



# Sabot Away!



## Newsletter of the Austin Armor Builders Society

May 2015  
Volume 19, Issue 5



### Inside this issue:

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	2
UPCOMING PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS AND NEWSLETTER ARTICLES	2
FROM THE TURRET	3
BE A HERO, SPONSOR A TROPHY	3
2015 AMPS INT'L CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS	7
AMPS CENTEX ARMOR EXPO 2015	11
JOIN AMPS TODAY	12
NEW ON THE BLOCK	13
BORESIGHT PREVIEW	13
ABOUT US	14
MEMBERS' GALLERY	14

## A Guide to Building Metal Tracks

By Jake McKee

**M**etal tracks are all the rage when building AFVs, so I knew on my latest build (Trumpeter's Sd.Kfz 7/2, kit # 01527) I had to try them. I bought a pair of Friulmodel tracks and dove in. The first

set was totally ruined when I attempted to burnish the links black (ish). Well, not ruined as much as made really great burned out/rusted out tracks. Some day I will put them to work on that particular project.

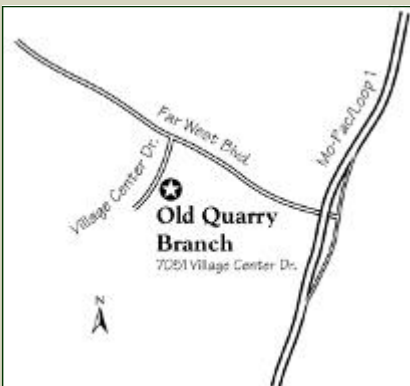
So I started over and learned along the way. Here are some of the lessons

*(Continued on page 4)*

Austin Armor Builders Society (AABS) meets at 7PM each month at the **Austin Public Library Old Quarry Branch**. Our next meeting is on

**May 6, 2015**

Annual dues for full membership are USD **\$12** to be collected at each January meeting. Upon receipt of payment, a membership card will be issued. This card is valid for one year, and it entitles holder to discounts at various local hobby shops in the Central Texas and San Antonio areas.



**Sabot Away!** is the official newsletter of AABS and is published twelve times a year on/before each monthly meeting. Any inquiry on subscription issues or assistance on article contribution please contact editor Eric Choy via email [aabsco@gmail.com](mailto:aabsco@gmail.com).

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of AABS.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ♦ **May 6 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ♦ **May 30 - Scalefest 2015** Grapevine Convention Center  
Grapevine, TX
- ♦ **June 3 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ♦ **June 13 - SoonerCon 2015** South Oklahoma City  
Chamber, Oklahoma City, OK
- ♦ **July 1 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ♦ **July 22 to 25 - IPMS/USA Nationals** Hyatt Regency  
Columbus, Columbus, OH



### AABS Officers May 2014– Apr 2016

**John Talley**, President  
(512) 388-3473, johnwtalley@hotmail.com

**Greg Beckman**, Vice-President  
(512) 539-9018, pgb3476@yahoo.com

**Eric Choy**, Treasurer  
(512) 554-9595, aabsco@gmail.com

**Ted Paone**, Secretary  
(512) 635-9516, theopaone@att.net

**Eric Choy**, Newsletter Editor  
(512) 554-9595, aabsco@gmail.com

**Roderick Bell**, Webmaster  
(512) 507-6104,  
rbell3@austin.rr.com



## Upcoming Program Presentations and Newsletter Articles

Month	Program Presentation	Newsletter Article
January, 2015	Tom Pachalos	Tom Pachalos
February	Tom Pachalos	Dave Bourland
March	Eric Choy	Eric Choy
April	TBA	Milton Bell
May	Jake McKee	Jake McKee
June	Dave Bourland	Aaron Smischney
July	Ted Andreas, Jr.	Ted Andreas, Jr.
August	John Talley	Rick Herrington
September	AMPS Judging Review	Zach Talley
October	Kit Auction	Bill Menzie
November	Kevin Hutchison	Kevin Hutchison
December	Ian Candler	Ian Candler
January, 2016	Ted Paone	Ted Paone

Here is a list of members who are responsible for providing articles for the newsletter and program presentation at our monthly meetings.

