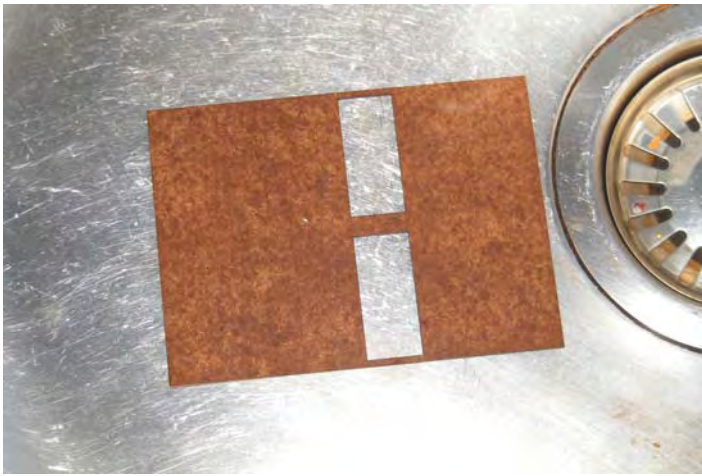


## BURNT WOOD AND PAINTING

Well you've read about the smell of burnt wood and seen all the blogs reviewing the gaming capabilities of Laser Cut buildings, but you're still not sure. Will it warp? Will it lose all the detail when painted? Can it be customised? Do I need an Air Brush?

In the past year more and more laser cut MDF buildings and accessories are becoming available to the gamer, Sci-Fi, Old West, WW2 and more, pre-painted and unpainted. Confident as the makers are in its ability to provide you all with 'great' buildings for your table there have been many questions as to how it reacts to paints, fillers and glue. I decided to get hold of a number of buildings of different types, with different levels of detail and assembly methods. I then set out to answer some of the questions about modelling and painting with this 'new stuff'.

### WILL IT WARP?

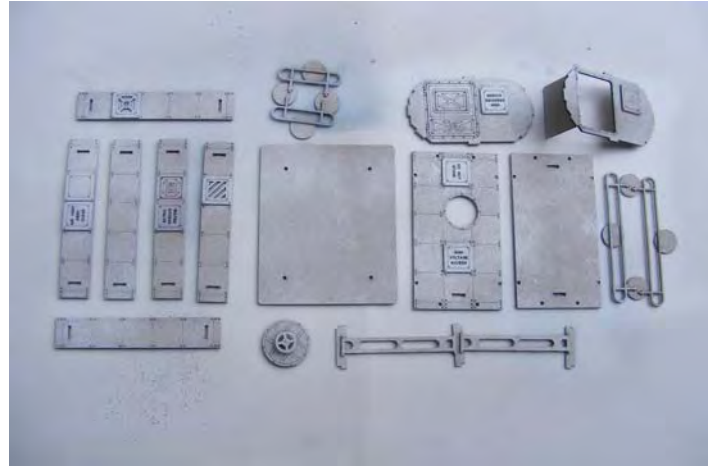


The most common question is about warping. So I did the most basic tests. Firstly I decided to drop a panel of 2mm MDF in to a sink of water and forgot about it for a few hours while I went off to prime and paint other buildings. Yes eventually it did warp, when I say forgot about it, it was 6 or 7 hours by the time I remembered it. I pulled it out and left it to dry. Well it didn't go back flat, but I was impressed at how flat it became. If I had left a weight on it I think it would have returned flat. There is no doubt that if you drench it, it will warp, but it takes a heck of a lot of water and time. Bigger panels may warp if over laden with too much 'wet'. Take it slow and avoid too much liquid I say.



So, I went on to see what I could achieve with paint and glue. The one thing I really liked is that these models can be painted in parts or assembled and so it can make it easier to get a hold of the bits. It also means if space is an issue then they can be left as parts when not used.

I've read a number of comments about the use of primer on this stuff and how it eats the paint and then comes the comment that the etching doesn't look deep enough and will it disappear? I put a light coat on first just to see and found it easy and it didn't eat paint. It only took another coat to finish it to the way I wanted.



