

## Building Biremes

Several years ago, ok a decade or more, I decided to create a scenario from Classical Hack Scenarios Macedonia. The scenario was Alexander's siege of the island portion of the city of Tyre. To create this scenario I required the island city and Alexander's fleet.

To the right is the city's fortified island. It was set-up on a table 10 feet x 16 feet. This view is the more fortified part of the city and where Alexander decided not to attack.



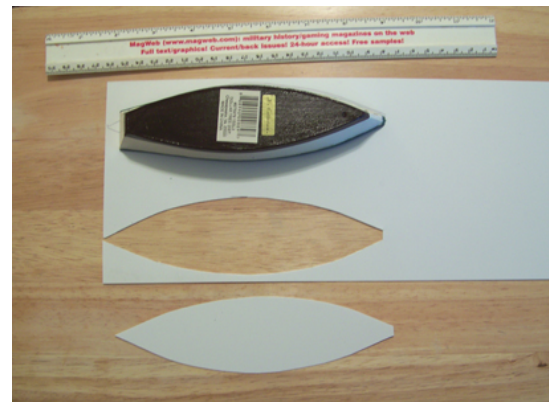
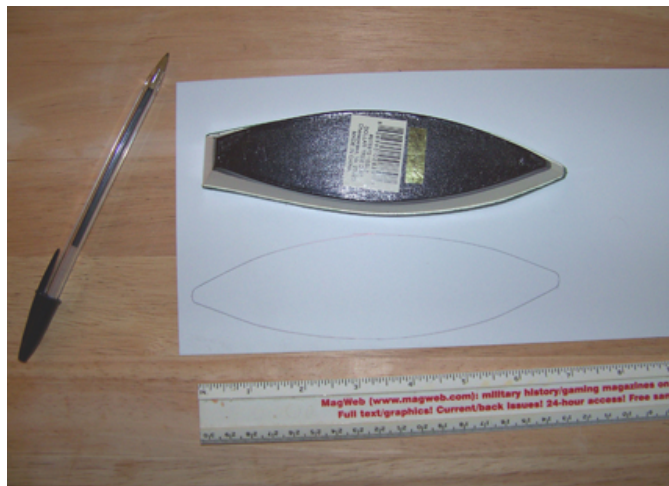
The portion which Alexander decided to assault by boat was where the defenses appeared weakest; the island temple was here. It was connected to the main island by a very short and narrow neck of land. This was called the Melcart portion of the island. At the bottom of the picture is a low wall. It was this area that Alexander planned to break into the city. This is shown to the left bottom. While the playing area was large it did not require a lot of figures. I'll get to this later.

Over the years I have made 4 of these set-ups. People were so impressed they wanted to own it buy one of their own. So being a model junkie I happily sold 3 of this set-up.

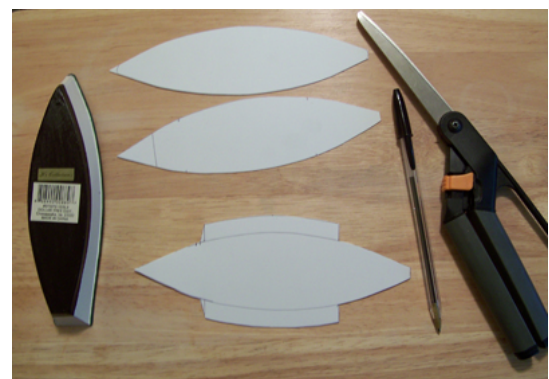
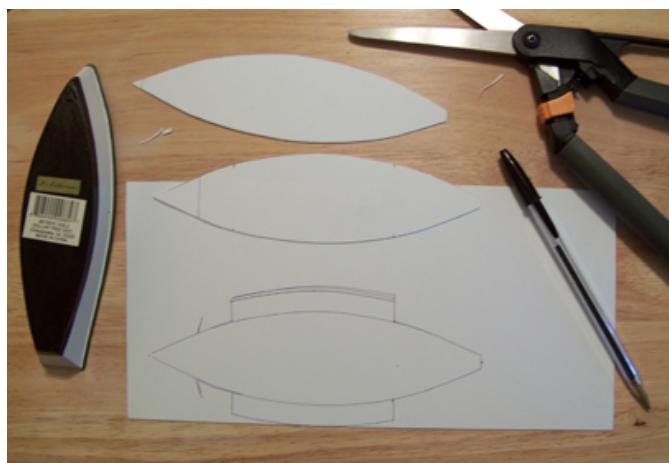
With the city made I then had to make Alexander's fleet and a few vessels for the defenders. At the dollar store I found some canoes. These I used to make my fleets. I made about a half dozen or more and to do this I made a basic pattern as I will illustrate. I decided to use styrene for the island base. For the boats and buildings I used Perfic Panels from Precision Products. Using styrene made everything very light and portable.

