



Hearne's sculpted figure of an American MP astride a kit motorcycle was the piece that, when first exhibited, brought him immediate and far-flung recognition.

BY PHILIP O. STEARNS

Bill Hearne

An exceptional talent, whose amazingly realistic figures have gained him renown throughout the modeling fraternity, turns his artistry to the creation of commercially produced miniatures.



Hearne's interest in figures grew out of the need for crews for his individually built model aircraft. The BE2 seen here has been motorized by Hearne for realism in photography.

Among miniaturists, the name of Bill Hearne is widely known, either as a result of his extraordinary models or through his instructional articles appearing in a number of publications devoted to the subject of military miniatures.

His presence at competitions used to cause apprehension among fellow competitors, it being a foregone conclusion that anything Hearne entered would win, at least, a first prize. It came as a source of considerable relief to we struggling amateurs to learn that he had at last taken his talent into the ranks of the professionals. It was, further, a great joy to many of us familiar with his work to know that his astonishingly lifelike and incredibly detailed creations will be translated into figure kits, to be available on the market in the near future.

Born in England, Hearne moved at an early age to Canada with his family. He attended art school until he was seventeen, joining the RAF in 1939 and serving until 1945. He qualified as an observer and served several tours of duty, after which he was grounded and transferred to camouflage supervision for advance flying fields, this placing him in the thick of things on D-Day plus two in Normandy.

After the war, he returned to Canada to pursue a career as a commercial artist. However, Hearne always had a desire to get into Canadian television. Toward this end, he spent a year at the Ryerson Institute of Technology, learning television and broadcasting techniques. Though the job this led to — running a radio station in the maritime provinces for fourteen years — included every facet of radio broadcasting, it still frustrated his desire to become involved in the visual aspects of television. In 1964, he moved to Radio Luxembourg, spending six

months at what he refers to as "hard labour", finally becoming program controller for Radio Caroline before this station closed. Transferring to the BBC, Hearne eventually ended up in the special effects department, remaining there until his recent retirement to concentrate on modelling assignments and to relish the less hectic life style to be found in the depths of the Devon countryside.

Hearne maintained a keen interest in modelling throughout his childhood and his adult participation was awakened by Revell's issue of a 1/48 scale Sopwith Camel, which he personalized and adapted to represent Major Baker's plane. He then began building his own model aircraft, motorizing them for photographic purposes.

His interest in figures evolved naturally from the need for appropriate crews for his aircraft. Having joined the International Plastic Modellers Society after meeting Norman Whitcome, and the British Model Soldier Society through Lynn Sangster (who also introduced him to Historex miniatures), it seemed almost natural that Hearne would win the 1969 B.M.S.S. Diorama Competition with a brilliant scene of a crashed World War I RE 8, complete with ambulances and with a wounded observer being rescued from the cockpit.

From there on, his specialized and unique adaptations of existing figures, and his use of a variety of materials to create original miniatures, finally led to the creation of his incomparable American military policeman astride an E.S.C.I. 1/9 scale kit of a Harley Davidson motorcycle. The following year, he sculpted two German figures to fit the same manufacturer's model BMW with side car. These three figures were created entirely from a secret material he discovered; their workmanship and lifelike quality defy description. There is even a pack of American cigarettes protruding from the G.I.'s hip pocket. These figures led to Hearne's contract to produce 1/9 and 1/35 scale figure kits for E. S. C. I.

Hearne first designs each figure as it will eventually appear in completed form, then breaks his design down into individual elements, sculpting each separately so that more than a hundred pieces will finally be pantographed down from the double-size figure to 1/9 scale. In his sculpture of a figure of a British paratrooper, he has achieved a sculptural, anatomical perfection, as well injecting a character that is, in every essence, English. At the same time, the figure reveals the natural caution and determination of a soldier at war.

In seeing the first figures that Hearne has either completed or has underway, I can only say that his work, when released in kit form, will set new standards in military miniature production that will be difficult to equal. ○



Hearne's later works included the sculpting of two incredibly lifelike German soldiers to fit a kit BMW (above) and an extraordinary desert vignette.

