



the alloy is predominantly lead. By 1935 the aircraft range was sufficiently well-known that the German armed forces used supplies of them as training models during the Spanish Civil War. The thin cross-sections of 1:200 aircraft wings and empennages created design and service problems for Wiking. Aircraft cast in lead alloys were either unacceptably subject to bending and breaking or were unrealistically thick. Mr Peltzer had read about work with injection moulded plastics and became an early convert. Plastic allowed Wiking to introduce delicate models like the DFS Glider and to manufacture models that had the primary colour cast in place, required little hand-finishing, and could be shipped with no fear of breakage. The first plastic Wikings predated Frog kits by a matter of years. It should be mentioned that Wiking, along with other early plastic model makers, were slow to develop shell (ie hollow) designs for their products. Aircraft were generally made as solid, one-piece mouldings, and the producers found some very ingenious ways of preventing sink marks that would otherwise occur as plastics cool and harden. Some kit makers today could well profit from studying 1930s technologies. A unique feature of the 'Cyanolit' plastic used by Wiking is that it is incredibly durable. Whereas Frog, Cruver, and other early injection moulders typically used cellulose acetate (which has a projected service life of circa 30 years and is sensitive to heat, light, moisture, and acidic conditions), Cyanolit was developed for harsh applications like radio cabinets and ash trays.

To be continued in avia mini vi

WIKING B&V Ha140

By Ron Crawford

FOR AS LONG as I have collected Wiking aircraft there have been rumours of various aircraft models that could not be documented. In some instances the models actually appear in Wiking brochures or preserved correspondence. One example has been the Blohm und Voss Ha140. It appears as late as 1945 in a product information notice, although the aircraft was then several years out of service. Optimistic collectors have long listed the Ha140 and similar models in their search lists. When their faith wavered, sure enough another possible sighting would be reported. In the case of the Ha 140 we received a report in the late 1980s that a chap in Moravia actually had one. However, the alleged owner never answered my letters, and he was a man of such unpleasant reputation that none of my local contacts would even agree to contact him. He later sold his enormous collection to another American collector, who told me that the Ha140 was not among the models acquired. The mystery continued. Last autumn I had coffee in Prague with an aged and infirm Czech Wiking collector. He had personally known the first collectors who mined former German bases in Moravia in the 1940s and 1950s. He hauled out his scrapbooks and files, and right there in living black and white was a picture of himself holding, you guessed it, a 1:200 scale Ha140. The Wiking Ha140 does justice to the less than artistic or commercial success of the prototype. The model is in standard wartime RLM grey plastic. It bears the WM logo under the port wing and original Wiking German crosses on the topsides. Regrettably some past owner felt compelled to paint the underside and canopies in light blue and to add some other decals. I verified the authenticity by holding a wing in boiling water, but I have not yet summoned the courage to strip a one-of-a-kind model. Does that mean one of us will find the original C-54 Skymaster or one of the Gothas? Keep the faith! The Ha 140 only took me 20-plus years.