Taking the canoe I made the basic pattern for the biremes. The final is shown here to the right. Each vessel could take a crew of 8 to 12 figures. The finished boats looked really nice I think.

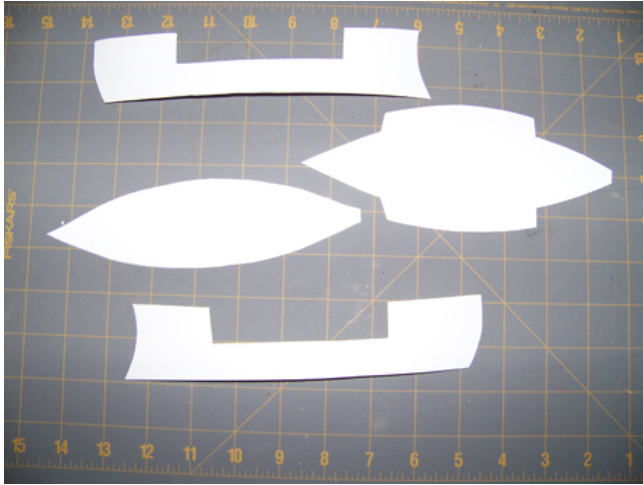
Below is the boat or canoe I bought. I selected a sheet of Perfic Panel and outlined the boat on a small sheet. I cut a bunch of these out first. It was pretty simple to outline the basic ship on the panel. I reversed the prow so the boats would look right. The lines would not be seen as the boat would be painted in the final stages.



The first cutouts were for the bottom of the vessel. Next I configured the outriggers which would be on each side of the vessel. This was done using one of the bottoms and drawing the deck with the outriggers. The panels cut easy with a scissors.

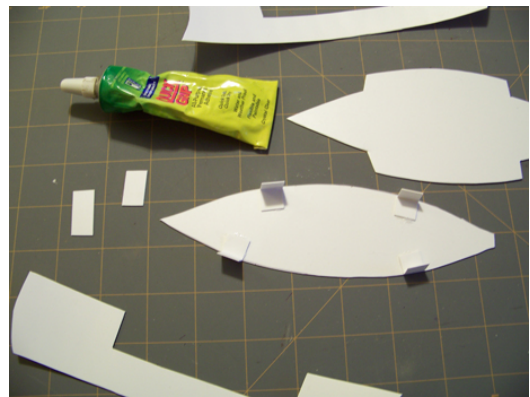


Using a cutting board I next cut the vessel's side walls. I reversed these to make sure they mirrored each other for final gluing. Below are the basic ship parts excluding the bow and fantail.



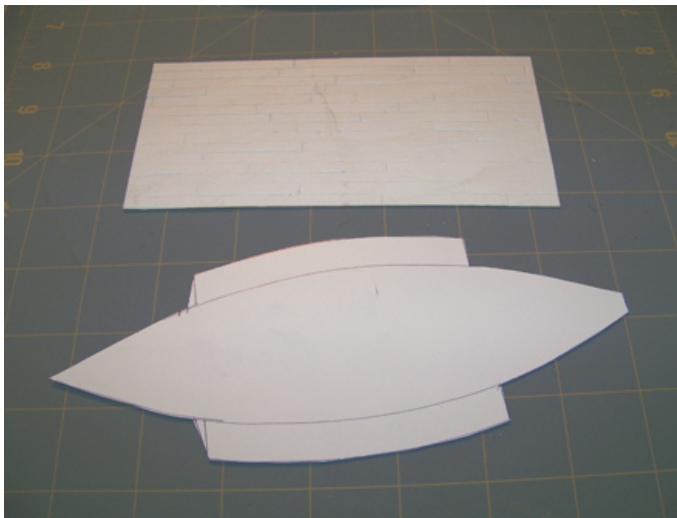
To make the sides of the ship secure I then made tabs; 4 for each vessel. Again I cut all the required parts first something like a dozen of each for the sides, bottoms, upper decks and tabs.