Please note any member may contribute as many articles as he/she wants anytime. The purpose of this schedule is to ensure we have at least one article in the newsletter each month.

Prompt submission of your article is much appreciated. The deadline is always **11:59PM on the last Wednesday of the previous month** (e.g. Tom Pachalos' article for January was due on the last Wednesday of December).



## *From the Turret*

**A**nother month has quickly passed. I hope you all have had a productive month of modeling. With our show coming up this fall I hope we're all finding time to make progress on our WWI themed projects. It would be great to hear what you are planning or have already created.

This May marks the anniversary of a couple of memorable events in the history of armored warfare. In May of 1940, 75 years ago, the German blitzkrieg was rolling through France. Five years later in May 1945, the fortunes of war had turned completely, and Germany had been defeated. In that five year period armor technology advanced dramatically as the combatant nations produced over 300,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, not to mention millions of other vehicles.

These images show the height of German armored achievement in May 1940 as it surged unstopably forward in the invasion of France. In complete contrast, the absolute low point for German armor in May 1945 as it laid defeated in a Berlin tank graveyard.



The 2015 AMPS International Convention was held from April 30<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and some of our members travelled to Auburn, Indiana to participate in the event. We're all looking forward to hearing about it Wednesday night!

**John Talley**  
President

## **Be A Hero, Sponsor a Trophy!**

**T**he club needs your financial support to host our biennial event this fall (see ad on page 11). There are still a few Best-of awards that need sponsors:



**Best Small Army  
Best Vignette**

**Best Sci-Fi/Fantasy  
Best Junior**

You can be our hero by simply sponsoring one or more of these awards. Each trophy sponsorship is **\$50**. We accept cash, personal check, and money order. For those who prefer to make a mail-in payment, our treasurer's address is

**Eric Choy  
13213 Marrero Drive  
Austin TX 78729.**

Please **DO NOT** send cash by mail. Be sure your check or money order is made payable to "AABS."

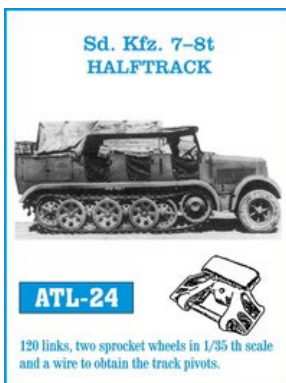


(Continued from page 1)

that I ascertained, in no particular order, and they personally work well for me. Your mileage may vary.

## Construction

On my first set I cleaned up each link one at a time. For my second try, I started a production line instead.



1. Clean up any burrs or other imperfections. In the Sd.Kfz. 7 set, the imperfections are all basically in the same spot on every link. I cut them out with a brand new scalpel. Remember that the metal is super soft. A little pressure on the blade goes a very long way.

2. Find the right size drill bit, chuck it up in your pin vise and hollow out both of the two track pin holes on each link. Yes, only some of the pin holes are clogged up, but it's faster to run through every hole than to inspect and decide which ones to drill out. Plus, there have been times when I found that a hole \*looked\* clean, until I tried to put the wire pin in and it wouldn't go all the way through. Easier to take three seconds to run the drill bit through in your production line than having to stop your track building process mid-stream.

3. Soak the links overnight in standard kitchen vinegar. Use a toothbrush to scrub them down to remove all the gunk. Rinse them off and let them dry (I've read you should absolutely NOT use dishwashing liquid or other cleaners as some detergents leave a coating that the burnishing fluid doesn't get along with).

4. Throw away the thin coiled silver wire that comes with the track links. Seriously, toss it in the garbage... that is what it is. Garbage. I use .019" brass wire instead. The stiffer straight wire is easier to use on all counts: easier to get into the holes, has more strength to hold the link, and doesn't get eaten away during the blackening process.

I cut a bunch of track pins using a standard wire

cutters. Find a block of wood, measure length of pin you need, put two pieces of tape on the wood block representing the pin length, then just put the cutters down on top of the wire, cut, and viola! Track pins. (Just be sure to put a finger on the newly cut track pin so it doesn't fly off into the ether)

5. Using your non-dominate hand as a holder, put two links together, then use tweezers to pick up and place the pin in the holes to join the two lengths. I started off doing two links at a time, then joining the pair together with other pairs. But I quickly got to using four or five links at a time. Just keep adding a link to the first pair until you feel like you cannot hold it easily any more. Don't worry about gluing until you have several links ready to go. The advantage of the brass wire over the included wire is that the brass is strong enough to hold together as long as you don't turn it upside down and let the pin fall out.

