

— 7201 — M9A1 Half-Track Body

THE HALF-TRACK CAR M9A1 IS AN AMERICAN HALF-track of World War II, used in only limited numbers by the United States armed forces but supplied in some quantity to Great Britain. It is based on the Half-track Personnel Carrier M5A1 but differs from that in a revised layout of the rear body interior, akin to that of the Half-track Car M2A1.

This set is a simple conversion for the 1/2nd scale M5 half-track kit by The Plastic Soldier Company (No. WW2V20013). It may fit models by different manufacturers, but this has not been verified.

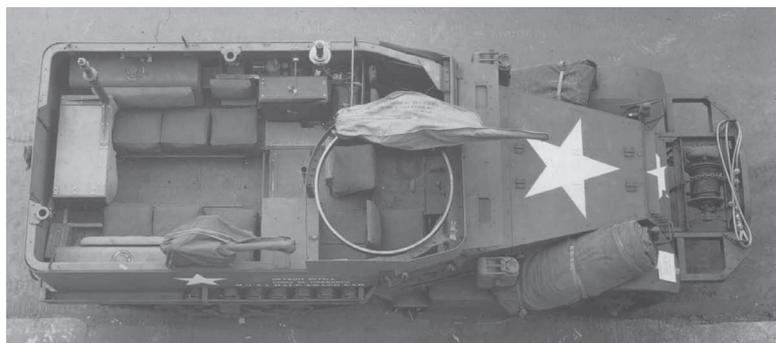


INSTRUCTIONS

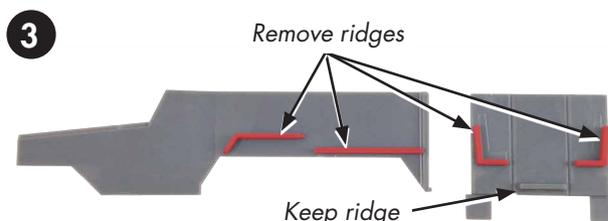
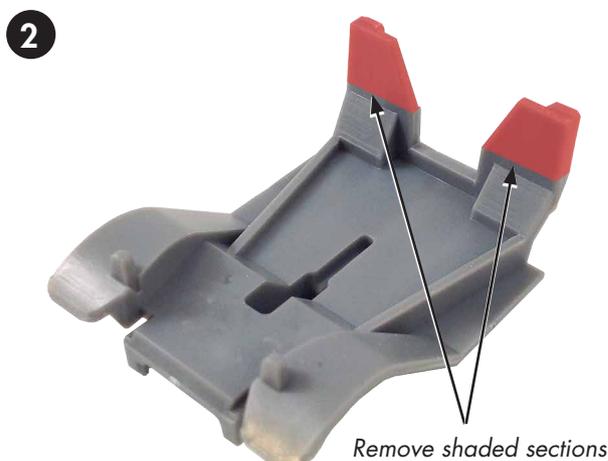
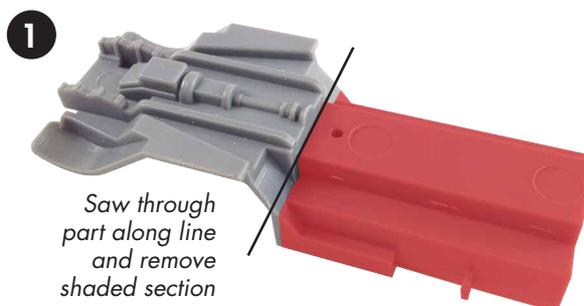
The set consists of only a single part, designed to replace the passenger area of the body. Little or no clean-up should be required on the part itself, though it may have somewhat ragged edges, which can be cleaned up by scraping gently with a modeling knife.

To assemble the Plastic Soldier Company kit into an M9A1 half-track, these steps can be followed.