I used Quick Grab glue to fix the tables. This glue dries very quickly.



Next I took one of the upper deck sections and a piece of Precision Products wood panels and cut the upper deck. These look just like planking.

Again I cut a dozen of these out. You have to take

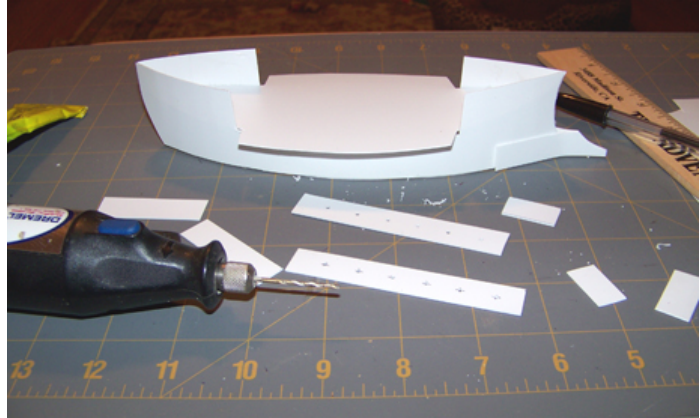


a mass production approach so you can build lots of vessels fast. In essence you are making a model vessel kit. At this point I stop and glue all the planking cutouts to the plain cutout of the plain decking shown above left in the top photograph. I use the top cutout as the outrigger would require each vessel's own top piece of planking.

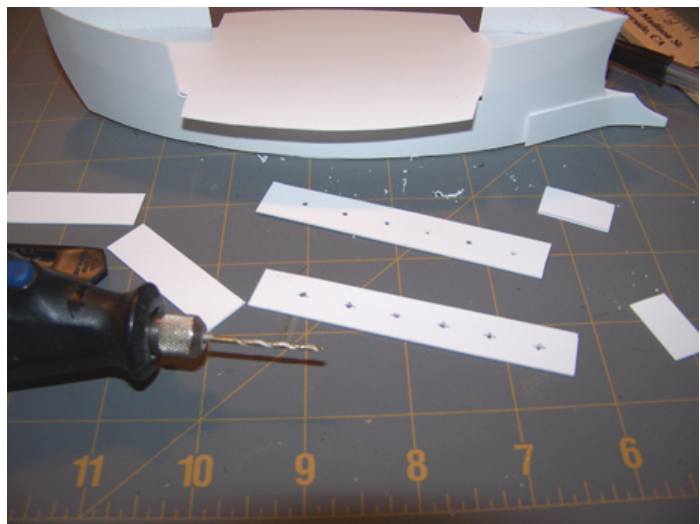
With this done I was ready to assembling the two fleets. The vessels are narrow and I based the width of each vessel on half stands for heavy infantry. A normal 4 figure stand is 60

mm. So the decks had to be able to take half stands which were 30 mm wide. In the game I would count the total number of crewmen in melee. The depth of the stands were about 20 or 25 mm deep.

Here we have a partially completed vessel. I then figured out the outrigger sides cutting these narrow parts out. The vessel sides did not require putting planking on the side walls of the vessels. I could have done this but chose not to to speed things up. So the side walls would be bare panels.

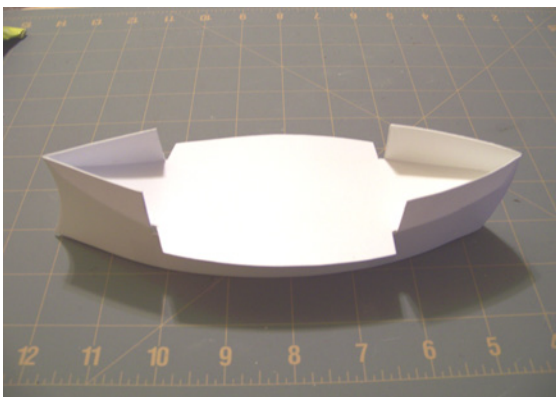


With this done I was ready to start assembling the outrigger sides but rather than assemble and then drill oar holes I decided to put a pile of sides together and drill the holes for the oars. In this way they would all be equally spaced.