6. Dot a bit of super glue on top of the pin to lock it in place.

7. Repeat 40+ times and you have a metal track!

A few random pointers:

- ♦ To make it easier to paint, judge necessary length on the vehicle (you get extra track links). To allow the links to fit inside the container for burnishing, make three long runs (about 20 links, and at least one short run (three or five links).
- ♦ You read a lot about how you should push the track pin into the opposite side of the link so that it better connects and helps "lock" the pin in place. In my limited experience, that's a horrible idea. The tracks are soft enough that this action simply bends the track link out of whack. And getting it back in place is a nightmare. If you use the stiff brass rod/wire, just make sure that there's a recess on the opposite side that the pin can "sit" in. Problem solved.
- ♦ Just because they come in two bags, doesn't mean there's a right side/left side. You can "hide" the pin edges (on some types of vehicles) simply by having the pins face in. But this will





only be true on one side of the vehicle. The other side will show clearly. So be careful on how much extra pin you leave hanging out.

## Coloring/painting

The metal tracks need some amount of help to look like real metal. Some people paint them, but I prefer to use chemical reaction that cause the metal to turn natural black, or even rust. There used to be a product called Blacken-It that was for this sole purpose. Put the metal in, wait, pull it out, and it's blackened. But that product disappeared from the market. Fortunately AK Interactive and AMMO by Mig both make burnishing fluid that are effectively the exact same product.

Since my Local Hobby Shop (LHS) didn't have any of the products I mentioned in stock and I really wanted to finish my tracks over a weekend, I posted a thread on [armorama.com](http://armorama.com) to see if anyone can provide an alternative. There were a few good ideas, but I went with a local club member's suggestion: **Birchwood Casey's Perma Blue**. This is a gun bluing product sold at any **Academy Sports+Outdoors** store. Each 3oz bottle costs \$5.99. I bought two and used both for one run. You can also buy a 32oz bottle on **Amazon.com** for \$35.99!

Power tip: You can also use this brand's other products for burnishing photoetch, brass rod, etc. too!

Now get ready to dive in. Carve out enough uninterrupted time to focus entirely on doing this to completion. Once you start, you can't stop until you're done. Read these instructions entirely and prepare all your materials first. This isn't hard, but if you forget something, or have to read these instructions half way through, you're going to be irritated with yourself when you don't get the results you wanted.

1. Find a container that will fit ALL of your tracks laying flat and can cover the tracks completely. Fill it with water and a fair amount of baking soda. Mix well.

2. Find a shallow, flat bottomed container that can fit your track runs lengthwise, without having them lay on top of each other. Fill it up with the burnishing

liquid. Make sure you put in enough to cover the tracks completely.

3. Get an old toothbrush
4. Use rubber gloves
5. Ventilate the room

Here's the process (and make sure to verify all of this on test pieces and always follow the burnishing fluid's instructions):

1. Build your tracks as mentioned above. (I tried both individual links vs. track runs. Color consistency is much easier to maintain in runs)

2. Lay them flat, side by side in the container of burnishing fluid. I **STRONGLY** recommend that you put ALL tracks in the SAME batch of burnishing fluid. This helps to ensure both sides of the track come out looking the same.

3. Give it a minute or two to start working and watch closely. It's like cooking bacon: if you don't want it burned, you have to take it out of the skillet when it still looks under cooked.

4. Scrub both sides of each track run with a clean toothbrush to get the burnishing fluid into the crevices. This also helps to eliminate the build up of any chemical reaction gunk, which can cause dots of discoloration in the overall blackening.

5. Take the tracks out of the solution and verify they look like the way you wanted. Scrub again with the toothbrush. Blow the bulk of the water off with a hair dryer to determine roughly what the final color looks like (wet things always look darker than dry things). If you need more darkening, toss them ALL back in the fluid.

