

I thought perhaps I could save a little time by building four kits at the same time, hoping that economies of scale would have an effect, and I decided to document the process as well, as an example for those who intend to build large fleets with my 1:900 scale kits. I commonly build multiple kits at once, but I had never documented it before.

I first printed out all the parts and sail sheets necessary for four frigates, plus a couple extras just in case an error during the construction left me short of useable parts, so that I wouldn't have to interrupt the process to go print more since the printer is in the library and not the workshop:

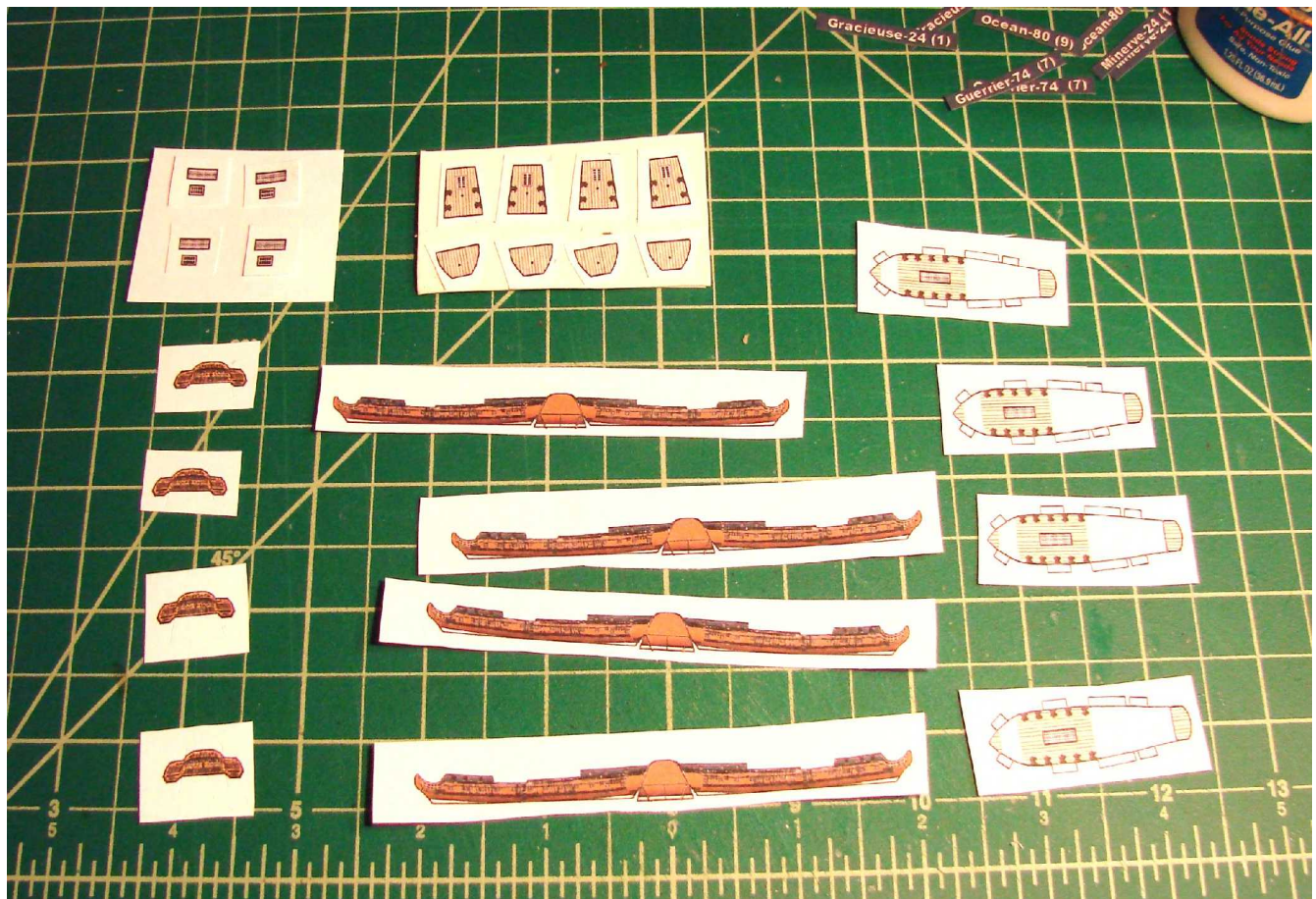


These sheets were then sprayed with a matte fixative to seal the ink and prevent smudging, and I poured a generous two fingers of good single malt to help steady my aging fingers. One coating of fixative was sufficient, but repeated applications of single malt proved to be efficacious. This, of course, occasioned some delay as I strolled down the hall to get a resupply from the bar, as did the frequent pauses to relight my pipe, hurriedly packed between steps and stubbornly refusing to stay lit.