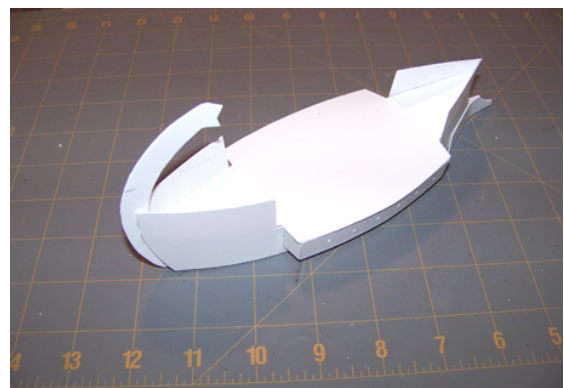


I forgot to mention cutting out the rams, fantails and prow piece. This I did repeating the mass production method. Had I glued and assembled the out rigger sides I would have risked breaking them. You also need front and rear pieces for the out riggers in the image on to the right.- the small pieces above the number 6.

So now we have an almost complete number of vessels. Here is an almost finished vessel. Below is the fantail piece which could be done before gluing the two side wall together. I should have mentioned this earlier.



I also glue the ram onto each vessel at this stage or before.



Now we are ready to do some detailing. For this I use micro screening or embroidering mess. First though on the next page is the prow of the ship. I fit the bow piece in now.

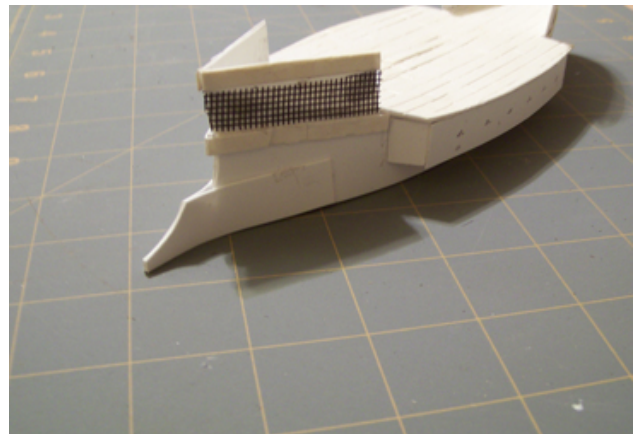
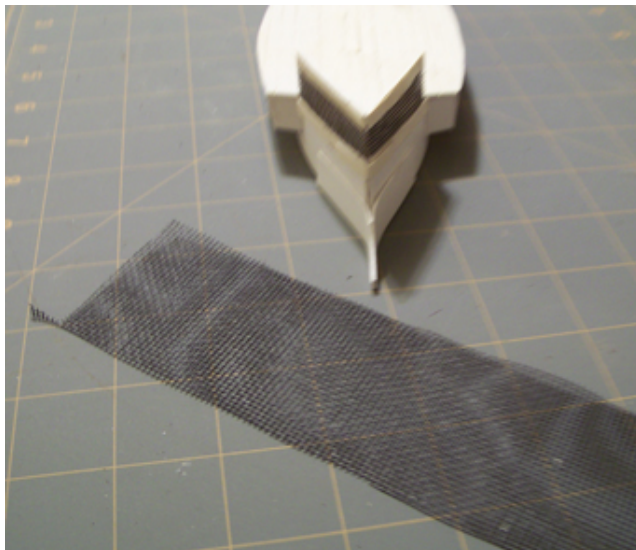
Looking at the image you will get an idea how narrow the vessels will be.

Next you can add the oars if you wish but I would wait and do this later as we haven't painted things yet.

To give details I am ready to give the prow details of the vessels. Yes cut a number first all the same size.