6. When you are done with the blackening, take out ALL the tracks and toss them in the baking soda + water bath. This should stop the chemical reaction. I let them soak for a couple hours just to be sure. But I'm sure what the requirement is on timing here.

7. Personally, I chose to take one more soak in white vinegar to get them clear of any chemical reaction



gunk. Then I washed with water and set aside to dry.

Remember to be careful handling the tracks after the chemical process, especially if you have used the included coiled wire. That stuff is so thin that too much time in the burnishing fluid will eat it away.

Once you have blackened, cleaned, and dried, throw a wash over them all to even out the colors and add some extra pop. I use the AK Interactive enamel Track Wash.

### Placing on the vehicle

Honestly, I don't know the right way to place these things! I'm going to have to update this section as I work on my next few sets. Here're a few things I learned though:

- ♦ Trying to put heavy tracks on a model with only two hands is tough. Really tough. Especially when there is no sag on the run.
- ♦ Look at your model before you start to make SURE you know where to place your hands so you don't knock the small bits off as your brain starts to focus in on just the tracks.
- ♦ Before starting the blackening process, make sure you figure out exactly how many links you really need to have in a total run. It's a pain trying to remove links after they're already glued in place.
- ♦ I had a struggle trying to get the tracks pulled tight enough to connect the two ends while also trying to line up a pin. Even if you don't use brass rods for the rest of the links, this is the perfect place to do so here since the stiff rod is vastly easier to place. I used a tiny blob of Blue Tack to hold the pin in place so that I could use my hands to pull the track together. Then using my thumb, while still holding the two ends of the track, I could push the pin all the way through the tracks.

### So... is it all worth it?

This has been a lot of work to finish this up. My biggest mistake, honestly, was assuming I needed to



add metal tracks before I started building the kit, and making modifications to replace the driver wheel the Fruil tracks required. Had I done a better job of examining the kit tracks, I don't think I would have spent the time and money to replace them. The kit supplied tracks are nicely molded, and on a vehicle that doesn't have that much "track sag," it would have been just fine with the plastic ones. The multi-piece individual links Trumpeter produced are impressive. Plus, with the rear sides lowered and the diorama/mud oriented weathering I have in mind, there's not much to actually see with these tracks.

That is not to say I am against metal tracks. Not at all. I wish I had a set for the AFV Club Sd.Kfz 11 I am working on so I don't have to use the kit supplied "rubber band" tracks. For vehicles that have more noticeable sag, I'd put Frails on in a heartbeat.

There is also something extremely beautiful about the rusty look and the metallic detailing that metal can give you. While it's not impossible to recreate in plastic, it's a lot harder and not quite as "natural" as metal.

So my advice is simple: Think through whether you *\*really\** need the metal tracks before you spend the expense and effort. But if you have the right conditions, you'll be happy with the effort at the end of the process.

**Jake**



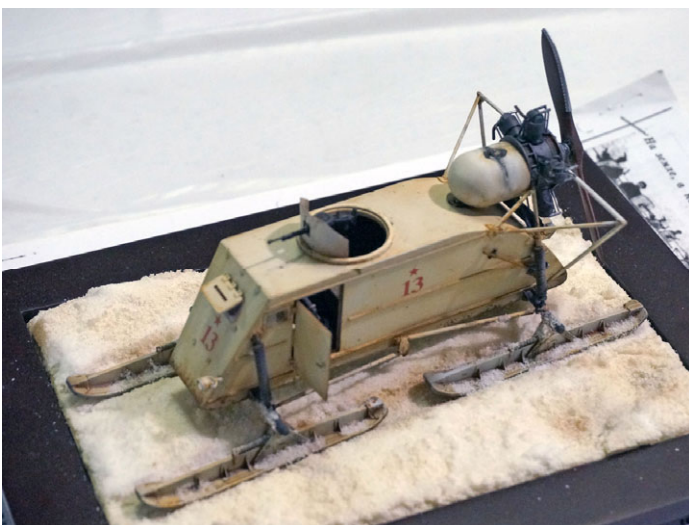
## 2015 AMPS International Convention Highlights



*This year's armor modeling extravaganza took place once again at the WWII Victory Museum in Auburn IN.*



*Here's a Sherman variant you don't see every day: a 1/35<sup>th</sup> IDF Kilshon by Tony Zadro.*



*Greg Cihlar's most excellent 1/32<sup>nd</sup> "Hind Down" diorama. We were lucky to see it up close and personal at the show.*

*Chris Toops' 1/35<sup>th</sup> Aerosan received a lot of buzz, not to mention a Gold in the Wheeled Vehicle category.*





Michael Moore's Object 279 in a museum setting won a Silver in Modern Armor Advanced category.