I still have plenty of paint left. The trick is to let the first coat dry and seal the surface. This will stop you using too much paint and stop any chance of warping. If you're still unsure of warping prime both sides. Use the right paint for the job too, household primer and emulsion is great for the walls but not for modelling (feel free to disagree).

I don't like using spray paint and don't have an airbrush I hear you shout... Ok, I agree sometimes spray paint is not the best for the job. I don't have an airbrush either, so I thought I would start and just paint direct to the panels.







Using water based acrylics I just slapped it on. I thinned it down a little and found it really easy and fast to cover the surface and again it didn't eat paint. If you're looking for a dead flat colour you may need to coat it twice. I found that if you don't 'seal the edges the burning comes through. I used a matt topcoat to seal the next panels. You'll notice the difference between the sealed 'lighter' and unsealed 'darker' panel.



Once I had had a bash and felt confident I decided to see how it reacted to covering the panels with glue and sticking things to it. The beauty of these models is they are really easy to customise. As they cost so little its possible to mash 1 kit into another and make your own changes. You can cut and drill in to the parts really easily too.



The great thing with the etching is it helps you paint 'between the lines'.



In this case I wanted a thatched roof. I use good old plastic kitchen scouring pads. I tried using PVA glue (White Paper Glue) and it worked very well. It's great for gluing most things, but for thatching it takes too long to dry and I'm impatient so I use carpet tape. Basically industrial strength double-sided sticky tape used for sticking flooring down.



I painted the edges when assembled to get a good match on the faces. You can see the lighter wall edge is sealed, compared to the darker roof edge.



The MDF doesn't react to either the glue or tape.





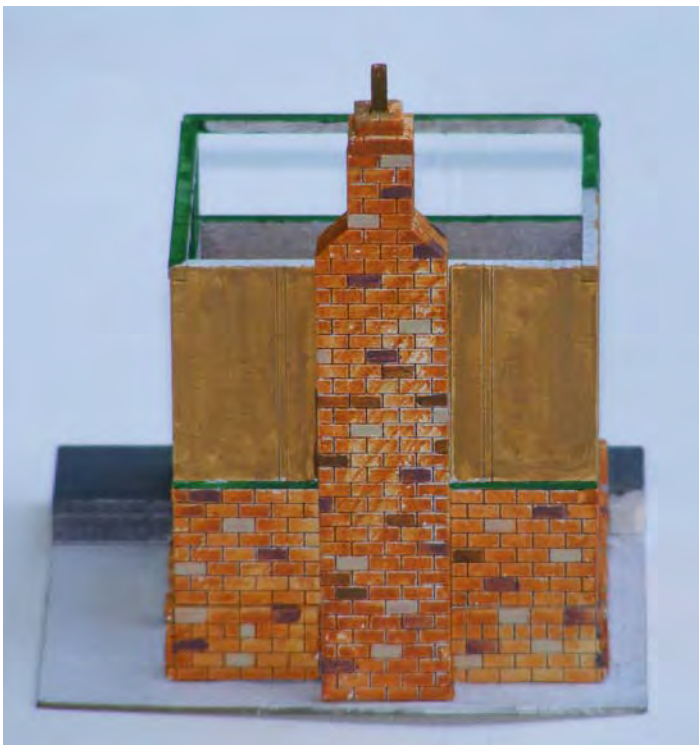
The thatch is sprayed with a tan coat and weathered. I found here that the kitchen pads soak paint up in gallons if your not careful, and luckily the MDF still didn't react.



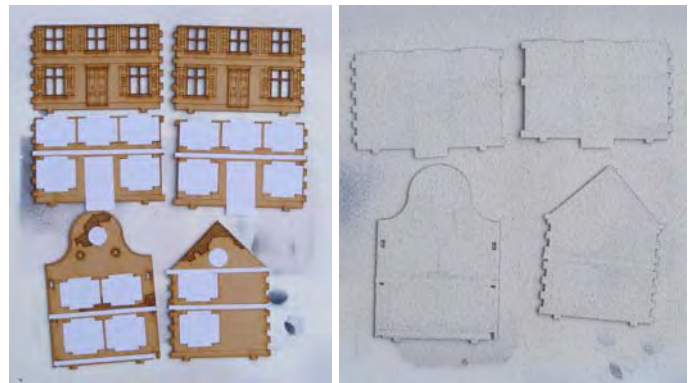
The walls were weathered using inks and dry brushing, a little grass and grit added.

