

## Moulded Canopies – by Mark Saunders March 2020

Mark Saunders has refined his method of making canopies from old plastic bottles and writes –

I have been experimenting with fabricating cockpits from plastic bottles whilst building my Bambina from the RCM&E free plan. The plan said 'cockpit cut from suitable pop bottle' but I couldn't find a bottle to fit right.

In the same issue of the magazine they were also showing a method using a modified sealant gun to push out a cockpit from sheet plastic whilst heating the material with a heat gun. I think I found an easier way, which is to jam a cockpit mould into a bottle (with one end cut off), pack it out until tight, and then just heat-shrink the bottle onto the mould.

Not all bottles are created equal - when I used a 'squeezy' ketchup bottle, the resulting cockpit would probably be bullet proof - it was so tough I could barely cut it. In the end I settled for a nice green number.



Initially create a balsa "plug" for the canopy



Put the plug in the bottle and pack it tightly



The bottle after heat treatment

One thing to watch out for is that the bottles tend to shrink in length as much as they do in diameter, so it's best to get the ends to shrink on tight before working on the middle.



The finished canopy on Marks Bambina