Ken Guntin won a Gold for replicating the unique JGSDF Type 90 MBT "polka dot" winter camo.



AMPS 1<sup>st</sup> VP Chuck Aleshire's Gold winner: 1/32<sup>nd</sup> 1910B Omnibus titled "Belgium Avenger."



Boresight editor John Robinson also received a Gold for his very nicely finished 1/35<sup>th</sup> IJA Type 89B Otsu.



It's not easy being white! UN CV90 by Glen Martin.

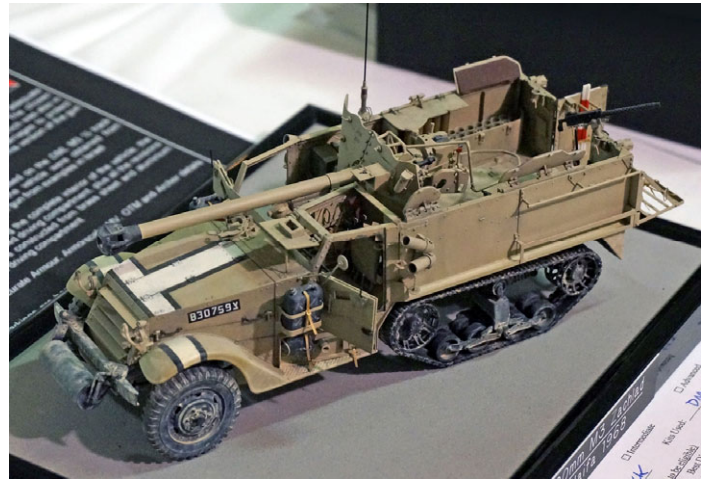


This tiny 1/72<sup>nd</sup> M18 Hellcat has a full interior lit up by LEDs!





A nicely done diorama based on the famous photo of the Tiananmen Square Protest on June 4, 1989.



Another AMPS Master Mark Hazzard's 1/35<sup>th</sup> IDF M3 halftrack with a 90mm anti-tank gun.



Joseph Koenig's 1/35<sup>th</sup> Sherman Firefly VC "Carole" is the winner of Best Commonwealth award.



Check out the details on AMPS Master James Wechsler's M1128 Stryker.



Best Figure award went to Scott Primeau's Waffen SS Infantryman, Balaton, March 1945.





AMPS' new president John Charvat (center) was making a point while Boresight editor John Robinson (left) and 1<sup>st</sup> VP Chuck Aleshire (right) looked on.

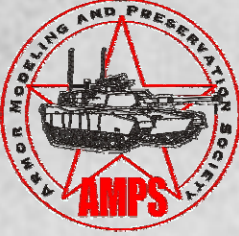


The crowd went wild when David Vickers won the Best of Show trophy with his 1/35<sup>th</sup> diorama "Victory and Contempt."



"Victory and Contempt" also won Best Diorama and Best Russian/Soviet awards.





# AMPS CENTEX Armor Expo MMXV September 26, 2015



*Location*  
**Georgetown Community Center  
445 E. Morrow Street  
Georgetown, TX 78626**

*Show Theme*  
**First World War**

*More Info at*  
**[www.austinarmorbuilders.com](http://www.austinarmorbuilders.com)**

Above artwork was done by renowned armor artist **Jody Harmon**. Mr. Harmon has graciously granted AABS permission to use this image for this event. This and other artwork of his can be seen and purchased at his official website **[www.jodyharmon.com](http://www.jodyharmon.com)**



# JOIN *AMPS* TODAY

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **POSTAL CODE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTRY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 1 Year US (\$30)   ☐ 2 Year US (\$60)   ☐ 3 Year US (\$90)

**IF PAYING BY CHECK OR MONEY ORDER SEND YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP DUES AND COMPLETED FORM BELOW TO:**