It is details like this that will make a nice looking scratch built model vessel.

To the left is where I glue the mesh on to the prow area. I like to leave this a color of black or brown. but you can paint the vessels to your own liking. With embroidery mesh you can get this in different colors. This will reduce painting it. But remember you

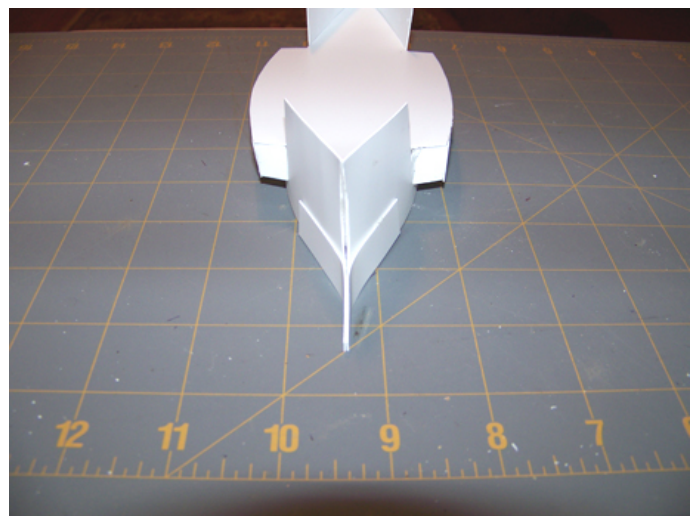


really like to paint things which are small.

should paint the vessel first unless you

Finally we are ready to paint the fleets. I like to have them all look the same for each side, although painting the fleets the same is not necessary.

I guess you want to see more views of the vessel completed. One thing though I omitted is that I paint the top deck planking before gluing it on. This I do with a light deck color and then paint over the deck planking piece black or brown and wipe off before it dries. This brings out the details of the planks.





I use inexpensive acrylic paints from Wal-Mart.

I should note that I also created barges on which were catapults and ballistae.

See how I painted the upper decking and barge floors first. You can just make out the planking details.

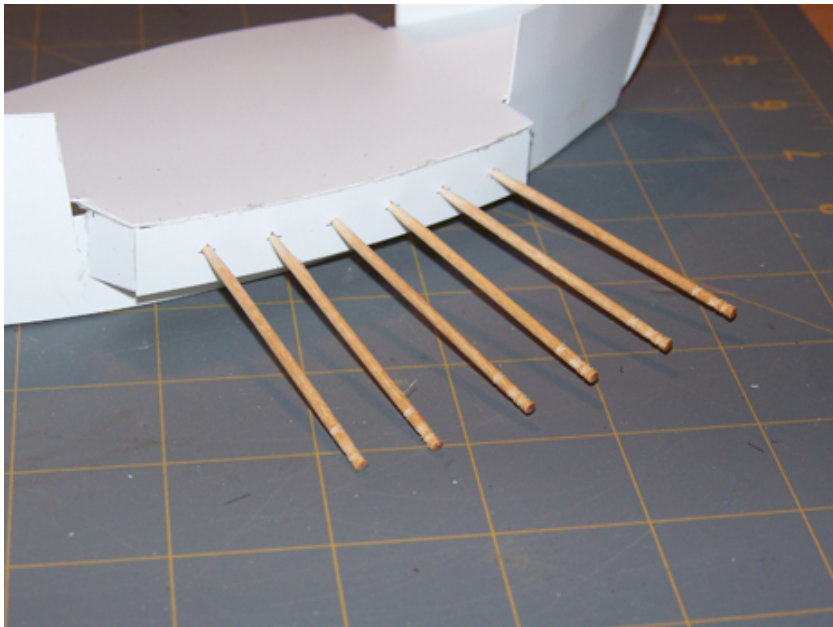
Below left are the oars which are tooth picks from Wal-Mart. Just glue these in but paint them first.