For reference, the squares on the green cutting board are .5 inches.

First I rough-cut all the necessary parts for the hulls, making a little game out of separating them from the parts sheets with the fewest number of cuts, just to give myself a little head start on the total time. The indicated fold lines were all scored at this step, before the parts were trimmed.

Elapsed time: 10 minutes.

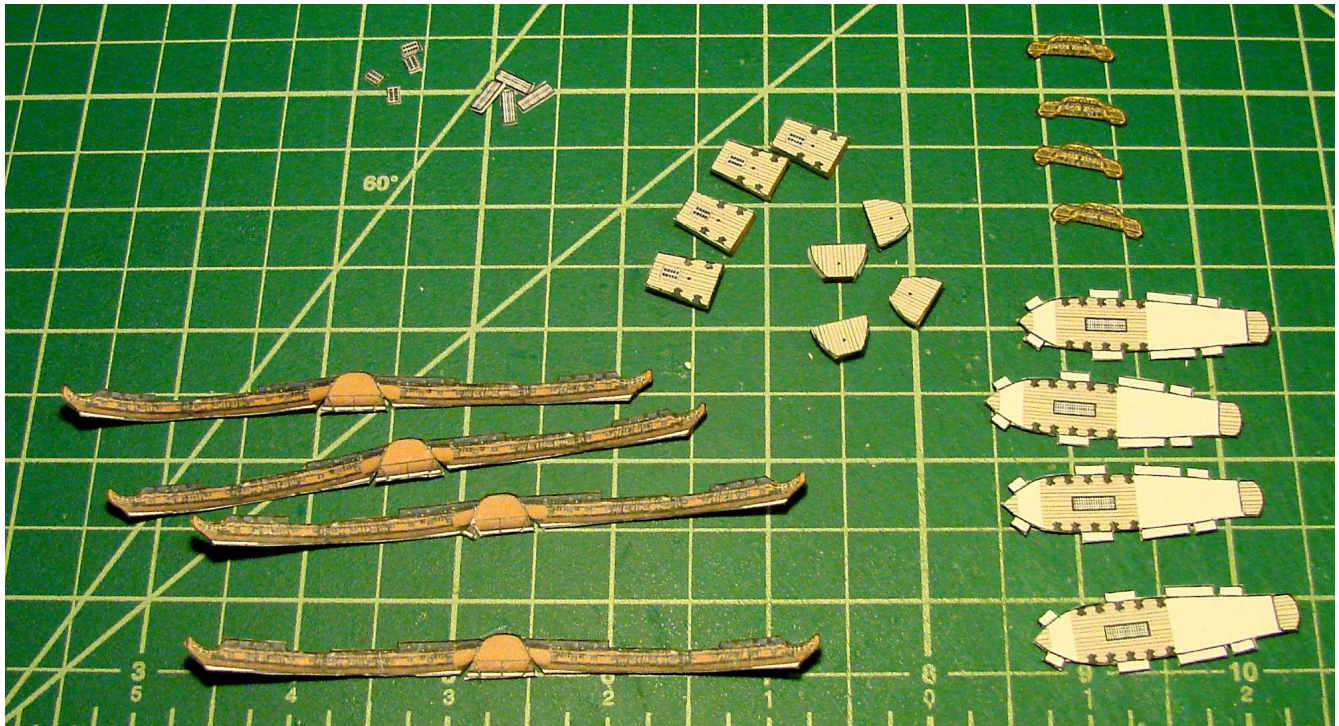




The next step was to glue the laminated parts (in this case, just the deck pieces) to a double thickness of tagboard, so they would dry while I was working with the other parts. The remaining parts were then carefully trimmed, and the edges tinted to cover up any exposed white. By the time this was done, the deck parts were dry and I could safely trim and tint them as well.