1. The kit floor's aft section must be removed by sawing it off from below directly behind the cab area.
2. The upright plates directly behind the cab must be removed as well, by cutting horizontally at the level of the original rear area seats.
3. The locating ridges on the insides of the body side panels must be removed. On the rear plate, the L-shaped locating ridges on the inside must also be removed, while the horizontal one at the bottom should be kept.
4. At this point, the sides can be glued to the cab/front and the rear plate; the M9A1 rear body can then be dropped in place between the sides, resting on the cab floor and the locating ridge at the bottom of the rear plate, and fixed in place with superglue. When it is in place, the chassis section can be attached to the M9A1 rear body, also with superglue.



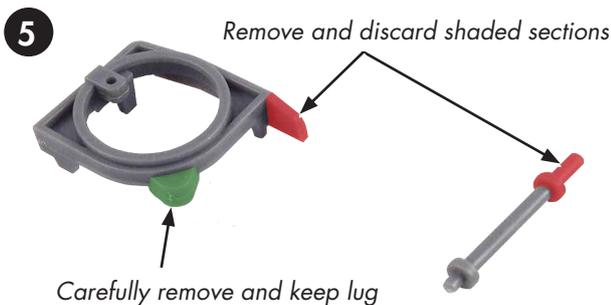
Overhead view of Half-track Car M9A1. Note that the pictured vehicle has been modified by replacing the left storage bin by a radio set and adding a cabinet with a second radio at the rear of the body, causing the left rear seat cushions to be moved forward. (Source: via Half-Track by R.P. Hunnicutt)



CONTACT INFORMATION

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please address these to info@plasticwarriors.org.

5. All M9A1 half-tracks were fitted with a machine-gun ring mount over the cab.¹
 - a. The rearward extension along the right side of the ring mount should be removed.
 - b. The ring mount part must further be modified by carefully cutting off the lug into which the upright support rod fits, and then gluing this to the support. This must be done carefully if both ring and lug are to be saved; it is easier by using two parts, though this will make it impossible to fit all models from the kit with a ring mount.
 - c. The support itself should have its lower end shortened to remove everything up to and including the flange, and be fitted without glue in the hole by the front seats in the new rear body. Its top can then be aligned with the machine-gun ring and glued to that so the support is vertical. Some cutting or filing of the lug may be necessary where it fits against the ring in order to make sure the support rod is vertical. When all is in place correctly, the lower end of the support rod can be glued.
 - d. In British service, a machine gun was not commonly fitted, though some photographs of M5A1-type half-tracks do show an M2 HB or occasionally a Bren machine gun on the ring mount.



6. The rest of the kit can then be built according to the Plastic Soldier Company's instructions, keeping the following in mind:
 - a. The model can be fitted with either a winch or a roller at the front of the body.
 - b. The machine guns at the sides and/or right rear of the body can be fitted, or if they are omitted, mountings for them can be fabricated.
 - c. The mine racks on the sides should be fitted, but if a British vehicle is to be represented, the mines in them must be removed as these are an American item not used in the British Army. This is simplest to do by cutting away the entire horizontal rail and the mines behind it, then adding a new rail from plastic strip. (For strength, stowage can be put behind the rail so that it cannot be pressed inward when the model is handled.) The rear ends of the racks should extend beyond the curved corner so they are flush with the rear plate of the hull.
 - d. The stowage racks to go on the rear plate should be left off.²

¹ Though over 2,000 M9s (without this mount) were built, all were modified to M9A1s (with the mount) before delivery.

² A vehicle with these racks would be an M5A2, but should have an M5/M5A1 interior as well as some other modifica-

INTERNATIONAL HALF TRACKS
WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS
Rated Payload 3500 lbs. (31 cwt.)
(Illustration shows M.9 model)

UNLADEN WEIGHTS (Full Fuel)	M. 5 and M. 9	M. 14
F. Axle	2 tons 10 cwt.	2 tons 16 cwt.
Track	4 tons 14½ cwt.	4 tons 7 cwt.
Gross	7 tons 4½ cwt.	7 tons 3 cwt.