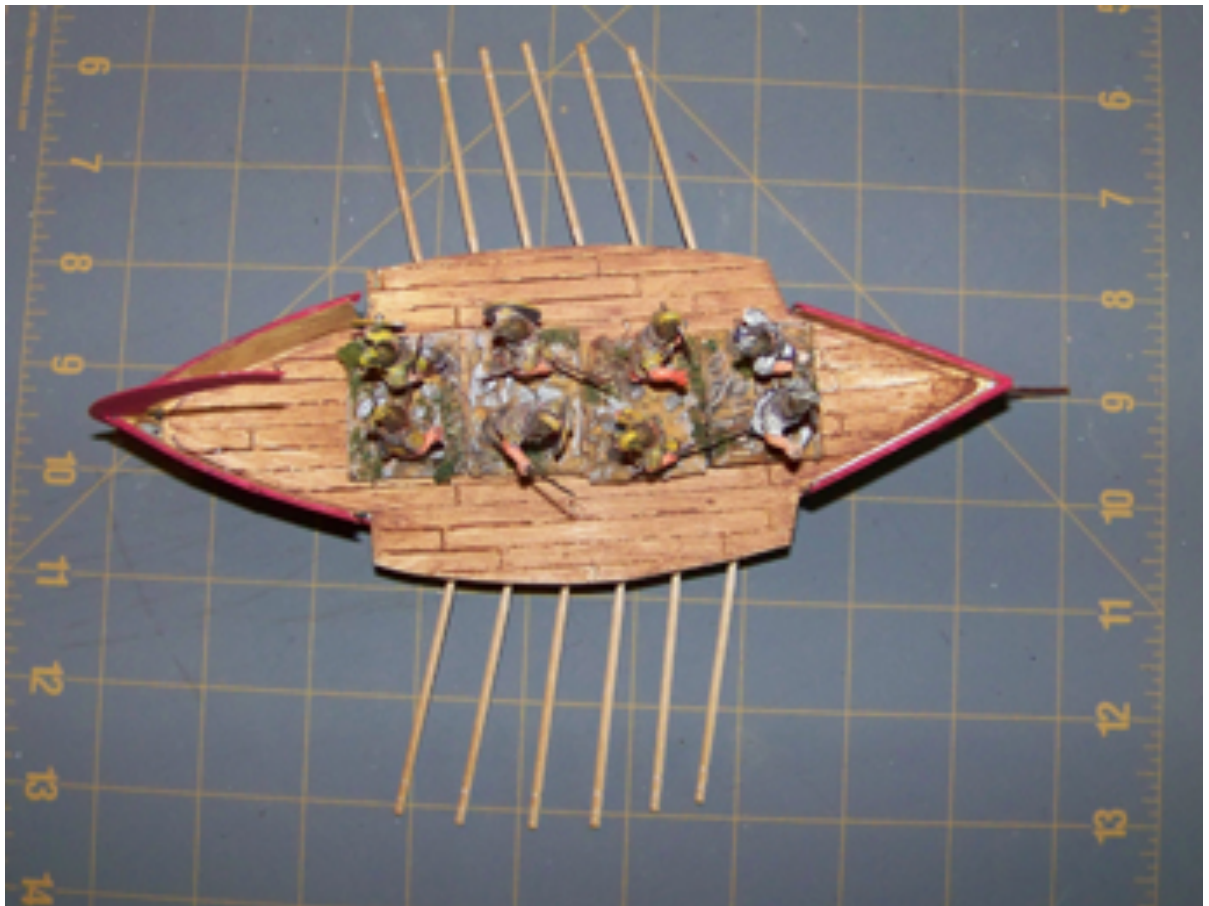
Well that's about it. If you have any questions you can e-mail me at:

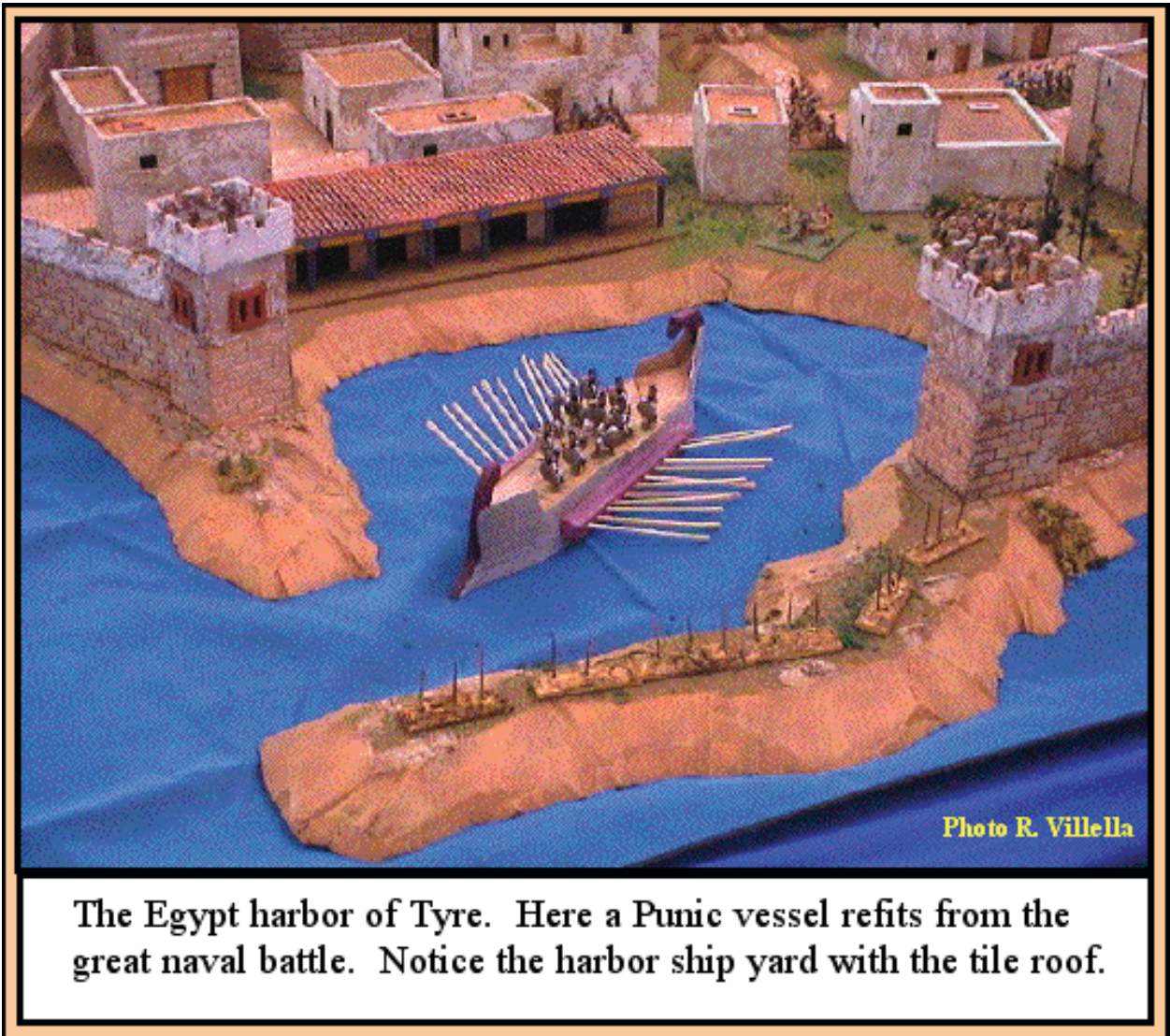
[philip@lmwworks](mailto:philip@lmwworks)

With all this said I will end the pdf with a few pages of completed 8 figure vessels. These are defender vessels.

Tyre images end this piece.







The Egypt harbor of Tyre. Here a Punic vessel refits from the great naval battle. Notice the harbor ship yard with the tile roof.





The Melcart Island. Here is the temple where the Carthaginian ambassador & The King of Tyre, retired hoping to find safety. The curtain wall at the bottom of the photograph was breeched later in the siege. It is removable.



The city island of Tyre from the north. Lower center is the palace of the King of Tyre and the two harbors on the left one being the Egyptian harbor and the other the Sidon harbor. While naval engagements raged outside both harbors landings were eventually made inside the harbor at great loss to Alexander's men and sailors.



The Macedonians land a battering ram. The siege was an exercise to see how the soldiers of the city could defend the place knowing there was little chance of success unless Alexander was killed or some relief from the Great King Darius arrived-no relieve came.

Notes: