DeHavilland Canada DHC-6

History: From World War II deHavilland Canada designed and manufactured a range of light civil aircraft that suited Canadian conditions but also had wider use in regional and rural air services. The culmination of this series was the DeHavilland DHC-6 Twin Otter which combined the features of the earlier DHC-3 Otter with new small turboprop engines that gave additional payload and operational safety. It became the most popular aircraft designed and constructed in Canada.

Development of the Twin Otter began in 1964 and the first prototype made its maiden flight on 20 May 1965 and received its certificate of airworthiness in mid 1966. The first six aircraft were Series 1 prototypes, followed by 108 Series 100 Twin Otters. It became immediately popular in rural and remote areas because of the additional safety and payload that made it a good replacement for the old Otters. In April 1968 production of the Series 200 Twin Otters began. It had improved STOL performance, a longer nose that gave a larger baggage compartment and a larger door to the rear baggage compartment. The 300 series was produced from 1969 with more powerful engines that allowed an increase of 450kg in payload. Production ended in 1988 after a production of 115 Series 1 and 100, 115 Series 200 and 614 Series 300 Twin Otters.

The Twin Otter found a niche in the market that had once been occupied by the utilitarian DC-3 with a reasonable passenger capacity and range and a good short take off and landing capacity. It could be found from the most remote areas to major airports. It carried a wide range of cargos and regional commuter airline passengers. Twin Otters were very flexible and could be delivered from the factory with floats, skis or tricycle undercarriage, making them adaptable to most environments, flying from the freezing cold of northern Canada, Alaska and Antarctica to the heat of inland Australia and many tropical areas. The versatility and manoeuverability made them popular in areas with difficult flying environments including Papua New Guinea. In Australia the Twin Otter was flown by airlines including TAA and Ansett, Aeropelican, the Australian Army and in the Antarctic.

In August 2006 a total of 349 Twin Otters of all variants remained in air transport services and a total or around 600 in world wide service. In 2006 a Canadian company bought

the licence to construct new Twin Otters to be known as Series 400. In April 2007 Viking Air announced that it had received orders for over thirty new Twin Otters, many from companies already operating old Twin Otters. It was expected that deliveries would start within two years at a cost of $3.2 million each.

Data: two crew light STOL transport. *Engines* two Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-27 turbojet engines of 462 kW (620 shp) each. *Wing span* 19.81m (65ft). *Length* 15.77m (51ft 9in). *Maximum take-off weight* 5670kg (12,500lbs). *Maximum cruising speed* 338km/h (210mph). *Range* 1297km (806miles). *Maximum payload:* 1941kg (4280lb) including up to 20 passengers..

The kit: Matchbox 1/72

Matchbox were a strange mob when it came to making model kits. There were the usual Mustangs, 109s, Spitfires and 190s but also a lot of very strange things too. Goodness knows what they were drinking at Board meetings when the decision of next year's releases was on the agenda, but we have a lot to thank them for. Of course, most Matchbox kits were also unusual with their selection of coloured plastics, deep trenches and overall simplicity, but on the other hand they usually also offered options so there were a variety of models to be made. These days many Matchbox kits are appearing under different labels and in dull monochrome plastic, but I don't think their Twin Otter is among them. I hear that there is a Hobbycraft kit, but if it's as good as their Dash-8 I think I'll stick with the Matchbox kit.

The Twin Otter was not on my shopping list but this kit came to me from a club member who had apparently lost interest after the first few minutes. It was not hard to see why. He handed over a plastic bag full of blindingly bright white and yellow plastic. Fortunately there was an instruction sheet as well to make sense of everything, which was just as well because some of the bits and pieces were quite vague. The kit could be made with floats, skis or wheels, and alternative noses so it seemed that all three Series were possible.

This bag of plastic hung around for quite some time. I picked up a Hawkeye decal set for an Australian Airlines Twin Otter but that failed to inspire me and the kit sat there, glaring at me sullenly for a long time until I got sick of looking at it. 'Either it dies tonight or it gets finished', I told myself and started work. The fuselage windows had been fitted, they had to go, and the fuselage rattled with the weight in the nose. These little problems were fixed with a bit of radical surgery and everything jammed back together with super-glue. By the end of the evening it was clear the patient was going to survive, the rest of the work involved making it look something like a real model aeroplane.

Painting was relatively easy but trying to figure out the colours should be was the hard part. The Hawkeye instruction sheet was rather vague about the colours and the only photo of an Australian Twin Otter I could find was far from being definitive. In the end I did what any good historian does, I made my best guess based on the evidence. As a result the wings are light grey and the fuselage is white with a nice little dash of royal blue beneath. It could be that there is a lot of black on the wing upper surfaces (those PT6A engines must be very dirty) but the pattern changes from airline to airline so I decided not to do anything - I'd rather have to add some black later than try to get rid of it. The Hawkeye decals went on very neatly and the end result was conversion of some ugly bits of yellow plastic into a rather nice looking little model.