LADEN WEIGHTS (Laden 31 cwt.)	(Laden 34 cwt.)
F. Axle	2 tons 17 cwt.
Track	5 tons 19½ cwt.
Gross	8 tons 16½ cwt.

OVERALL DIMENSIONS (Less winch)	(with winch)
Length	20' 2"
Width	7' 4"
Height	7' 8"
H.L. (cut down)	6' 2"

INSIDE BODY DIMENSIONS (APPROX.)

M. 5. Length behind driver 9' 0"	Width between tanks 4' 6"
M. 9. Length behind bins 6' 0"	Width between tanks 4' 6"

TOWING: Pintle hook fitted at rear. Height 29½"

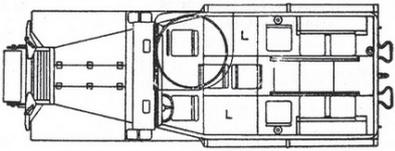
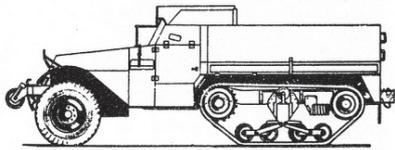



Illustration shows M.9 Half Track

M. 14. Modified for Load Carrier Role. Truck 15 cwt. Half tracked G.S. with winch.

This is similar to the M. 14 in Personnel role except that seats are not fitted in body and rear floor is flat (no wells). Load space is 15' 5" long x 5' 5" wide (except at front where petrol tanks encroach on width). No tilt fitted.

M. 14 Modified for Command Role
Truck 16 cwt. Half-tracked Command
Modified by fitting of commanders desk and map board at rear body; wireless operation's desk at middle of body with No. 19 H.P. and No. 19 L.P. sets installed. Fitting of roof lights and canvas cover.

Scan of what appears to be an official British Army data sheet on its half-tracks. (Source: [David Busfield](#))

Note: A common mistake is to model the M9A1 with doors in the body sides to match the stowage bins inside. Though the M9A1 in American service was considered equivalent to the Half-track Car M2A1, which has such doors, the M9A1 does not.³

PLASTIC SOLDIER COMPANY M5 KIT CORRECTIONS

The Plastic Soldier Company's M5 kit actually represents a hybrid between the Half-track Personnel Carriers M3 and M5—probably caused by altering the company's existing model of an M3 without paying full attention to the detail differences between the M3 and M5. For the model to accurately represent an M5 or one of its variants (M5A1, M5A2, M9A1, M14 or M17), the following points must be corrected. Most of these modifications are best made before the model is assembled.

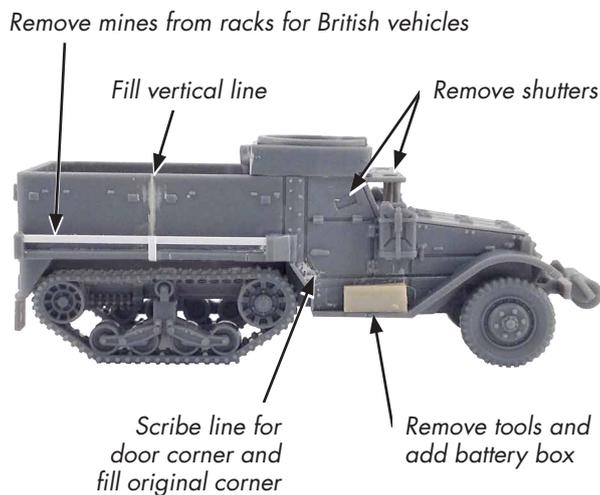
1. The shutters molded on the upper side doors and the windscreen armor plate must be removed, as these were on the inside on the M5, not on the outside as on the M3. This leaves recesses in the armor, which should *not* be filled as they will represent the vision ports well enough.
2. The lines marking out the lower rear corner of the left and right front doors should be filled with putty. A new lower corner can then be created by scribing a diagonal line parallel to the front of the rear wheel/track well directly behind the door. The top of this scribed line should meet the molded-in door line at the level of the top of the rear wheel/track well.
3. The vertical line in the side armor should be filled with putty and sanded smooth.
4. The battery box on the right running board has been omitted. This should be located directly behind the fender and can be built from plastic sheet or by cut-

tions. There was no M9A2, since the M5A2 was intended to replace both the earlier M5 and M5A1, and the M9A1.

