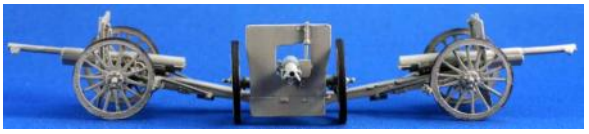
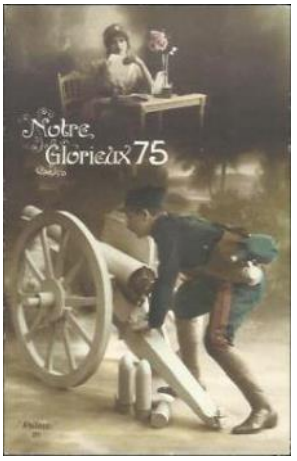
75mm gun assembly

Thursday, February 16, 2023

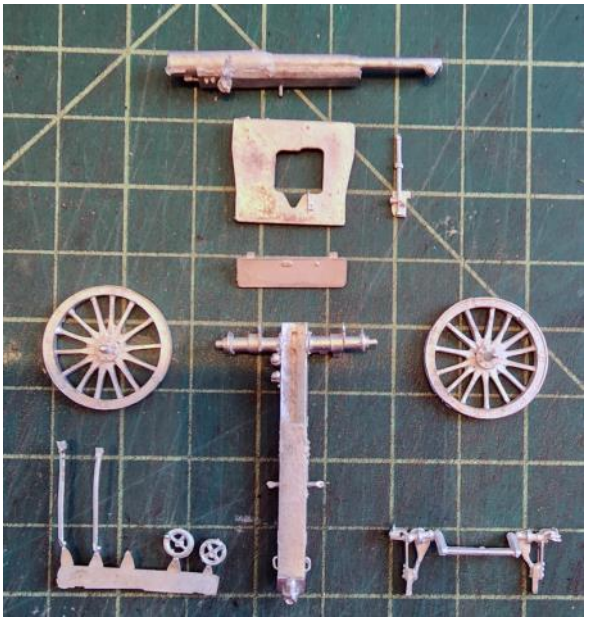


This version of the M1897 75mm gun--better known as the "French 75"--contains a number of improvements over our previous model. I've assembled six of these guns and I think I have the process down. If you have an idea that works better for you, go for it.



Some general considerations:

- As with any model, trim everything first and test fit all pieces before final assembly.
- The small parts come on a sprue. I prefer a small clippers to snip them off without damage.
- I generally like two-part epoxy. In a couple of places, super glue may work better. Use whatever you like and are good with.
- Depending how you make it up, you may choose not to use all the pieces.



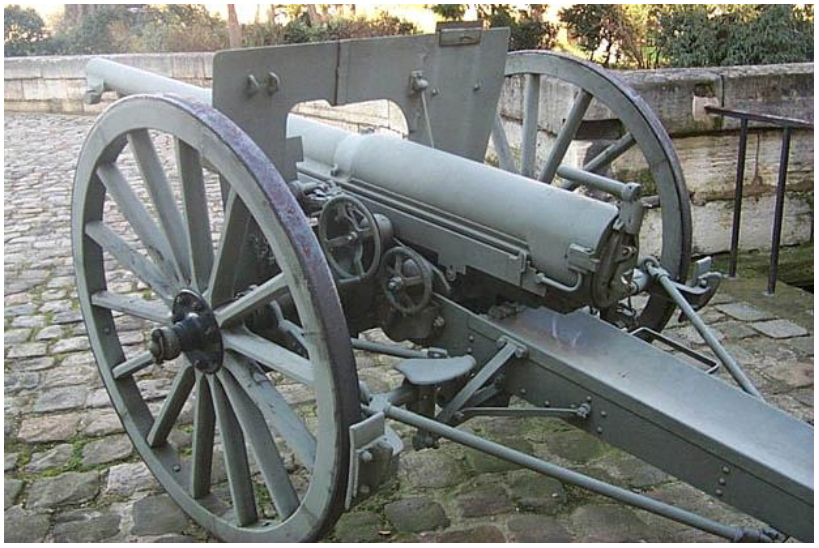
All the pieces laid out. Top to bottom,

- Barrel
- Gun shield. The small piece to the left is an additional shield piece.
- Gun shield extension (optional)
- Outside in: wooden wheels, carriage.
- Lower left, two hand-turned wheels for adjusting fire and two rods that connect from the carriage to the brake assembly.
- Lower right, brake assembly.

First Steps

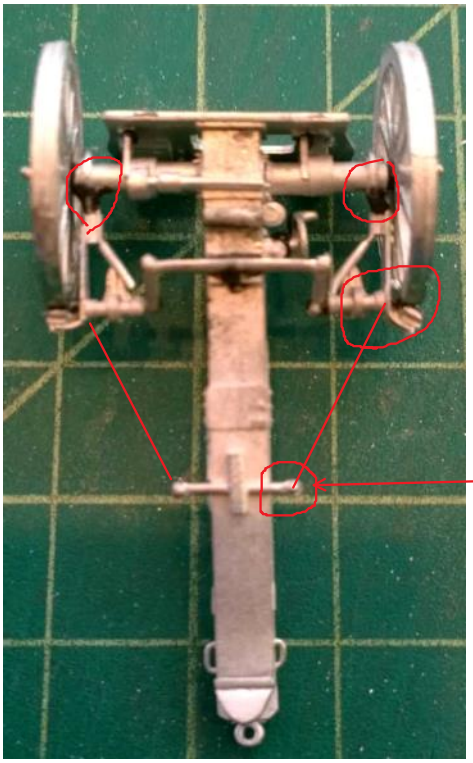
Top side with shield and wheels attached.

- First assemble the carriage with the gun shield. There are registration marks (circled).
- Set the shield on a flat surface and lean the carriage on something to keep it at the right angle while it dries.
- Next, assemble the wheels. Doing both at the same time ensures you can make sure they both look aligned.



An existing French 75 (location unknown).

Note the placement of the hand wheels and the brake assemblies. This example has more than the usual number of pieces intact.



Next Step

Brake Assembly. Viewed from the underside.

Attach the brake assembly next.

Red circles show where glue is needed to make the parts fit. The cross bar is shown in the registration marks. If it doesn't seem to fit conveniently, just snip them off. The brake pads will need to fit behind the wheels and the bars extend to the axle as shown by the red circles.

The straight red lines show approximately where the two tie rods should go. Add those now or later. I usually add those last. The gun needs to be flipped right side up to add them.

NOTE: The gun was designed so that when setting up the gun in battery, the brake assembly would drop and the wheels rest on the pads. Theoretically, this provided, along with the spade, three points of contact to stabilize the gun.

If you're not attaching the brake rods, you can snip these off.

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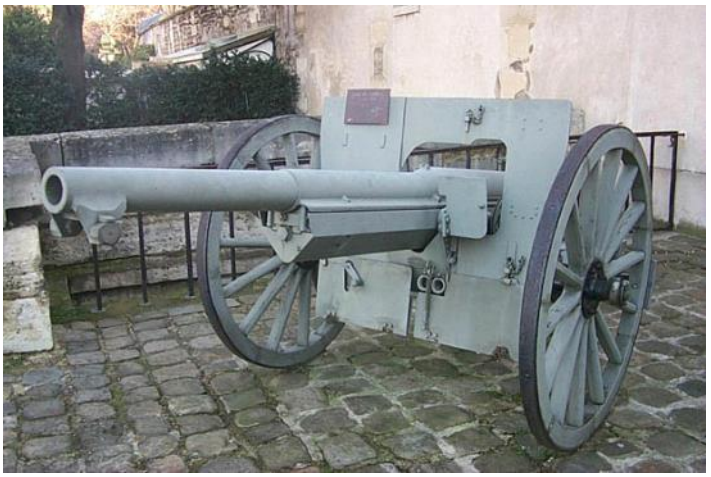
Here's the right side of a gun located at the old town square in Brazov, Romania. Note again the placement of the tie rods.

In the 1930s, the Foreign Legion operated 75mm batteries, the first being the *Batterie de Marche d'Artillerie* of the 2e REI. The Legion operated three 4-gun batteries that were the fore-runners of the BSPL. See Osprey MAA 325 for more details.

This inter-war crew is FR-10D.

Final steps

- Attach the barrel next. Put plenty of glue in the V-shaped cradle and use the registration pin to set the barrel. The barrel should be in place before you set the hand wheels.
- Turn the gun on its right side and attach the hand wheels, the smaller one to the rear as shown in the left side photo above. Note that they do overlap a bit so I think you get a better result by attaching the smaller one first.
- Turn the gun upside down and glue the shield extension on if desired. On the real gun, the lower part was on hinges and was divided into two pieces. In a lot of pictures and especially on existing display models, the extension is missing.
- Add the small shield piece to the front left of the barrel. The photo below shows its position as well as the lower extensions.



Additional considerations

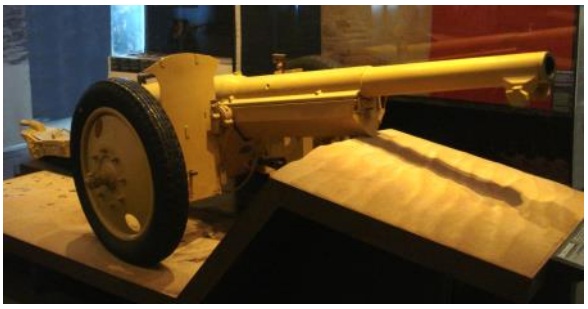
These versatile guns were used in a variety of ways over the years. Many have found their way into museums and as war memorials.

In North Africa in World War II, the French added pneumatic tires and carried them in the backs of trucks (*portee*) since towing artillery over desert sands was a tricky proposition.

There were a lot of different types of pneumatic tires and I don't know that any were the same diameter as the wooden wheels. Some photos I've seen have the brake system, some don't. If you're using the tires, just leave that off.

Below, an existing gun at Commercy, France.

The model built for *Batterie Saharienne Portee* of the Legion (BSPL). The Foreign Legion crew is FR-14.



An interesting variant is this gun at the Musee de l'Armee in Paris, used at Bir Hakim in an anti-tank role by the 13e DBLE.

To make this gun, just snip off the top of the gun shield and leave off the brake assembly and the two other gun shield parts.