**ITS IN THE DETAIL, COME UP AND SEE MY ETCHING.**

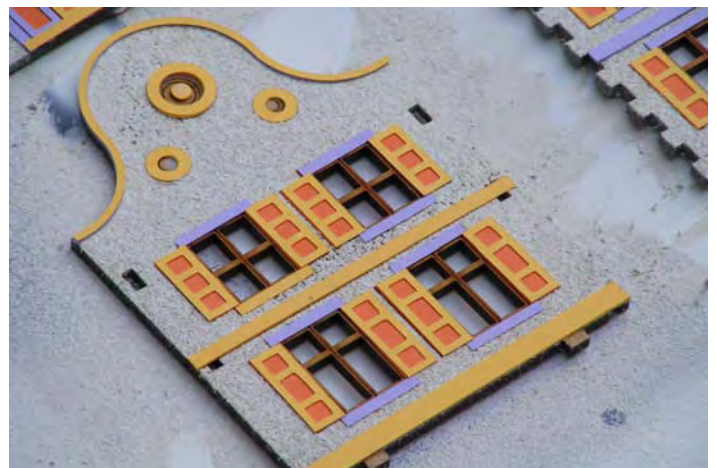
My first reaction to getting the kits was how amazing the level of detail and the precision of the parts were. The etched surfaces allow you to use all the standard painting techniques. Here I roughly primed and painted up a brick wall. I then colour washed in the brick with a base coat and picked out some bricks in different colours. I then chose to ink wash over to pick out the mortar lines. It is possible to wipe over the surface with a light shade and pick out the mortar lines for more realism.



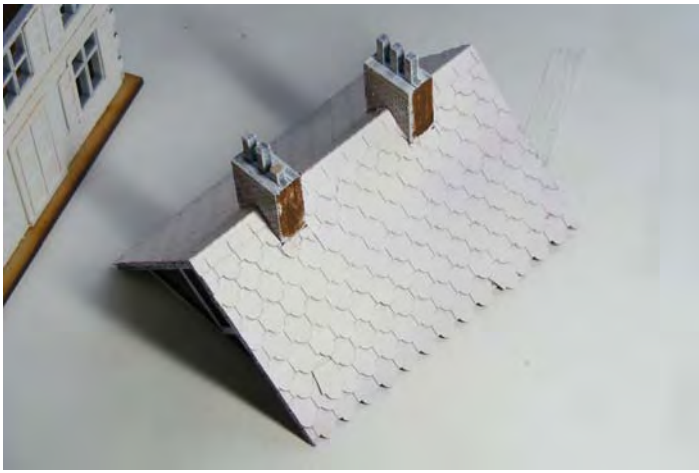
Finally I thought I would see how much punishment MDF would take. I took a standard model kit and began by masking up the windows and shutters to spray prime it. I then changed my mind and decided to spray it with a 'stone' effect paint. These take a long time to dry as they are very 'wet' paints, so I crossed my fingers. No warping but of course it did wipe out the etched detail where unmasked.



Taking it further I cut shutter, wall details and roof tiles and layered it on thick, more glue and more paint.







The roof tiles are of card and glued with PVA. More primer and more colour washes than you can shake a stick at... No change in the MDF and a building unique to me.



### ADDING YOUR OWN TOUCHES

The MDF is really useful for adding detail parts, white metal and plastic. It takes superglue well. This means you can customise things to your design fast. Here I added plastic rod and panels to create piping.



These are super glued on, but a 2-pack epoxy would do just as well. You can see I have painted and ink washed over and over to get simple weathering effects and still the detail comes through.



All in all I think the rise of the laser cut MDF will result in more variety and adds another level to gaming terrain. The kits are simple, inexpensive and very forgiving to the modeller. If you don't believe me try one, or try a table full...

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