Belcher Bits BL6: RCAF Firebee Drone set 1/72

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Background

The RCAF took on strength a number of Ryan KDA-4 Firebee drones in 1958 in support of Sparrow II trials, proposed for use with the CF-100 and to be developed for use with the CF-105 Arrow. These trials were conducted by the Central Experimental Proving Establishment. Two Lancaster 10MR (KB848 and KB851)were modified as Drone Controllers to carry the Firebee drones. The aircraft were the most colourful Lancasters in the RCAF with extensive patches of dayglo on nose, tail and wingtips (although Sparrows can't see colours, the pilots launching them can!) It was common to see these Lancaster 10DCs with a full load of two Firebees underwing.

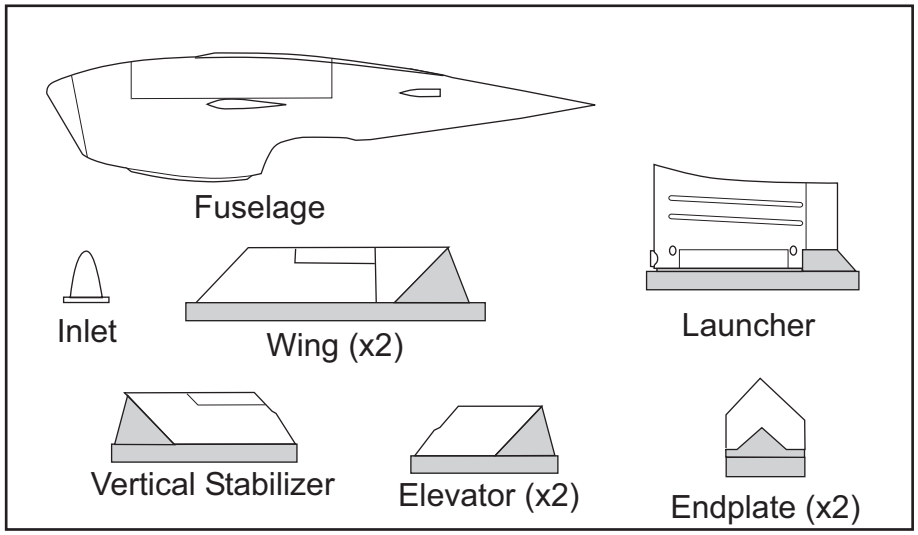
First Steps

Like all resin kits, this would benefit from a good scrub with a strong detergent to remove any oils or release agent. Remove all the flying surfaces from their bases. They are all attached on their leading edges, so touch these up with sandpaper to restore a smooth edge. The parts drawing shows by shading what needs to be removed.

Firebee Drone

In this scale, the flying surfaces are very thin but it would still be a good idea to reinforce each butt joint with a small length of brass wire drilled into the wing and fuselage.

The position of all surfaces are indicated on the fuselage. Note that the horizontal tails are in a slightly higher plane than the main wing.



The vertical fin has a pitot tube extending from its leading edge; this can best be represented with a length of wire or fine tubing.

Glue the wings to the fuselage, making sure they are level. Glue the elevators where indicated. Note also that there is a definite gap on the back half of each joint, so only fill the front half. Same thin applies for the vertical fin.

Glue the tailplane endplates on the end of the tailplanes ... where else! Finally, slide the engine inlet cone into the intake and retain with a couple drops of glue

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Firebee Colours

All KDA-4 Firebees in RCAF service were red 9-2 (FS 11310). There were variations: some had white wings, and other photos show this white extended in a band across the top of the fuselage. The top quarter of the vertical stab was left as unpainted fibreglass. This is best represented as a light tan.

The drones carried a 12" roundel on the fuselage just ahead and below the wingroot. They also carried a serial number in white on the rear fuselage. Both these markings are included on Belcher Bits decal BD18, which has markings for the Lancaster 10DC as well as markings for two drones.

Launch Pylon

Remove from the casting base as shown. To represent the sway braces, cut four lengths of 0.040" (1 mm) rod to 0.25" (6mm) long. Glue these into the holes cast in the side of the pylons, angled down at 45 degrees. When set, sand the ends square and glue a small disc under the end of each to represent the sway pad on the end of each arm.

Cut a length of 0.080" (2mm) rod to 0.5" (13mm) long. Round one end, and glue the other to the disc on the leading edge of the pylon. Pylons were overall light grey (exact colour unknown).

The pylons were installed under the Lancaster wing. In this scale, the pylons would be mounted 2" (51mm) inboard of the wingtip, with the leading edge of the pylon just behind the wing de-icer boot.

Ref: Canada's Air Force, Vol.3, p.292