³ The only way to distinguish between an M5A1 and M9A1 is by the interior. If this is not visible, a half-track cannot be positively identified as an M9A1.

ting it from a block of suitable material; in $\frac{1}{72}$ nd scale it is 9 mm. long, 4 mm. high, and the full width of the running board. Adding this box will require removing the tools below the right door on the model, but this is wrong in any case, as it is depicted as a mirror image of that on the left with a pickaxe and a shovel, when in fact only a normal axe should be stowed above the battery box.

5. If the machine-gun ring mount is fitted, there are two minor issues:
 - a. The rearward extension of the armor along the right side should be removed when building an M5A1, as this was a feature of the M5A2 only.
 - b. The vertical support for the mount is in the wrong place. It should be moved to the right of the vehicle's centerline, approximately halfway between the hole for it in the kit floor, and the side of the footwell on the model. (The kit designers probably put it in the wrong location because that way, a single hole in the floor could be used for both the M5's pedestal mount and the M5A1's ring mount support.)
6. The rear stowage racks should not be fitted for an M5 or M5A1, as these were only fitted to the M5A2—a variant which only saw very limited service late in World War II. On the other hand, the kit lacks the ladder-like stowage racks along the body sides which were a feature of the M5A2.
7. The front axle should have a “banjo” differential housing, not the “split” type represented in the kit (which is correct for an M3 half-track). This, however, is hardly noticeable unless specifically looked for, and probably not worth correcting.
8. For a vehicle in American service, the fuel cans in front of the doors are best replaced, as they represent the British or German pattern. American vehi-



Modifications necessary to make Plastic Soldier Company kit more accurate.

cles could carry such cans in Europe, but very few M9A1s were used by the U.S. Army.

In addition to the above, the model can be detailed in various ways, if desired. As it is a wargames model, its detail is fairly thick, and quite a lot of work would be needed to bring it to current standards for a display model—though it is generally accurate, with the exceptions noted above. Such additions, however, are beyond the scope of the present article, and the reader is advised to seek out additional documentation if the model is to be detailed.

REFERENCES

- HUNNICUTT, R.P. *Half-Track: A History of American Semi-Tracked Vehicles*. Novato: Presisio Press, 2001.
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- WALMSLEY, PAUL, et al. British WW2 half tracks. *missing-lynx.com Discussion Groups*, 2012. <http://www.network54.com/Forum/47210/thread/1341686950/British+WW2+half+tracks>

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

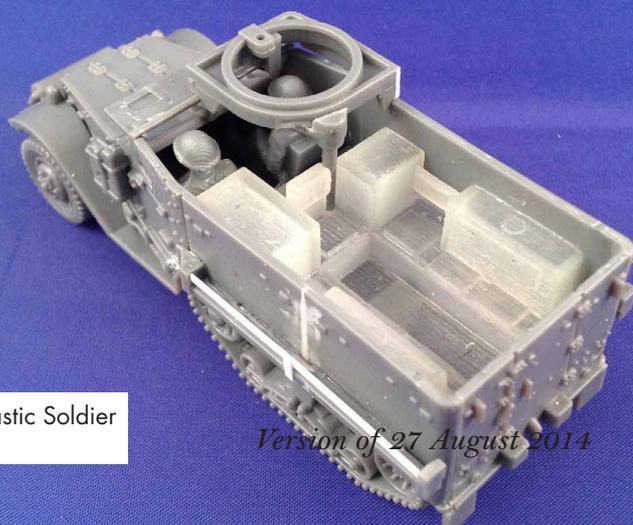
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Thanks to Bert Lindeboom.



Completed model using a Plastic Soldier Company M5 half-track kit.



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