

Heller 11CV Traction Avant 1:43

While browsing eBay I came across the Heller range of 1:43 kits at a variety of prices. I checked one of my favourite European shops and found that these kits were still available priced at €10 each. I bought an 11CV Traction Avant from eBay for £10.15 including postage from a UK supplier, so not too bad and it arrived very quickly.

The full range is: Citroen 11CV (1934-57), Citroen DS19 (1955-75), Renault 4CV (1947-61), Citroen 2CV first generation (1948-60), Austin Mini Mk2 (1967-70), and some modern rally cars.

The kit is reasonably well moulded but does need a little cleaning, especially the body. This is a one-piece moulding and was a little distorted and there was a small nick in the rear bumper (probably the plastic feed point) plus the moulding flash. All easily fixed.

Research for the model has been interesting as there were many variations of this car over years. Some of the info conflicts with the photos available, which is not helpful.

The instructions mention that this is a model of a 6-cylinder car, however this is not possible. All the 6-cylinder cars have louvers on the bonnet side while the model has vent flaps that were used on the 4-cylinder cars up to 1945. The body also has the boot opening from the outside (introduced in 1935) and the wheels are a style known as "Pilot Wheels" (1938-45). The dimensions are correct for the smaller bodied cars. Many of the cars in the UK were built at a factory in Slough, located on Liverpool Road on the Slough Trading Estate. The Slough built cars were all RHD for the UK and Commonwealth market. So, my car will be a 1938-45 light 15 (as the Slough built cars were called) and it will be cream and black (French cars were usually black) with tan leather interior and a wood dashboard. All I would need to change was the position of the steering wheel and fuel filler and then create an image for the new dashboard. Further research found a photo of an older version of the kit and this says 1939 on the box lid, so in agreement with my thoughts.

I mostly followed the instructions but kept the wheels off until the end to aid painting. They were pressed onto cocktail sticks to make them easy to hold and I painted them by rotating the wheel while holding the brush still. I used paints from the Coat d'Arms acrylic range which I like. They are made by HMG paints (who also make the Railmatch paints amongst others) and cover well but are also fairly thin. They can be sprayed, or brush painted. Tyres were brush painted, dark grey and slate grey for the tyres (which makes the tyre tread

slightly lighter than the sidewall) and the wheels were painted linen and chainmail. Games Workshops earth wash was used to show up the detail.



Moving the steering wheel to the right was just a case of drilling a new hole and filling the old hole. The dashboard was produced from a photo I found online printed at the correct size. This was worth doing as the large instruments are quite noticeable. The seats were painted leather brown followed by a GW sepia wash to highlight the creases. The floor was painted desert sand and the dash wood brown.



The body had the fuel filler cut off from the right side and reattached on the left side. The damage to the rear edge was fixed with Humbrol Model Filler.

Then the body was given a coat of Tamiya white spray primer, followed by Coat d'Arms "linen" (a cream colour) paint which was sprayed. The inside of the body was painted leather brown to match the seats and the headlining was "unbleached wool". The front and rear wings were then brush painted black. The radiator grill was painted with "chainmail", which is a metallic silver, followed by a black wash.

Once the body was finished I added a pair of small lights onto the front wings. These are made by filing a piece of clear spur in a mini-drill, then painting. You need to make a few of these and then find two that match. You may also find that they go ping across the room! There is also a rear light which is made from plastic rod and the number plates (with a Devon code) are printed on paper and stuck into place.

The thing I did not try to change are the windscreen wipers. These are at the top of the windscreen while it is reported that Slough built cars had the wipers mounted at the bottom of the windscreen. Photographic evidence is inconclusive. Removing the moulded on wipers would have been possible but polishing the clear screen would have been a challenge.



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