Elapsed time: 35 minutes.

Total time: 45 minutes.

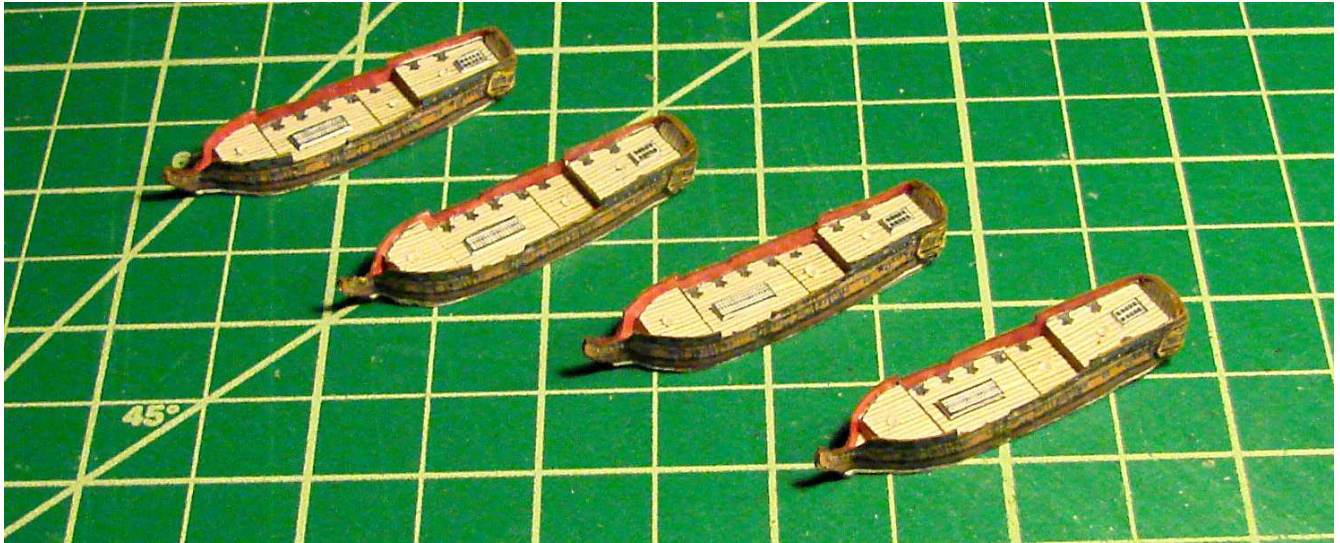




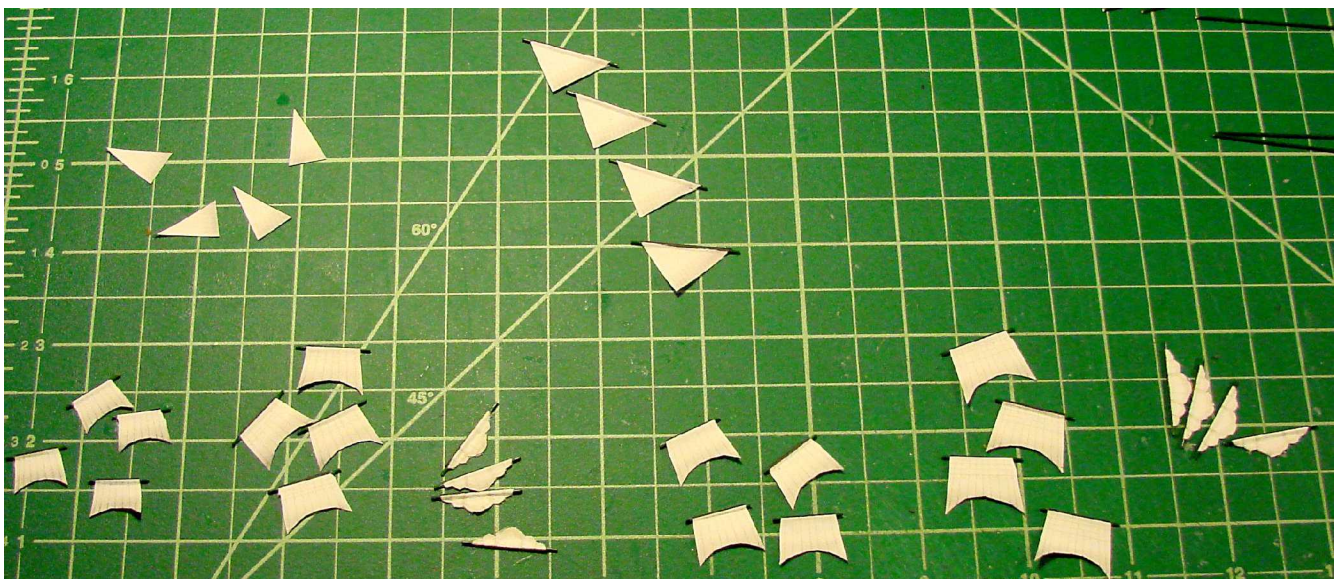
Once the parts were prepared, it was time to begin assembling the hulls. Here the advantage of doing multiple kits at once really began to be apparent, as I could do one step on the first hull, then leave it to dry while I cycled through the remaining three, and the first hull would be ready for the next step by the time I returned to it.

Elapsed time: 1 hour, 11 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, 55 minutes



With the hulls complete, it was time to move on to the masts. To begin, I needed lots of sails. Lots and lots of sails.

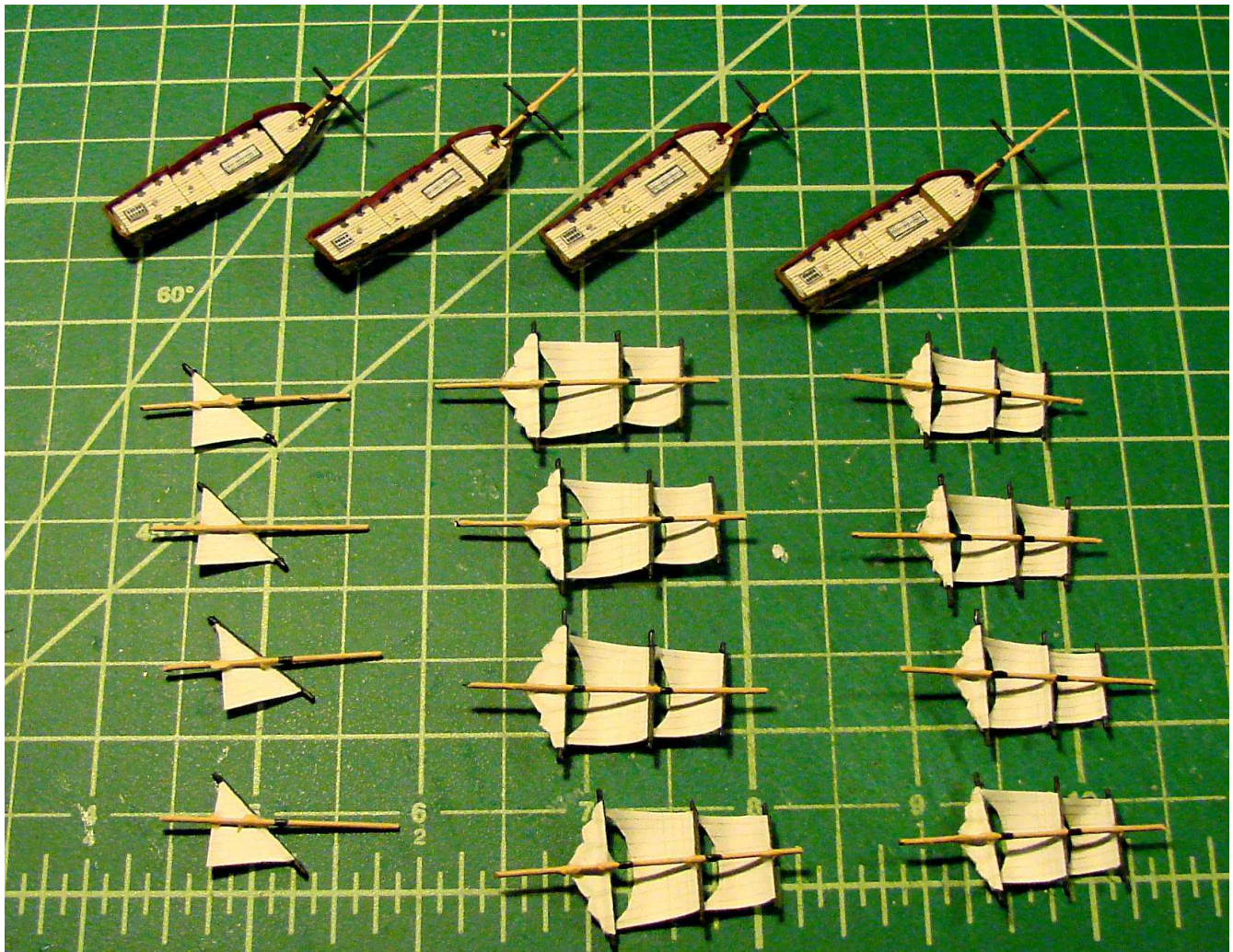




Putting together the 32 sails and yards and assembling them to the masts was by far the most time consuming step of the construction. I also added bowsprits and sprityards to the hulls at this point, so I could do the painting of all the wire at the same time. I suppose I could save even more time if I could find wire in a nice tan color, but the easiest wire for me to find is florists "stem wire", which only comes in dark green. I could use bare wire, but the green coating on the florist's wire acts as a primer for the paint, making it much less likely to wear off with the handling that is inevitable with wargame miniatures.

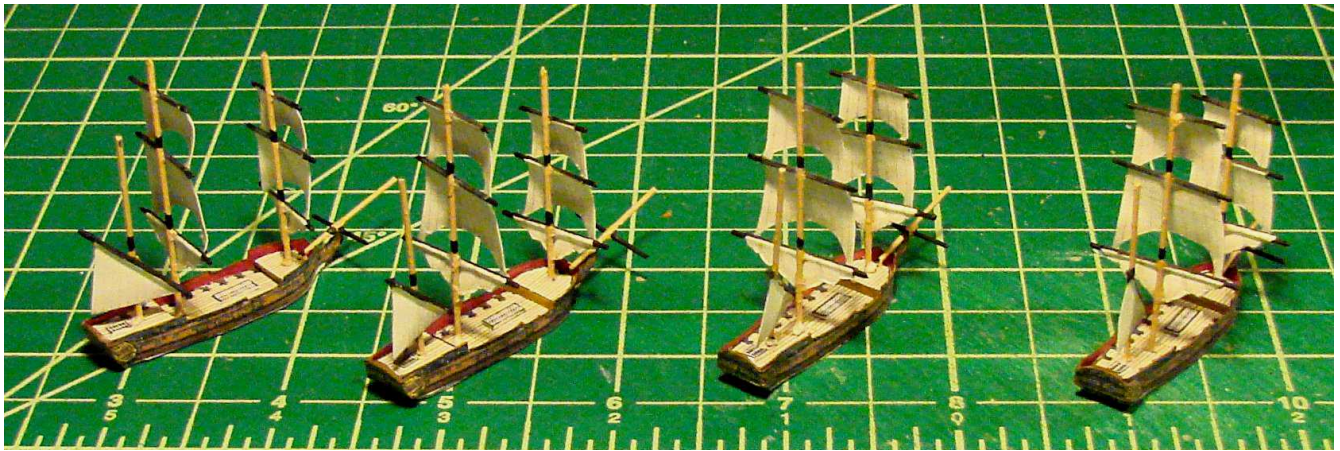
Elapsed time: 2 hours, 15 minutes

Total time: 4 hours, 10 minutes



It was a matter of only a few minutes to step the masts in their respective places, making sure they were perpendicular before the glue dried, and securing them underneath the hull with a generous blob of glue:





They looked pretty good at this point, but the rigging is the feature that really makes an impression on the game table. This step involves the largest number of individual parts (I used 60 individual pieces of rigging on each ship) but it goes quite quickly, especially when you've had a little practice. (For more on this subject, see the rigging tutorial on my Workbench page: <http://warartisan.com/workbench>). And there they are! Four swift and deadly vessels, ready to base and join their respective fleets.

Elapsed time: 1 hour, 50 minutes

Total time: 6 hours (or, one and a half hours per frigate)





Here's a closer shot of one of the French frigates:



And here's one of the British frigates, based and ready for action:

