

# DOLPHIN MODEL BOAT CLUB

## Model Boats - Getting Started<sub>4</sub>

### Model Boats - Getting Started

This article is intended for those wanting an introduction to the hobby of 'Model Boats' or possibly wanting to introduce a member of the *younger generation* to the hobby.

**Basic Requirements** - For a powered model boat, steered via radio control, the basic requirements are as follows:

**Boat** - Consisting of a hull and superstructure with an electric motor to drive the propeller and a battery to power the motor.

**Radio Control (R/C) Equipment** - Consisting of a Transmitter (operated by the user) and a Receiver (located within the boat). This equipment has a minimum of 2 channels. One channel for Power/Drive (Forward & Reverse) and the second channel for Steering (Left/Right or *more correctly Port/Starboard*). All new R/C equipment operates at a frequency of 2.4 Ghz. There are various manufacturers and the receiver has to be compatible with the transmitter. Transmitters and Receivers will often be seen that have, 3, 4, 5 or more operating channels. These are for more complex models, where (for example) features such as lights, sound simulators and smoke generators can be operated remotely.

**Ancillary R/C Equipment** – Consisting of a 'Servo' and an Electronic Speed Control (ESC). Both devices receive a signal from the R/C receiver with the Servo providing control of the boat rudder and the ESC providing control of the speed/rotation of the propeller.

**Other Ancillary Equipment** – As a minimum this is a Charger to replenish the on-board battery (or batteries) and the transmitter battery.

- Note 1 – With some systems the boat will require a battery for the drive motor and a separate battery for the receiver, as receivers operate at 5V, whilst motors (dependant on type) tend to operate at higher voltages. Whilst on other systems the ESC (previously mentioned) incorporates a Battery Elimination Circuit (BEC). With this system, the circuitry within the ESC which takes its power from the main battery driving the motor and then provides 5V to the receiver.
- Note 2 – Depending on the installation, it is likely that more than one type of charger will be required.

**Types of Model Build** – Many get their enjoyment of the hobby from the building of a model rather than sailing a model. However, as an introduction to the hobby, many will firstly want to experience `sailing` a model boat and then (hopefully) go to the next stage and try their hand at `building`. The following is a logical progression through the various types of build from the “*very quick and simple*” to the “*more complex and time consuming*”. Where a supplier has been identified, please note that this is a suggestion rather than a recommendation. Also there are often other suppliers that stock the same or equivalent product. **All suppliers identified, have a website.**

Ready to Run (RTR) and Almost Ready to Run (ARTR) – Both types of model are ready built. RTR will probably just require the battery to be charged. ARTR will also require some very basic assembly. Both types are normally supplied complete with R/C equipment and provision for charging the batteries.

*Unfortunately many model boats which are RTR and ARTR are fast e.g. speed boats and therefore difficult for a novice to control. However, a small number of more sedate models (such as Tugs) are available – Speak to the identified supplier.*

Howes Models – Kiddlington (Oxford) – 01865 848000

Previously Owned – Some suppliers also hold a stock of previously owned models. These models have a variety of sources such as a bereavement sale or simply where the previous owner required the storage space to accommodate another model.

Howes Models – Kiddlington (Oxford) – 01865 848000

Dockyard Model Shop – Chatham – 01634 830404

Avicraft – Bromley – 020 8460 0818

A check on eBay will also reveal a source of second hand models, but obviously there will be a lack of guidance, unlike a model shop. Also check, the For Sale section of *Model Boats* magazine.

Kit (Simple) – These require construction where the modules which form the model need to be joined together with an adhesive. The identified supplier has a range of such models which are made of vacuum formed plastic, including items such as the motor, propeller, rudder etc., and starting at around £30 + p&p. The range also includes a Sailing Dinghy (wind powered) for around £25 + p&p. At additional cost, there are `fitting kits` available for each model containing such items as life belts, anchors etc. Also available at additional cost is a package containing all the R/C equipment, battery and charger.

SHG Marine – Staffordshire - 01785 840308

*SHG Marine is run by a husband & wife team. Although the website is basic, and purchases need to be made by phone, the proprietors are very keen to ensure that you make the correct purchase. So if you are not sure exactly what you require.....just ask for their help.*

Kit (Wooden Construction) – From the late 1950s and through into the early 70s there were a number of companies that marketed kits for model boats such as cabin cruisers. Typical makes were Aerokits, and Wavemaster. The shapes of individual parts were often just pre-printed onto plywood and needed cutting and shaping. Now in the age of the computer, the kits have been reintroduced, based on the original designs but utilizing computer controlled, laser cutting equipment. This results in the laser cut parts being far more accurate than before, aiding ease of assembly.

Vintage Model Boats (sold by SLEC) - Norfolk – 01953 885279

Kit (Semi) - A semi kit is normally for a type of vessel (possibly a tug or fishing boat) rather than a specific vessel e.g. HMS Belfast. Typically a semi kit will contain mouldings for the hull, superstructure, deck and other major structural items. The remainder of the model is left to the builder to customise as they wish, using their own materials. There are a number of suppliers of this type of kit, including the following:

Deans Marine – Peterborough – 01733 244166

Kit (Full) – These are usually for a specific (named) vessel. In addition to the moulding of the hull, superstructure, etc., the kit will often contain discrete items such as bollards, steering wheel, crew figures, and decals (transfers). The kit will also normally contain the necessary plans, building instructions, and colour scheme. There are a number of suppliers of this type of kit, including the following:

Deans Marine – Peterborough – 01733 244166

*Please note that with all types of kit, the content is unlikely to include items such as motors, batteries, adhesives, and paint. This is because most builders usually have their own preference regarding: size, type, manufacturer etc.*

Scratch Building – This involves making the various components of the model by hand, although invariable some items are often purchased, such as life belts, or the steering wheel. Although some very keen modellers will make everything, particularly when say a steering wheel is not available in the correct shape and/or scale. Because the shape of the hull can sometimes be complex, quite often modellers use a pre-formed hull i.e. either a GRP or plastic moulding and then scratch build the deck and superstructure. Again where a suitable 'off the shelf' hull is unavailable, modellers will fabricate their own hull, normally using one of two common techniques i.e. "plank-on-frame" or "bread and butter". *For information on these two techniques, see the internet.*

Model Boat Plans – Models that are `scratch built' are normally built from a plan. The two suppliers defined within *Boat Modelling Outlets*, sell plans for a wide variety of models. *Model Boat* magazine tend to include a free plan within their publication, normally at a frequency of two months i.e. alternate issues. Another supplier *Sarik Hobbies* stock plans that were previously included in *Model Boats* magazine, plus another monthly magazine which is no longer published called *Marine Modelling International (MMI)*.

Sarik Hobbies – Malvern 01682 311682

Out of print copies of *Model Boats* and *MMI*, containing plans are available from various sources including eBay.

Boat Modelling Outlets – The following supply kits from a variety of manufacturers such as, Caldercraft, Graupner, Robbe etc. Additionally, most other items required by modellers such as motors, batteries, fixings, adhesives, paint etc.

Cornwall Model Boats - Camelford – 01840 211009

Dockyard Model Shop – Chatham – 01634 830404

Local Model Shop – These are getting thin on the ground, but when you require items in a rush, such as a tin of paint, or bottle of adhesive, they are obviously quicker and often cheaper than mail order. For those living in the Bromley/Orpington area, the identified suppliers are the only model shop still operating.

Avicraft – 15 Chatterton Road, Bromley – 020 8460 0818

Kent Garden Railways – 66 High Street, St. Mary Cray, Orpington – 01689 891668

Avicraft, although in the main specialising in model aircraft, they are now starting to cater for boat modellers. The shop is open: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. There is `free' parking in the side roads off Chatterton Road, but restrictions exist between 12PM and 2PM. The proprietor is Rob Newman who is very helpful and if your particular requirement is not in stock he can most probably obtain it for you. This includes anything available from a well known wholesaler called Jim Perkins (JP). If what you require is on the JP website, speak to Rob at Avicraft.

Kent Garden Railways is (as the name suggests) primarily for model railway modellers. However, the shop is still a valuable source of items such as model building materials, adhesives, paint etc.

***Make use of your local model shop. To quote a well known saying: “Use it or lose it”***

Other Useful Suppliers – In addition to the suppliers mentioned previously, the following are also well worth considering:

Component Shop – North Wales – 01248 719353

This company supply everything for the modeller which is `electronic`. This includes, batteries, chargers, motors, cable, connectors, lights, switches etc. They also now include a range of electronic units (black boxes) previously marketed by a company called Action Electronics which can be fitted to the more sophisticated models. These units provide special features such as light controls, sound simulators etc.

SLEC - Norfolk – 01953 885279

As well as incorporating Vintage Model Boats (mentioned previous), the main item stocked by this supplier is wood, for modelling use. This includes balsa, ply, and softwood strip. The company also supply adhesives and finishing materials.

Although wood is preferred by some modellers, many now use plastic. There are a number of names used such as Styrene, or Plasticard, but it is all the same material. It is available in sheet form in a variety of thicknesses up to about 2mm. Also available in a number of sections e.g. rectangular strip, tube, round rod etc. See the websites for suppliers such as SHG, Cornwall Model Boats or Dockyard Model Shop.

Magazine – There is one magazine dedicated to those that build model boats, with the very imaginative title of *Model Boats*. This is published monthly and available from W H Smith.

Model Boat Club – If there is a club in your area dedicated to model boats...then join it. As well as acquiring a facility to “go sailing”, you can tap into a wealth of knowledge from fellow members. If within the club membership you fail to get an acceptable answer to your question, you will at least be pointed in the right direct to a person or supplier who should be able to help.

Health & Safety – As with all hobbies care is needed regarding H&S. Always adhere to the written instructions provided. Even a relatively simple task like recharging a battery, can cause problems, if you get the wrong combination of battery and charger i.e. **FIRE or EXPLOSION - If in doubt – ASK!**

[www.dolphinmodelboatclub.com](http://www.dolphinmodelboatclub.com)

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