***AMPS***  
**MEMBERSHIP DEPT.**  
**P.O. BOX 543**  
**ELKTON, MD 21922**



**Membership Rates for a One-Year Period:**  
**\$30.00 USA, \$35.00 Canada/Mexico, \$40.00 Rest of the World**

**All payments must be made in U.S. funds.**

***Amps* accepts payments by check and money order, as well as PayPal.**

**To join using PayPal, just visit the *amps* website and click on "join *amps*."**

**If paying by check or money order, send dues and completed form to the address on the form.**

**[www.amps-armor.org](http://www.amps-armor.org)**





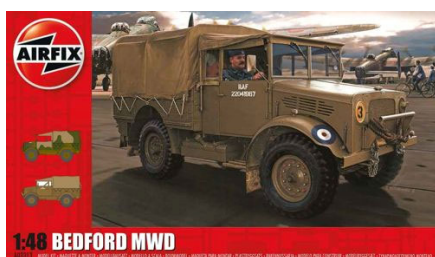
## NEW ON THE BLOCK



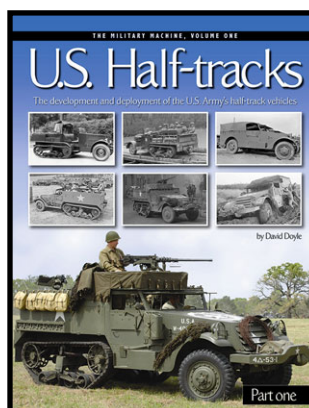
Don't let Hobbyboss' boxart fool you! Only one prototype of 44M Tas was built, and it never entered production or fielded in the Hungarian Army.



DML released another early Cold War designated hitter in 1/35<sup>th</sup>: British heavy tank Conqueror. Equipped with the same 120mm gun as used on the US M103, the type saw brief service with BAOR in West Germany only.



Airfix's latest quarterscale Bedford MWD truck is out in the UK and some mail order sites. No word when it will appear in our LHS.



Need reference material on US Half-track vehicles? David Doyle's new 456-page book on the subject is available now from Ampersand Publishing.

## AMPS Boresight (Volume 23, Issue 2)

The latest issue of **Boresight** is out. Here is a quick look inside:

- ♦ **The Italian M13/40** by Mike Roof  
How to make an accurate version of Italy's WWII medium.
- ♦ **The RCME and Tiger 007** by Ignace Vangel  
Cleaning up the battlefields of France in 1944.
- ♦ **Book Review** by John Charvat  
*Tiran in Lebanese Wars*, published by Ammo of Mig Jimenez
- ♦ **SdKfz.222 in 1:48 Scale** by Glen Martin  
Tamiya reboxes the ICM armored car kit and adds a little spice.
- ♦ **AMPS Bulgaria** by Mitko Nikitov  
Local chapter growth on the international front.
- ♦ **AMPS Local Chapter News**  
What's going on in the AMPS community.





## About Us

The Austin Armor Builders Society (AABS) started in 1999 when Don Jones, a member of the local IPMS chapter, decided "what a good idea to get out two nights a month, and on least one night talk tanks."



Since then AABS is the only modeling club in Central Texas devoted solely to armor modeling. We don't build planes because they are just plain! Our passion is armored fighting vehicles and military figures. Subject of our interest ranges from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Middle East, to the most recent Gulf War Conflicts.

At each monthly meeting, we talk tanks, swap kits, and share our building techniques and tricks. We also hold regular in-house model contests and organize out-of-town field trips to museums and model shows.

Every odd-numbered year AABS hosts the biggest armor model show in AMPS South Central Region (AMPS CENTEX). Known as Lone Star Armor Expo, we attract some of the best armor modelers in Texas as well as in the neighboring states to come participate.

To find out more about AABS, you can visit our website or pick up a club flyer at your local hobby shop.

**We are on the web @ [AustinArmorBuilders.com](http://AustinArmorBuilders.com)**

*This 1/35<sup>th</sup> DML KPz70 used to be one of Robert Mesch's pending projects at the time of his passing earlier this year. We are delighted to see Rick Herrington, a prolific AABS member, stepped in and finished it. Job well done, Rick!*

