



Full Review

Border

IJA 28cm Howitzer Russo-Japanese War 1905

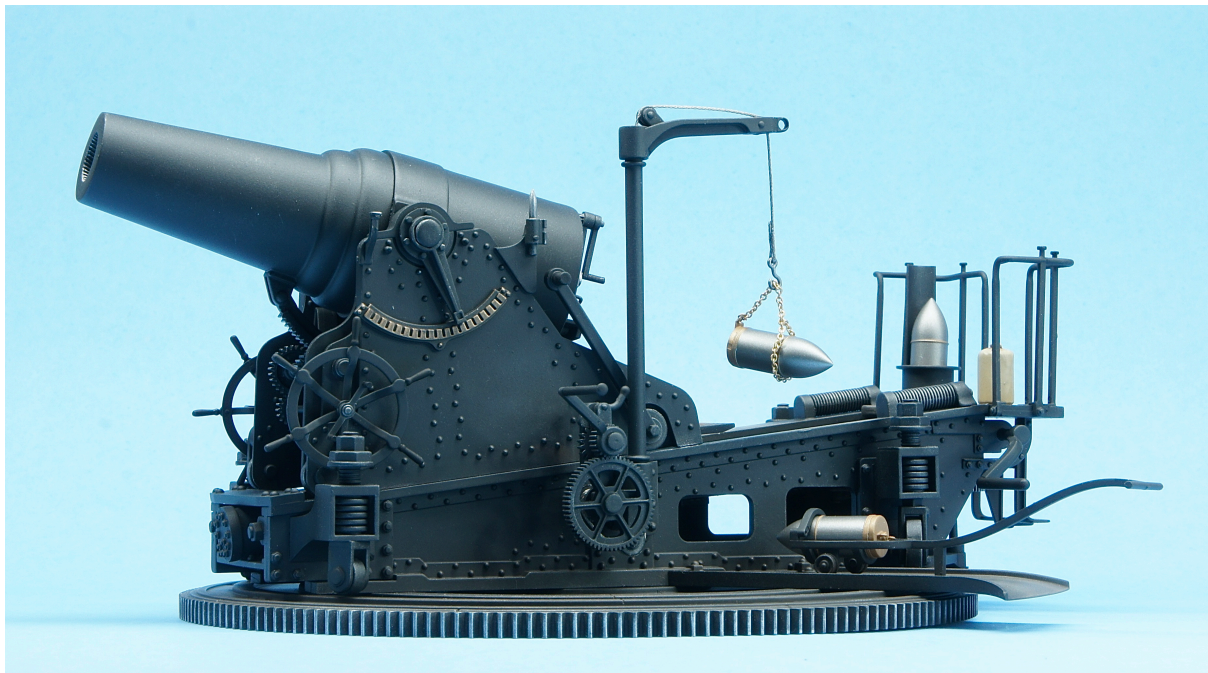
1:35 scale

with

Dave Coward

(January 2024)

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Kit ref: BT-030

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Background...

From Wikipedia

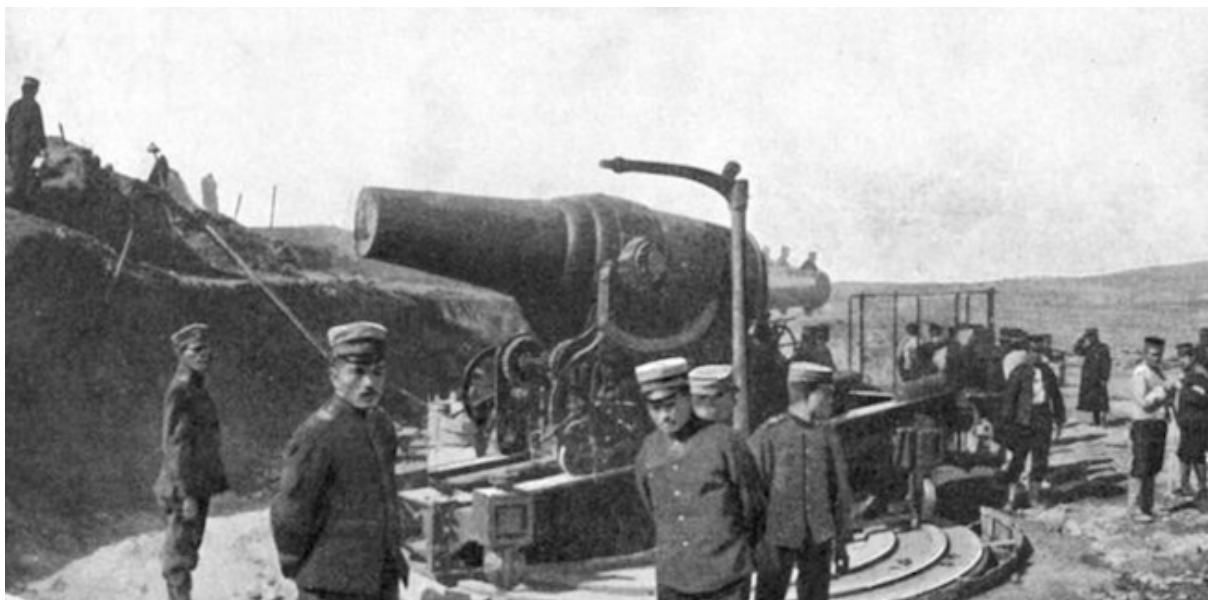
The 28 cm howitzer L/10 was a Japanese coastal and siege howitzer. It was developed by Armstrong before 1892 and saw service in the Russo-Japanese War during the siege of Port Arthur and the Second Sino-Japanese War.



Design and description

The 28 cm Howitzer L/10 was designed in 1884 by the British Armstrong company. Armstrong had an Italian subsidiary which produced guns for the

Italian Navy and Major Pompeo Grillo, a heavy artillery specialist was hired in April 1884 to help the construction of artillery at a new plant in Osaka. The description from Brassey's Naval Annual of 1892 reads "The howitzer was a 28-cm rifled breech-loader of cast iron, 9 calibres long made at Osaka, from the designs of guns made for the Italians by Sir W.G. Armstrong". The Italians produced the design in a number of different lengths and they were designated by their diameter and length in calibres 280/9, 280/10, 280/11, and 280/16. Some 220 pieces were manufactured by the Osaka Artillery Arsenal for Japanese coastal defence. It was mounted on a turntable which was fixed to a steel firing platform. It required two to four days to emplace for firing. An ammunition crane was fixed to the carriage for ease of loading. The howitzer entered service in 1892 and was installed in shore batteries in forts overlooking Tokyo Bay and Osaka Bay, and had been intended for anti-ship operations. However, it saw use as a siege gun during the Russo-Japanese War due to a lack of heavy siege guns.



Russo-Japanese War

During the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese Third Army was besieging Port Arthur. While the capture of Port Arthur had been achieved in a single assault during the First Sino-Japanese War, the situation was different in 1904. The Russians had been in possession of Port Arthur since 1897 and had constructed strong fortifications around the city following the plans of General Eduard Totleben. After the first general assault in August 1904 yielded over 16,000 casualties, General Nogi, the commanding officer of the Japanese forces, requested heavy siege guns. With the arrival of the first battery of 28 cm howitzers, replacing those lost when the transport Hitachi Maru, loaded with a battalion of the First Reserve Regiment of the Guards, was sunk by Russian cruisers in the Hitachi Maru Incident on June 15, 1904, the situation changed. The massive 11-inch howitzers could throw a 217 kilogram (478 pound) shell over 7.8 kilometers (4.8 miles), [and Nogi then had the firepower necessary to seriously damage the Russian fortifications. The huge shells

were nicknamed "roaring trains" by the Russian troops (for the sound they made just before impact), and during their period at Port Arthur over 16,949 of these shells were fired

At 10:30 on December 5, following another massive artillery bombardment, the Japanese managed to overrun 203 Meter Hill overlooking the harbour of Port Arthur with the Russian Pacific Fleet at anchor. They sent an artillery observer on the hill, directing the fire of the 28 cm howitzer, systematically sinking the Russian fleet, one ship after another. On December 5, 1904, the battleship Poltava was sunk, followed by the battleship Retvizan on December 7, 1904, the battleships Pobeda and Peresvet and the cruisers Pallada and Bayan on December 9, 1904. All six would be raised, repaired, renamed, and recommissioned by the Japanese after the war. The battleship Sevastopol, although hit five times by 11-inch (280 mm) shells, managed to move out of range of the guns. On the night of January 2, 1905, after Port Arthur surrendered, Captain Nikolai Essen of the Sevastopol had the crippled battleship scuttled in 30 fathoms (55 m) of water by opening the sea cocks on one side, so that the ship would sink on its side and could not be raised and salvaged by the Japanese.

World War II



Due to a lack of alternatives, the Japanese reactivated the 28 cm howitzer for coastal defence in 1945, expecting the landing of the Allies. Thirteen guns were emplaced on Kyushu, six on Shikoku, 62 on Honshu and 10 on Hokkaido. Also, two batteries of the 28 cm howitzers were used by 132nd Independent Mixed Brigade at Dongning, Heilongjiang, during the Soviet invasion of Manchuria in 1945. Two batteries of 28 cm howitzers were emplaced with the Najin Fortress Garrison in Rason.

Aftermarket Extras:

CMK Chain

Construction

I'll start of by saying that this wasn't a model that I chose but one that Geoff said that I might like to try as I'm always up for building something a bit different so after a quick look in the box and seeing the quality of the moulding I very quickly said 'why not'.

I know very little about the subject apart from the Wikipedia entry that I have reproduced above. The good thing about this was for me it was a straightforward build with no research being done and that was quite refreshing after some quite in depth builds lately.

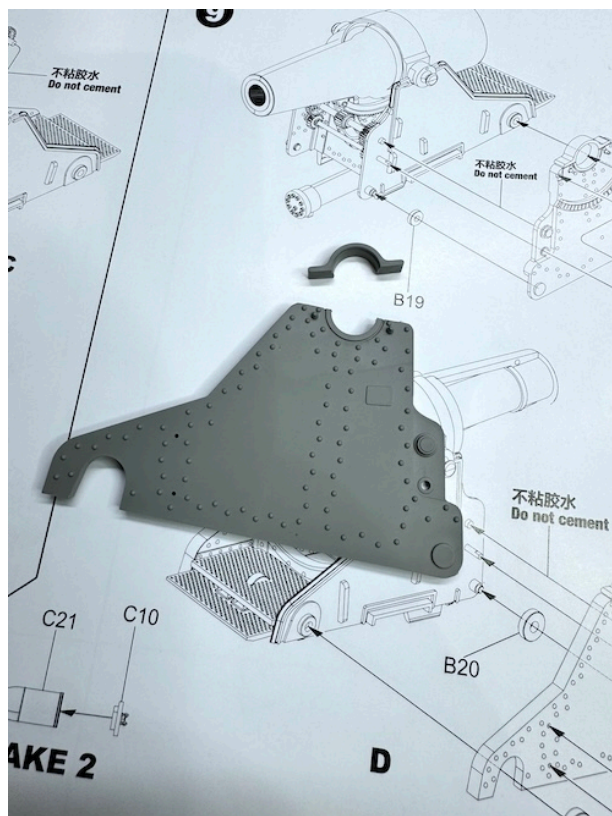


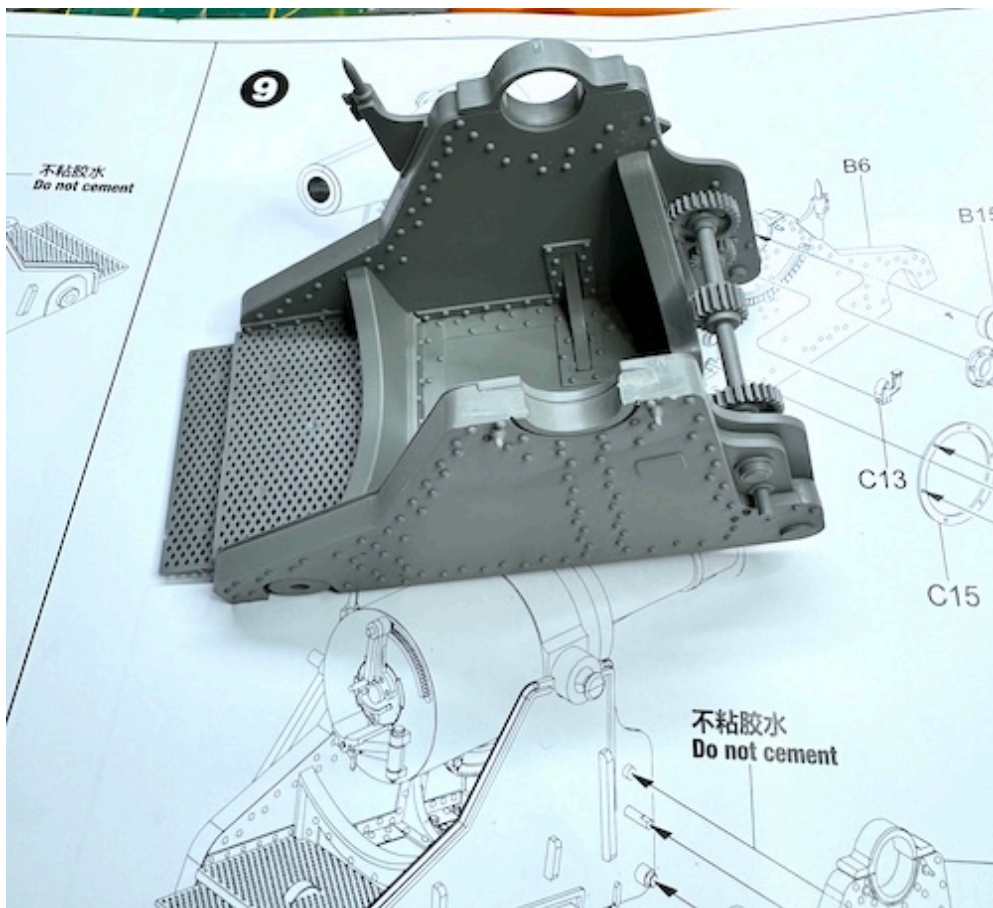
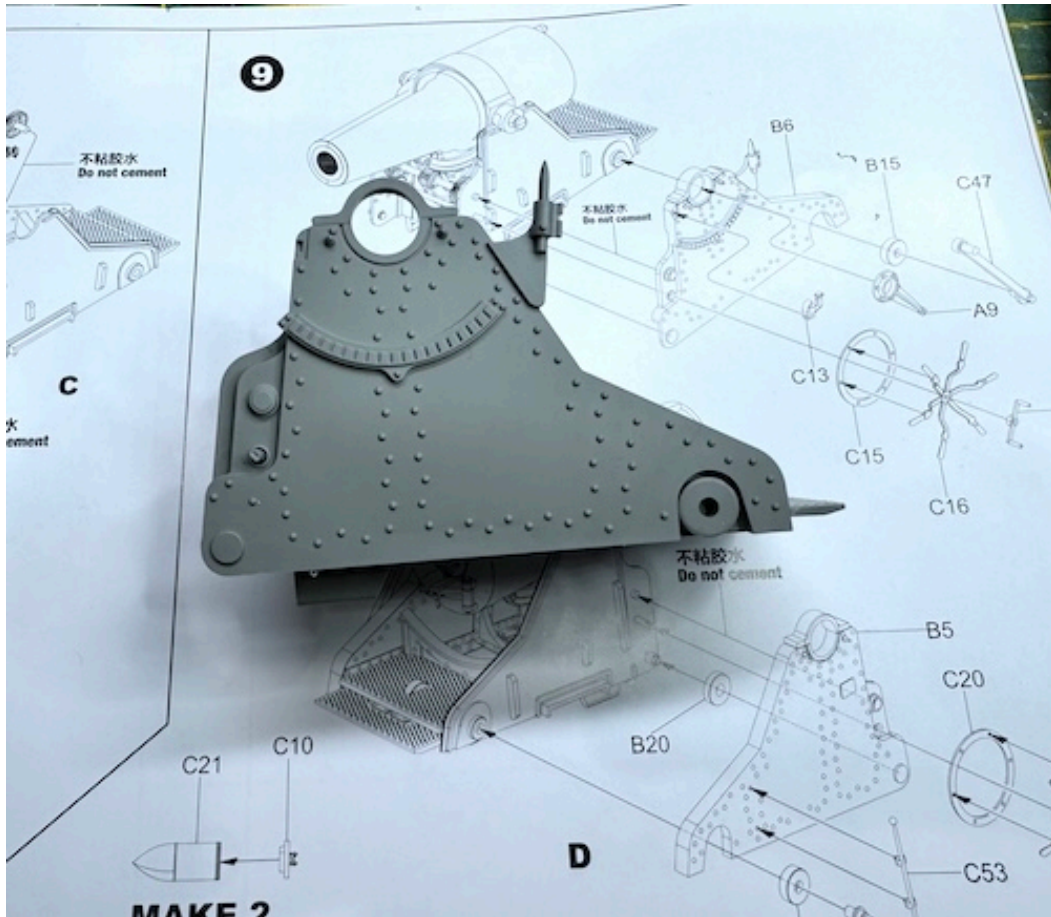
The instructions have you build the model as a series of sub-assemblies which can then be brought together towards the end to complete the kit. The main parts are:

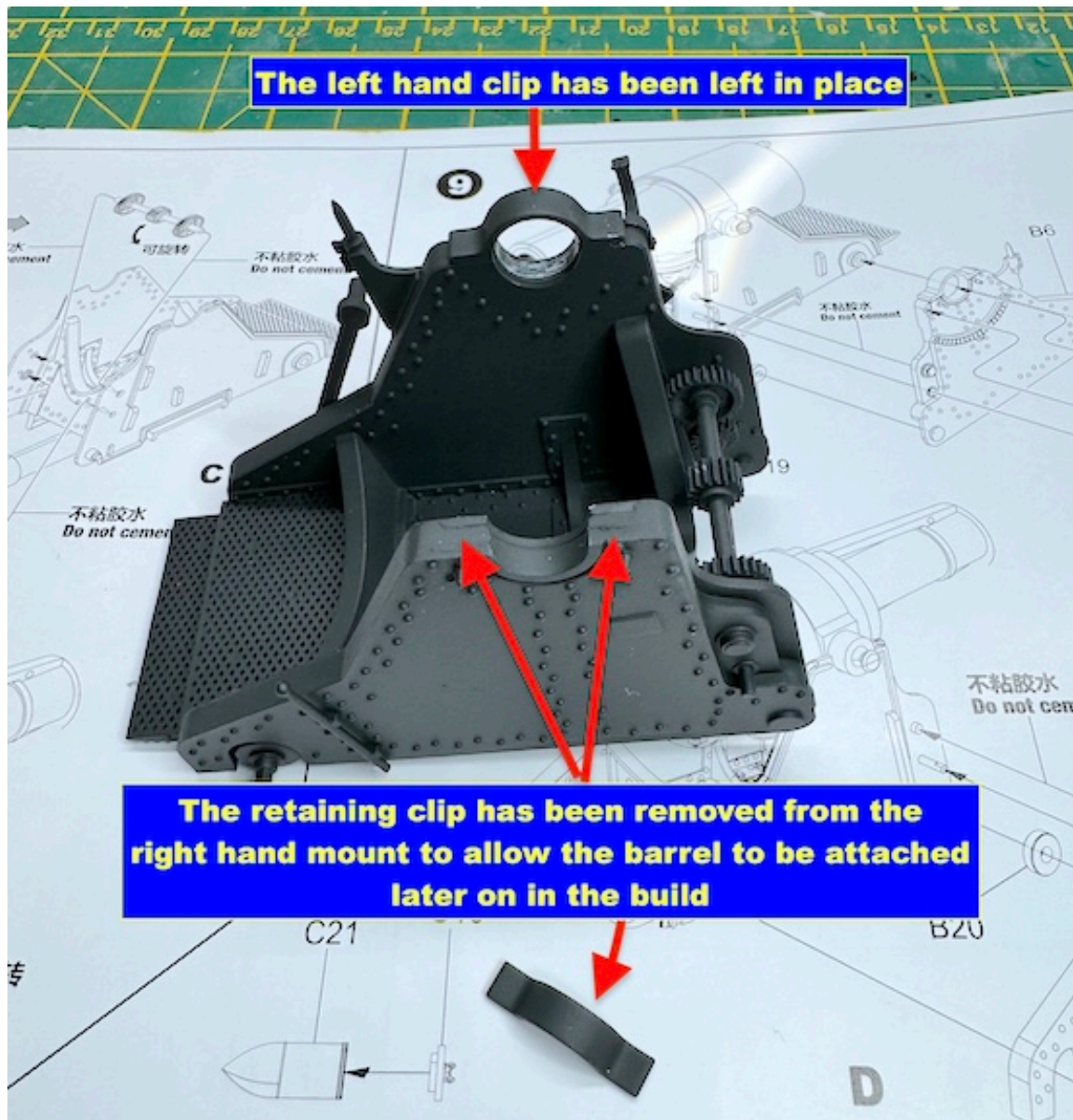
- The lower gun mount and gun crew platform
- The barrel and breach
- The upper barrel mount
- The crane
- The base and final assembly.

I built a lot of the above in parallel with me jumping from sub-assembly to sub-assembly as I was waiting for parts to dry. This also had the advantage that all the parts were ready to paint at the same time meaning I saved time and I could ensure consistency in the colour of all the assemblies so that they matched. Sometimes a different primer or a change of paint pots due to running out can lead to shade changes in the colour.

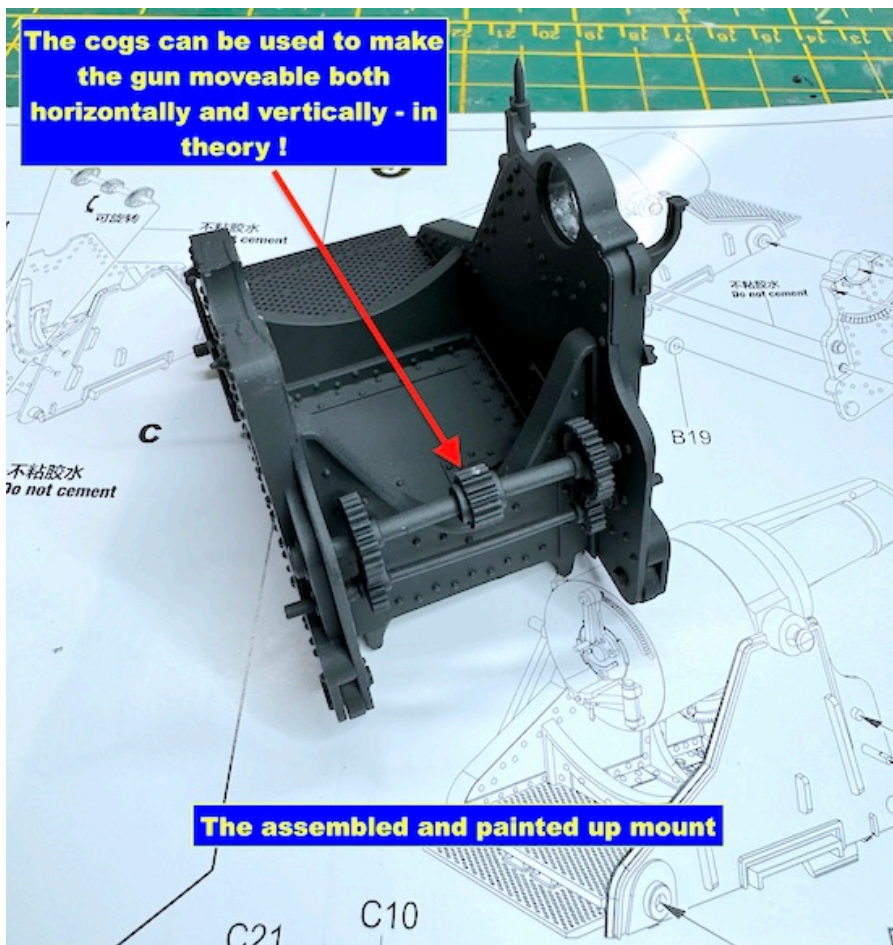
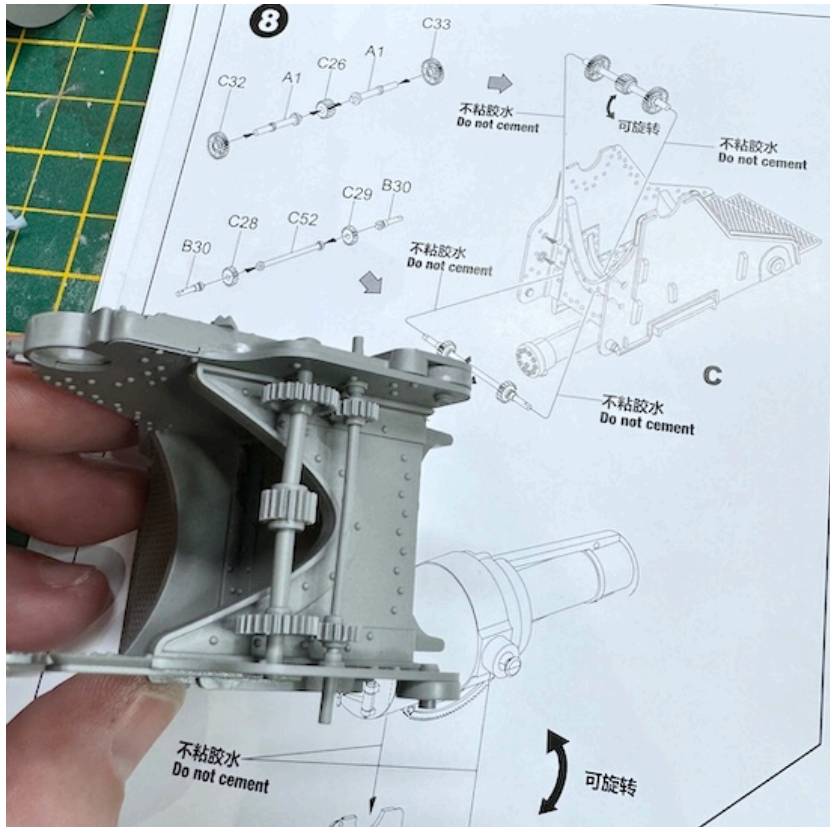
The instructions are very straightforward and quite clear about what goes where. The only issue I had was they will have you build the barrel assembly first and then build the mount around it. I really didn't want to do this as I wanted to paint up the mount and the barrel separately and then join them. In order to do this, I carefully used a razor saw to remove one of the retaining clips on the mount - see the pictures. This allowed me to insert the barrel into the mount later on and then add the clip that had been removed.





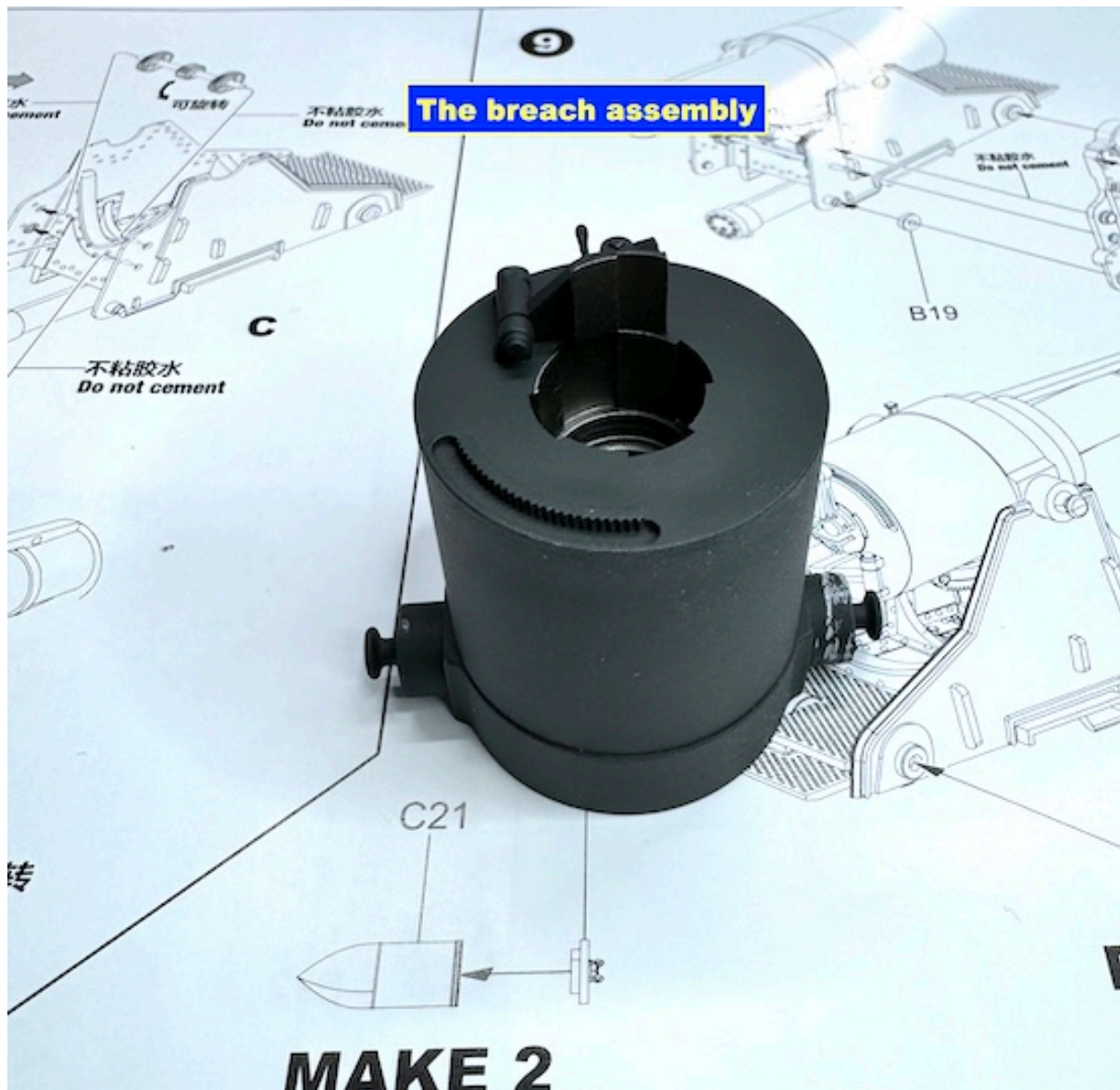


The kit is designed to move as would the real gun using a series of cogs to move it both horizontally and vertically. This in theory is feasible but I did find the cogs in some places a little loose in their tolerances and they would slip so I decided to fix the gun in a set position.



The outer barrel comes in two separate sides which needed some careful seam elimination through the use of a re-scriber and superglue to ensure no 'ghost seams' were visible. Have a look at your [SMN Techniques Bank](#) for an explanation of this process. The rifled inner barrel can then be placed in the outer and once lined up with the breach housing it can be glued in place. Once fully set any gaps in the joint between the outer barrel and inner barrel were filled in using superglue and sanded flush.

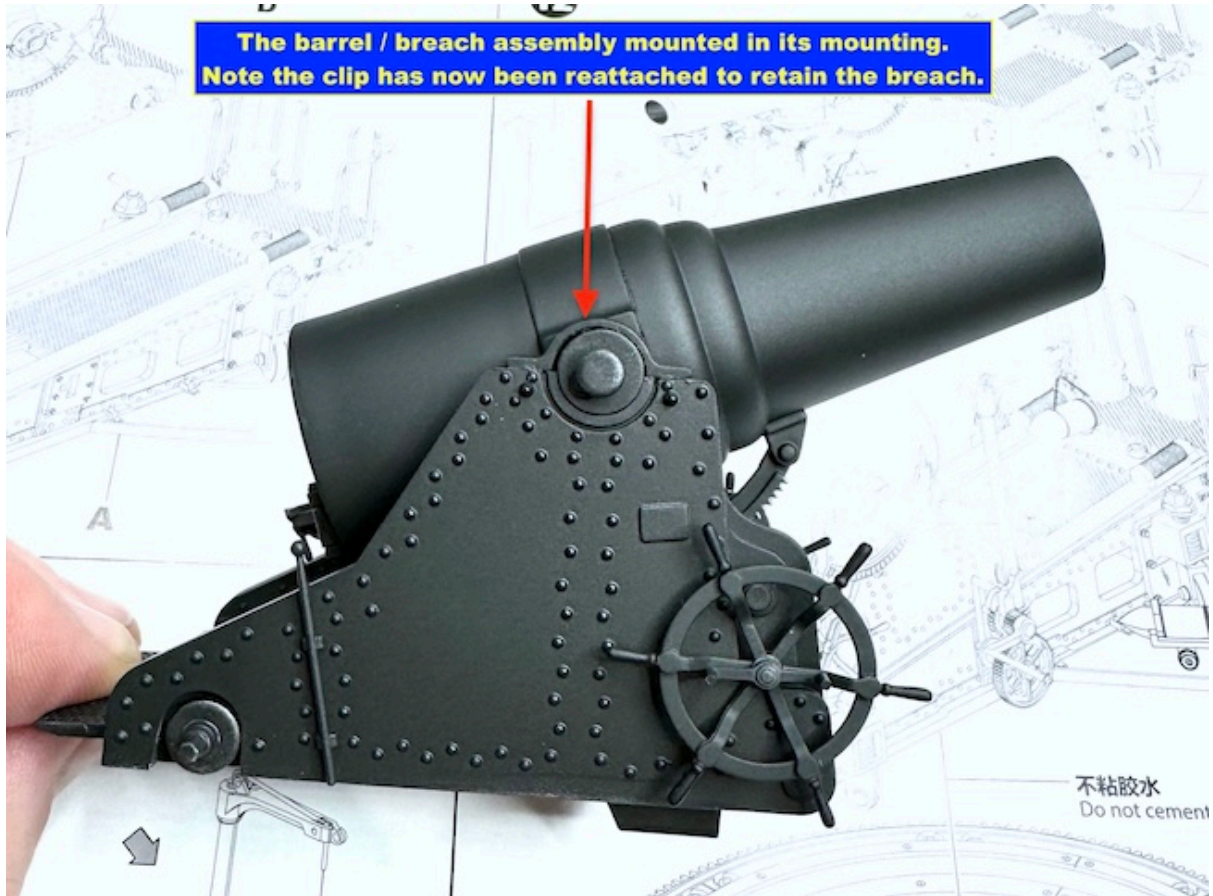




The completed barrel assembly can be painted up and fitted into the completed upper gun mount. I used Tamiya NATO Black for the main colour (XF-69) and Alclad Steel for the rifled barrel and inner breach. The steel was given a dry brushing with silver to highlight the detail.

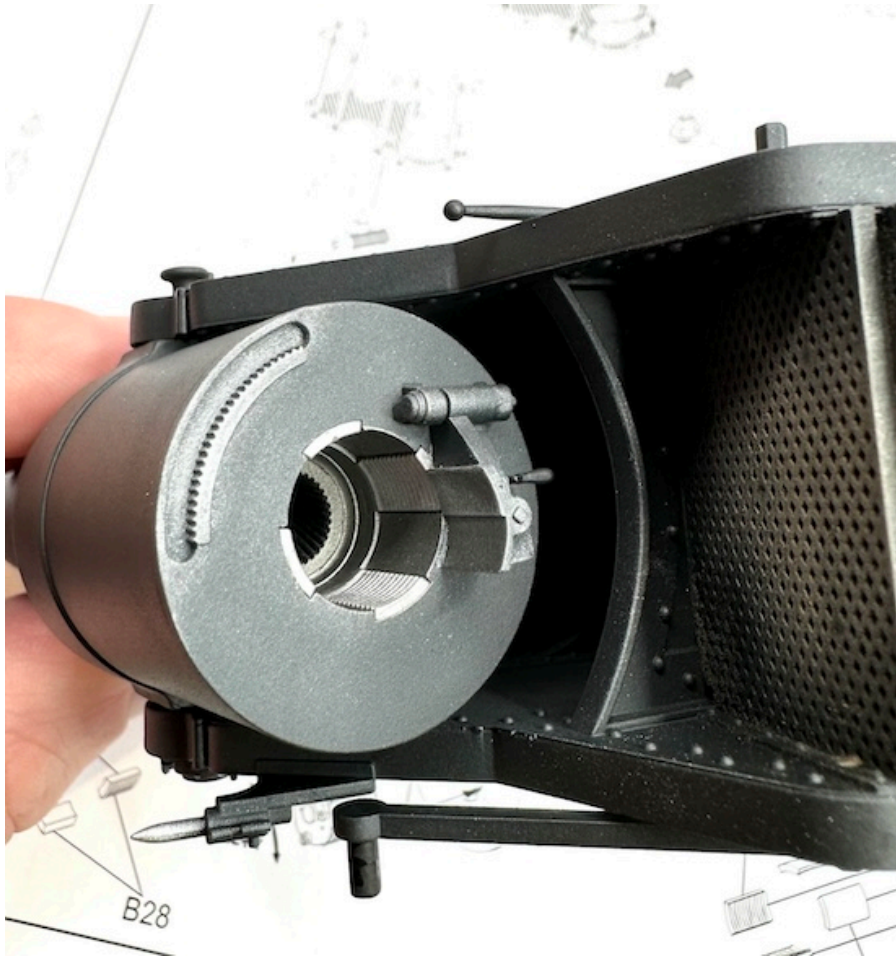
This barrel can then be carefully fitted into the upper mount and the retaining clip refitted into place. The fit is quite tight using this process and in hindsight I would have removed both retaining clips to make the fit more straightforward.

**The barrel / breach assembly mounted in its mounting.
Note the clip has now been reattached to retain the breach.**

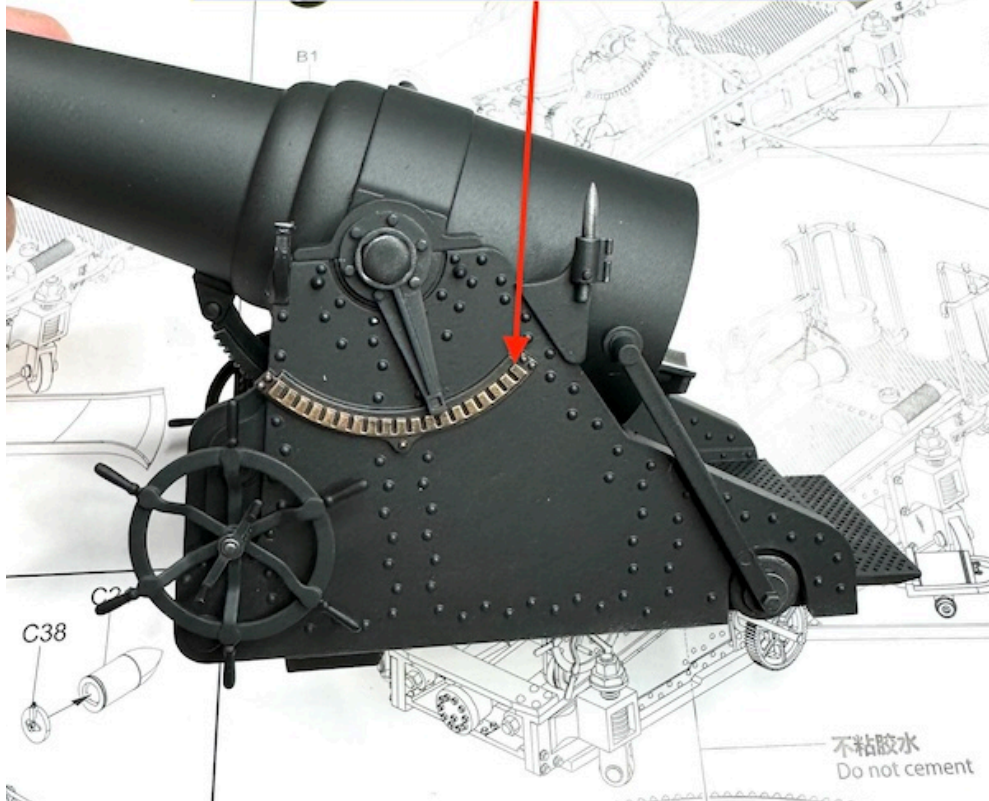


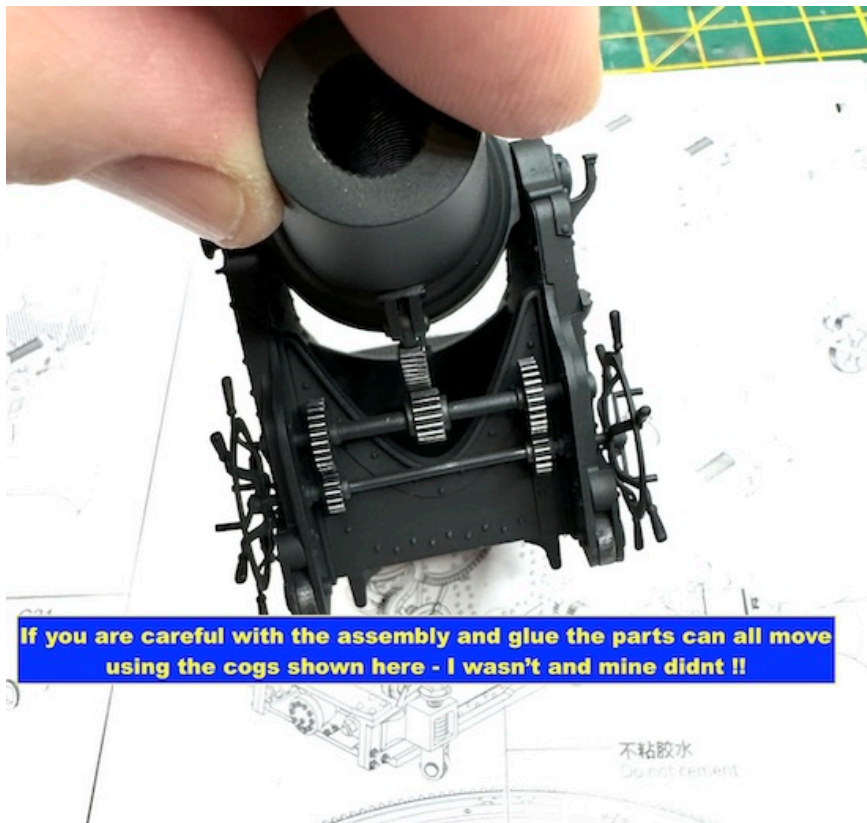
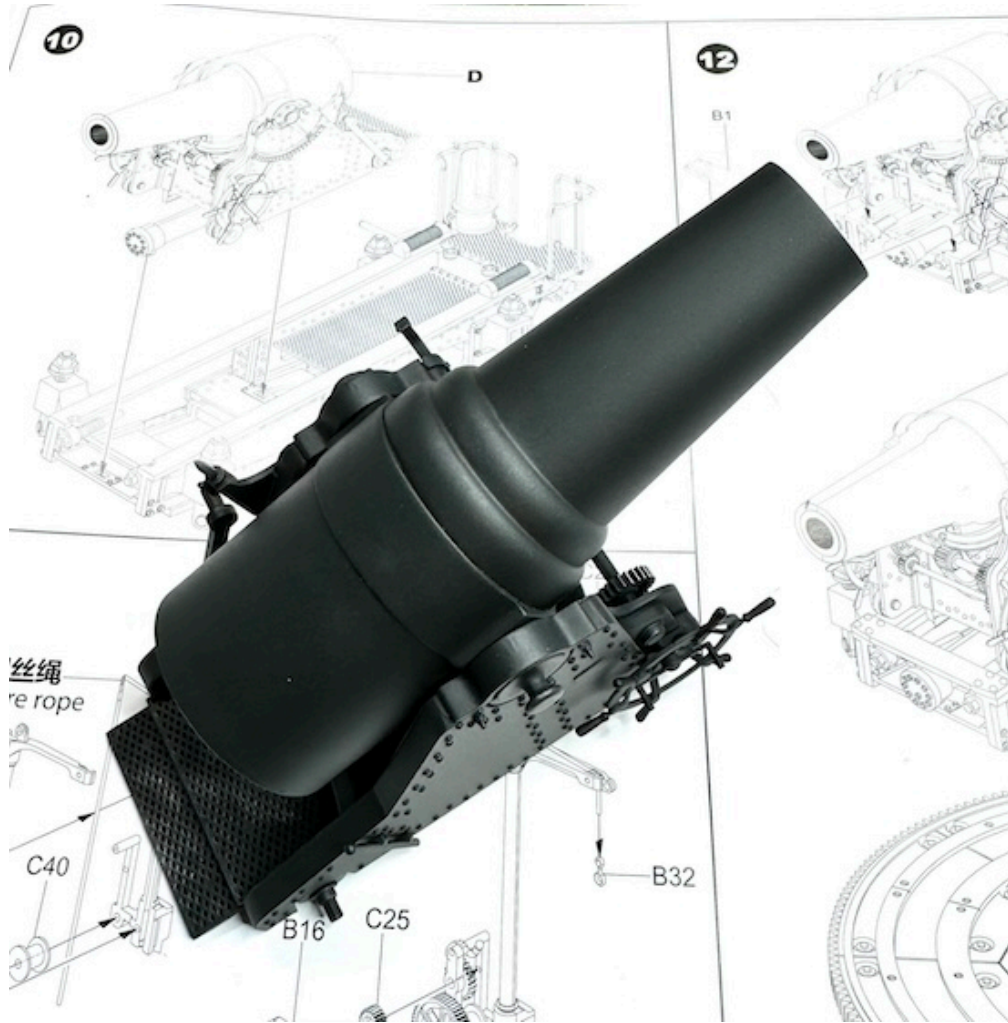
**The Breach - the detail has been highlighted
using dry brushing of light grey and aluminium**





Brass paint was dry brushed to bring out this detail



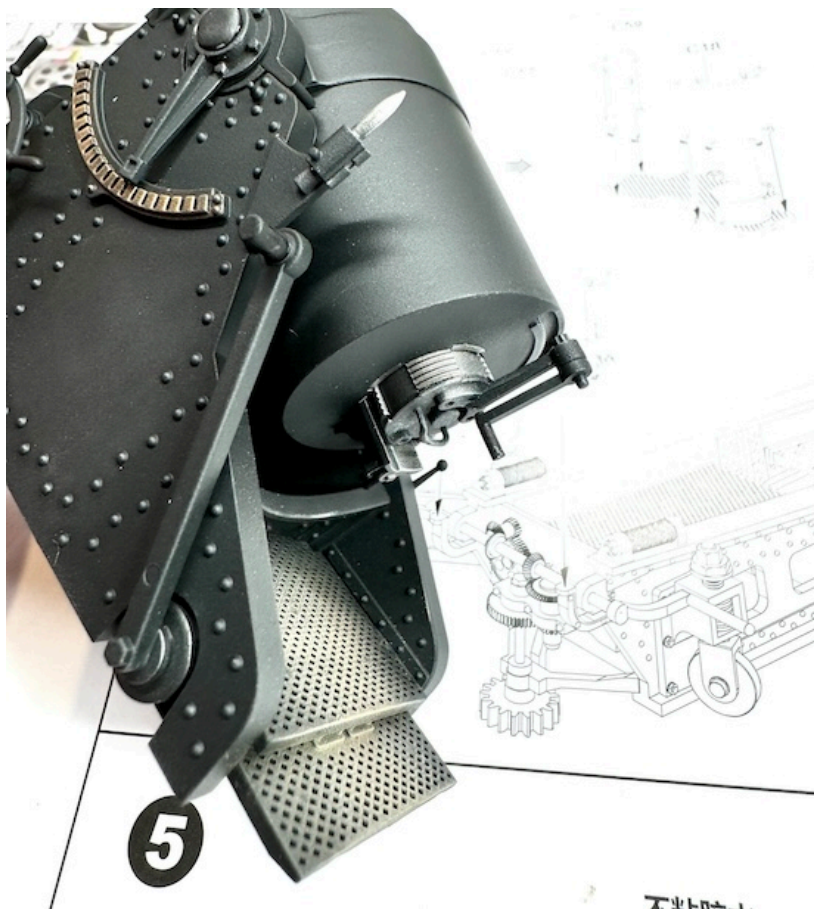
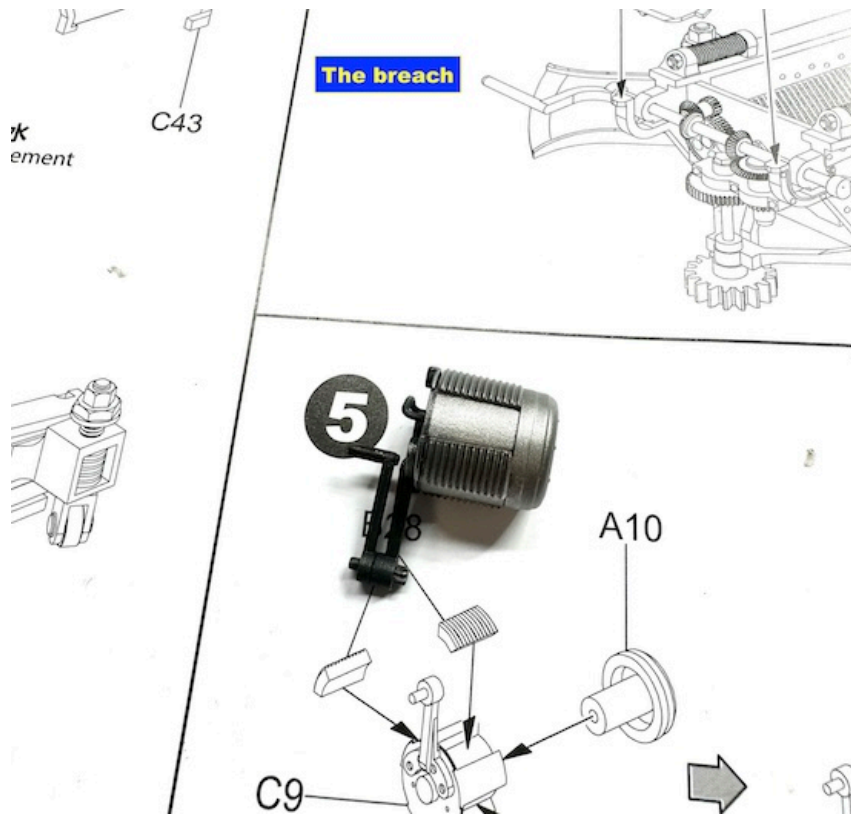


If you are careful with the assembly and glue the parts can all move using the cogs shown here - I wasn't and mine didnt !!

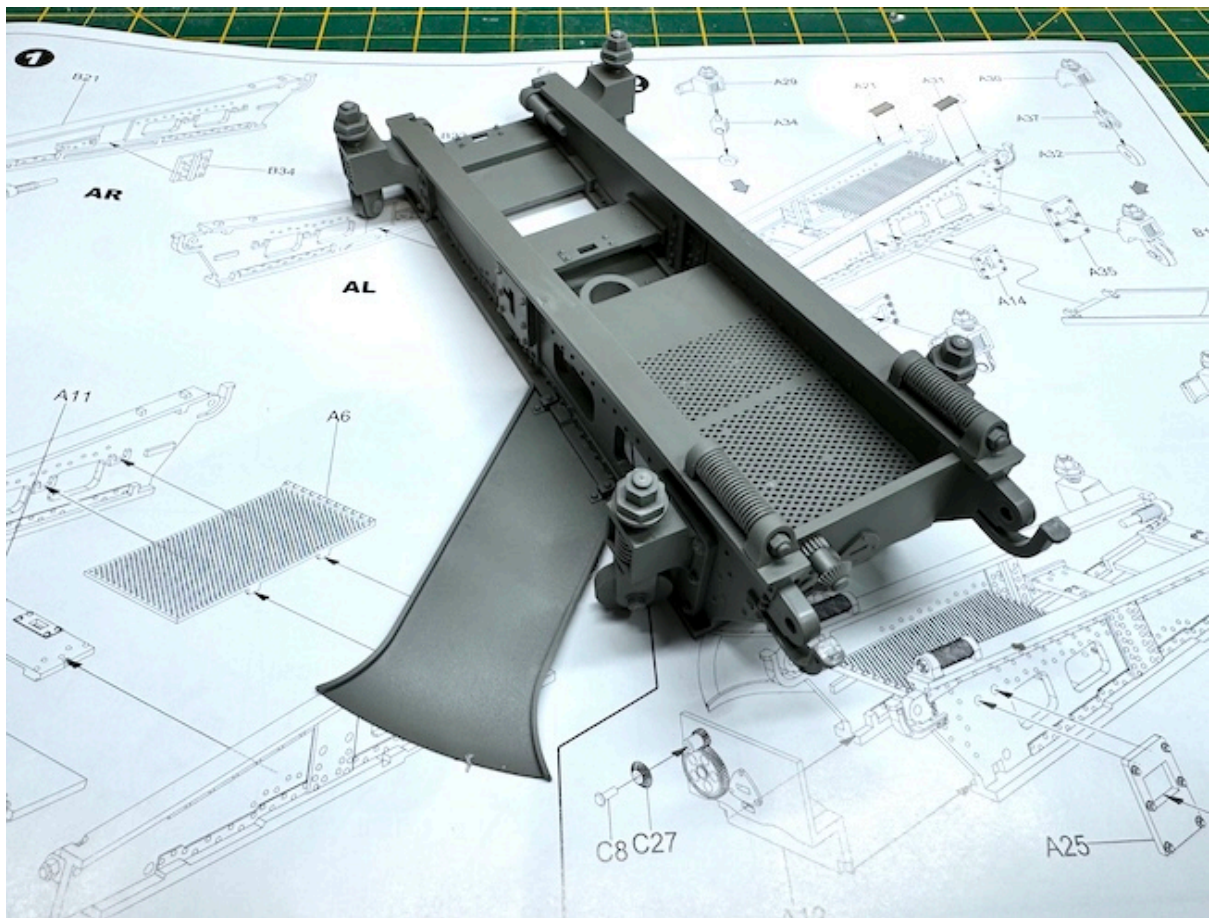
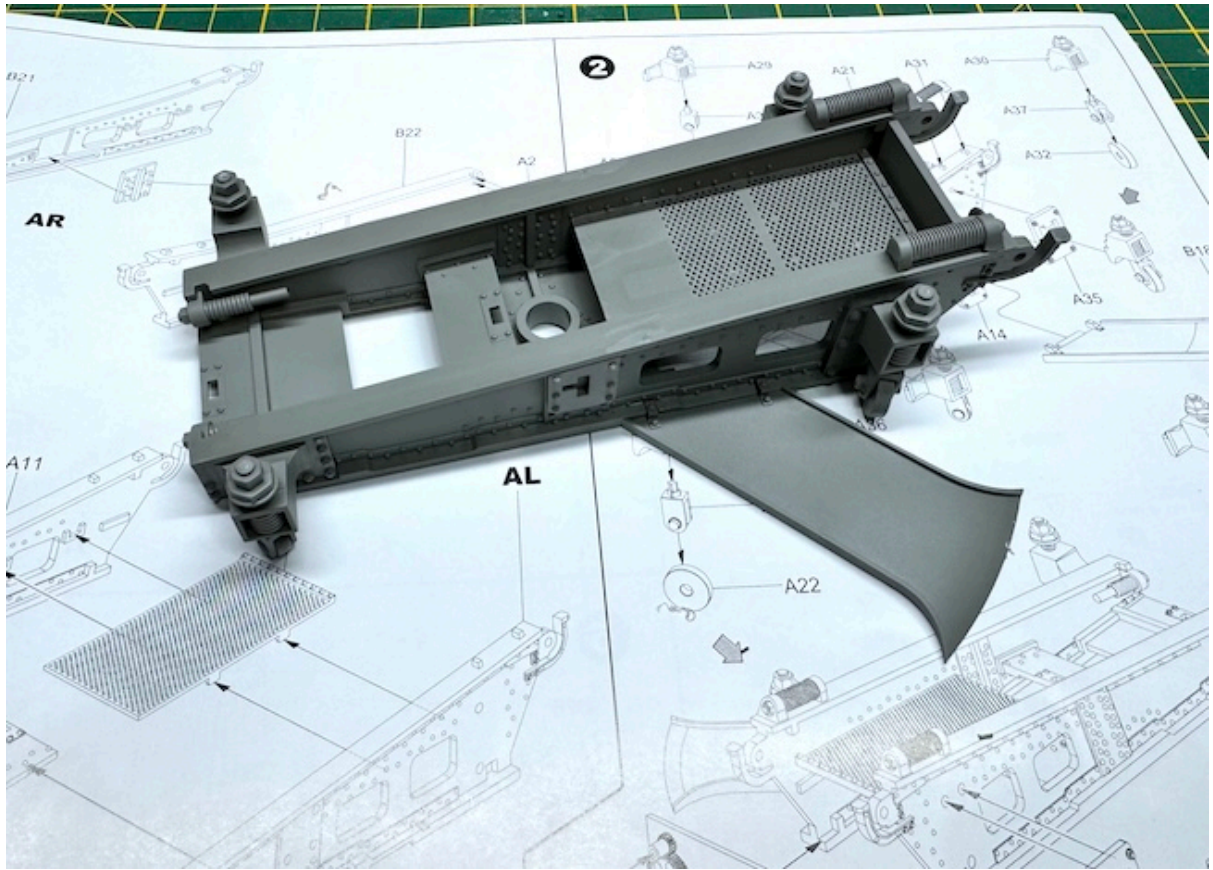
I did do a quick bit of weathering at this point with the simple use of some of Tamiya's weathering Masters pigments to add some mud around the areas where the crew would have worked and some silver dry-brushing around high wear areas where the paint would have been worn away.

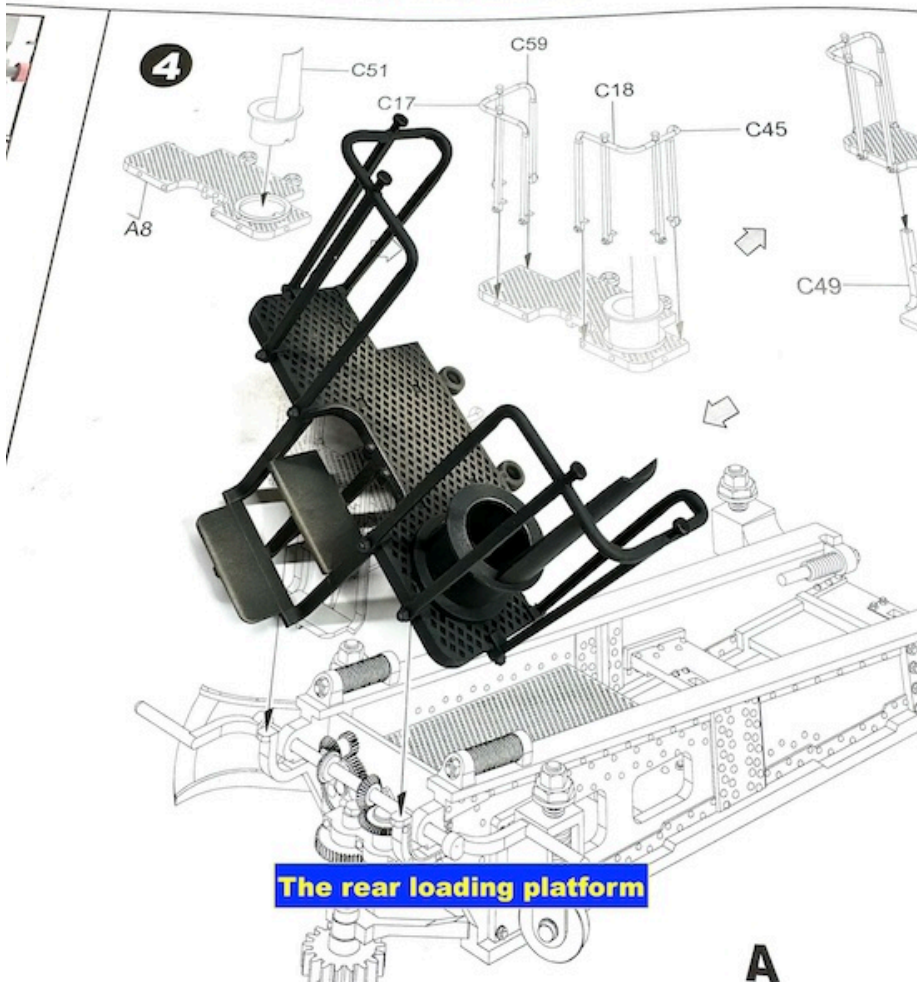
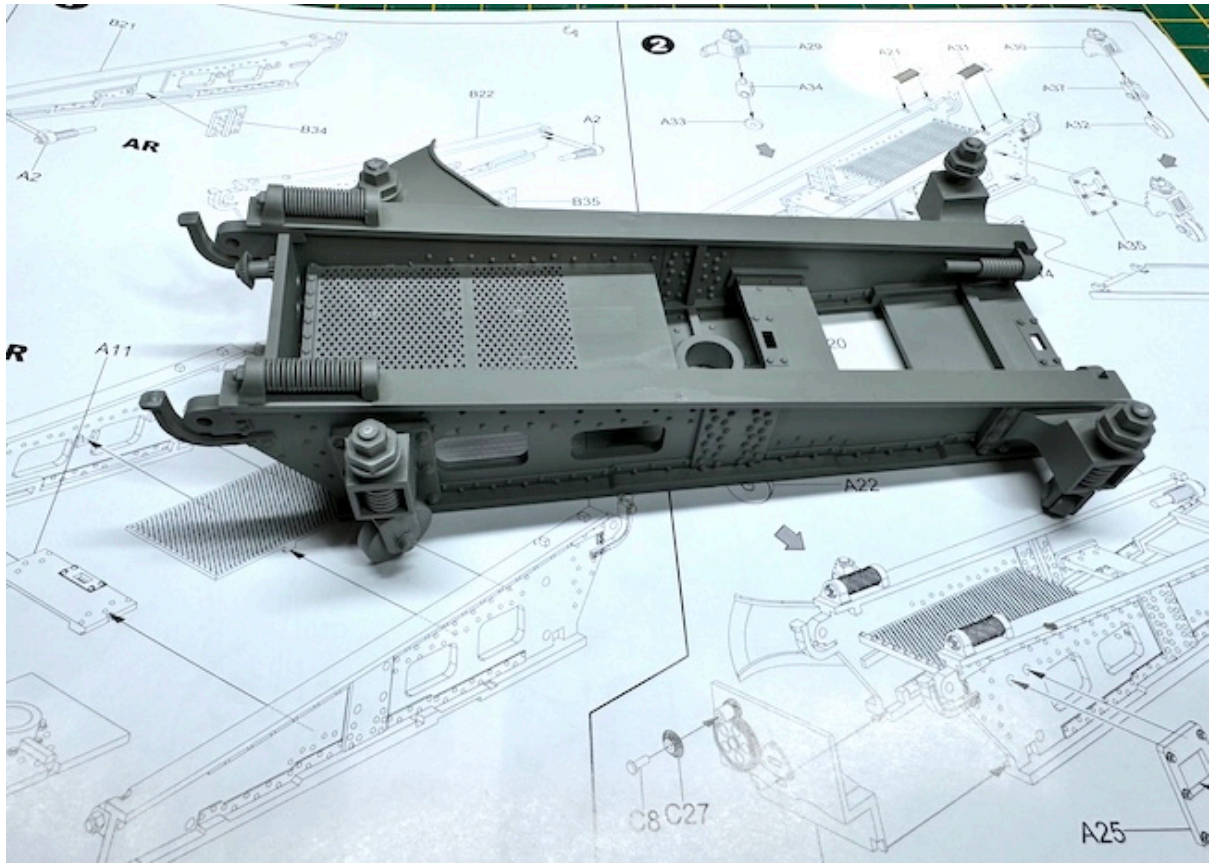


I must admit I don't understand the workings of how the breach fits into the breach housing and how it moves in and out so I just fitted in place as shown.



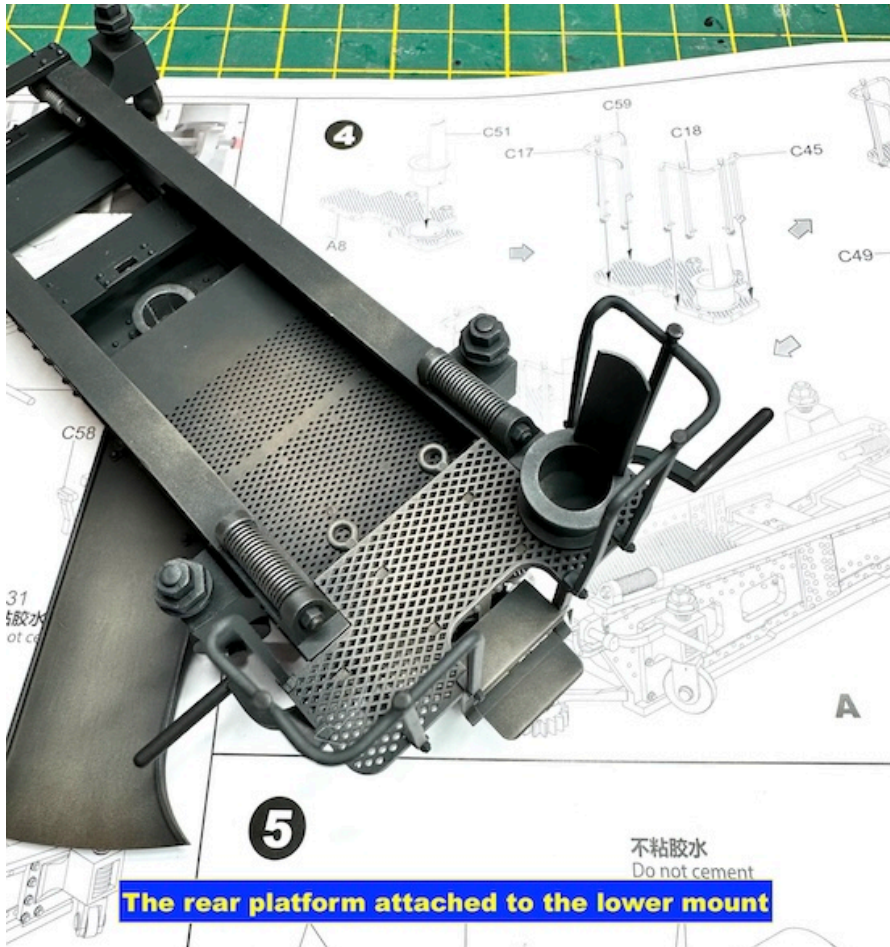
The lower mount and crew platform were assembled with no issues and again painted up and weathered before fitting together. The upper mount / barrel assembly can then be fitted to the lower mount / platform.

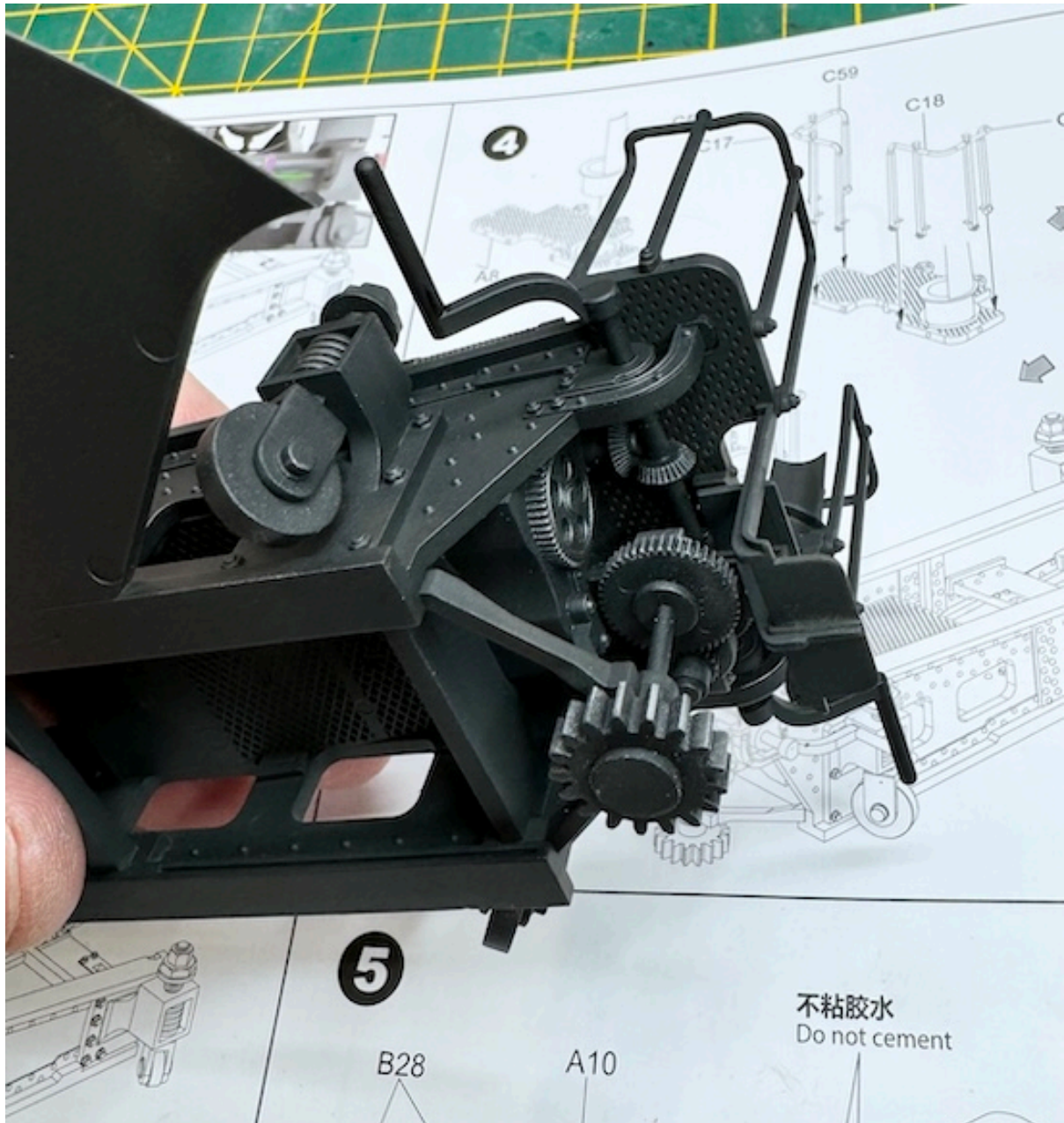




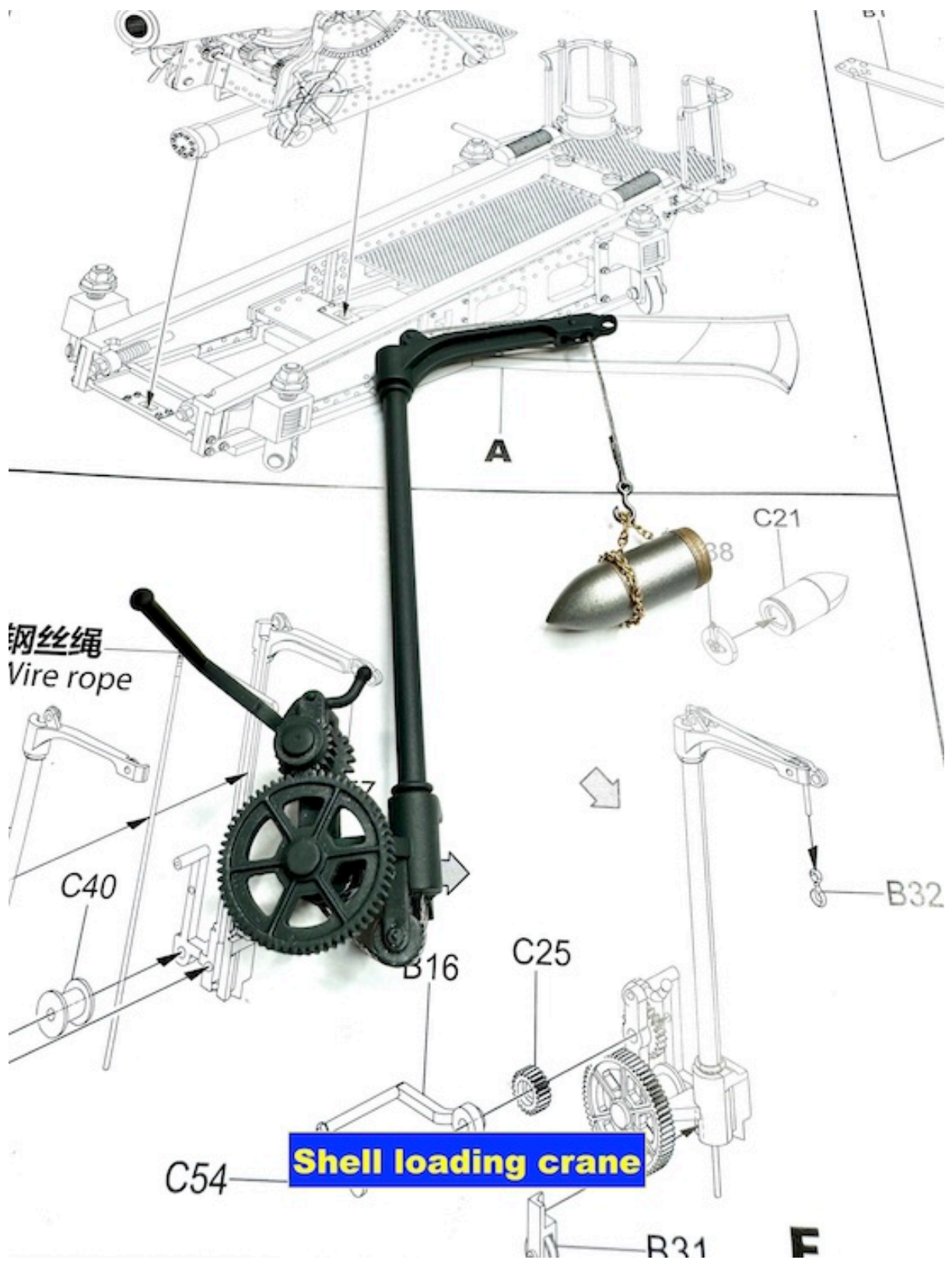
The rear loading platform

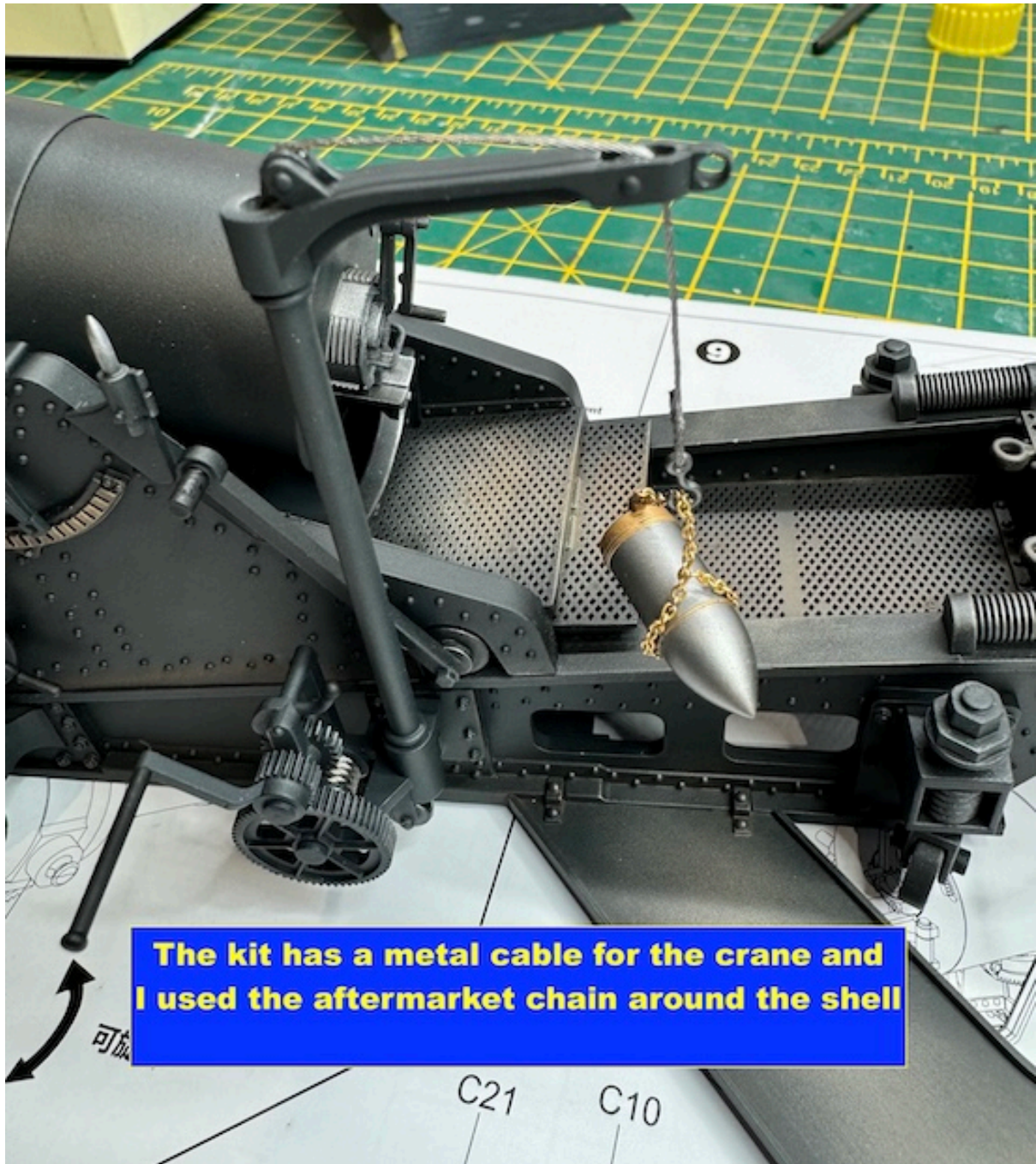
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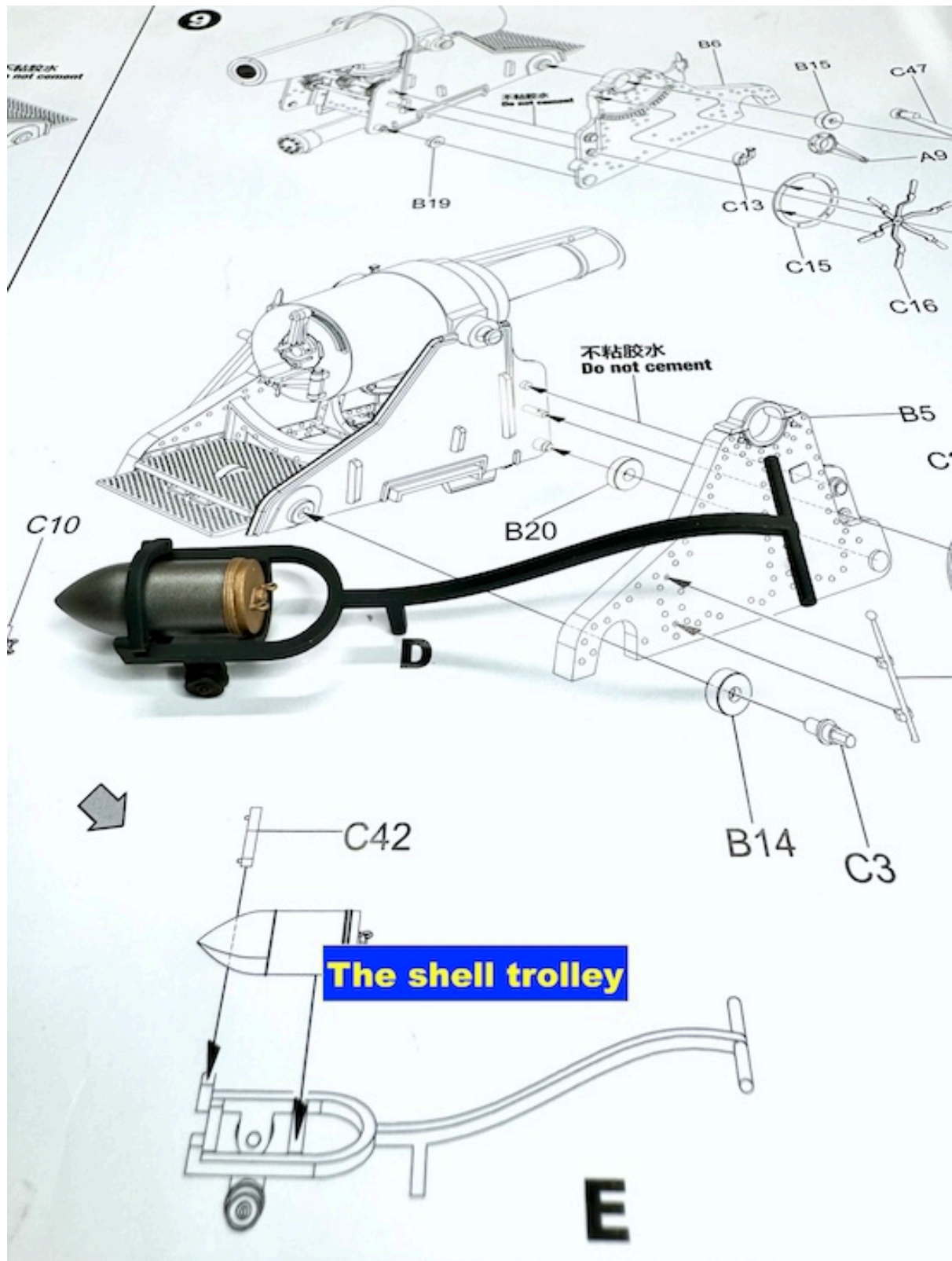
For the shell loading crane the kit comes with a length of steel wire. This was wound around the drum and the end pushed into the lower end of the hollow tube and glued in place. The remainder was then glued into the top end of the tube and thread through the pulleys and glued at the final pulley so it hung correctly. The hook was then attached to this. The aftermarket chain was used to make a sling for the shell and this was attached to the hook. The crane can then be attached to the lower mount.



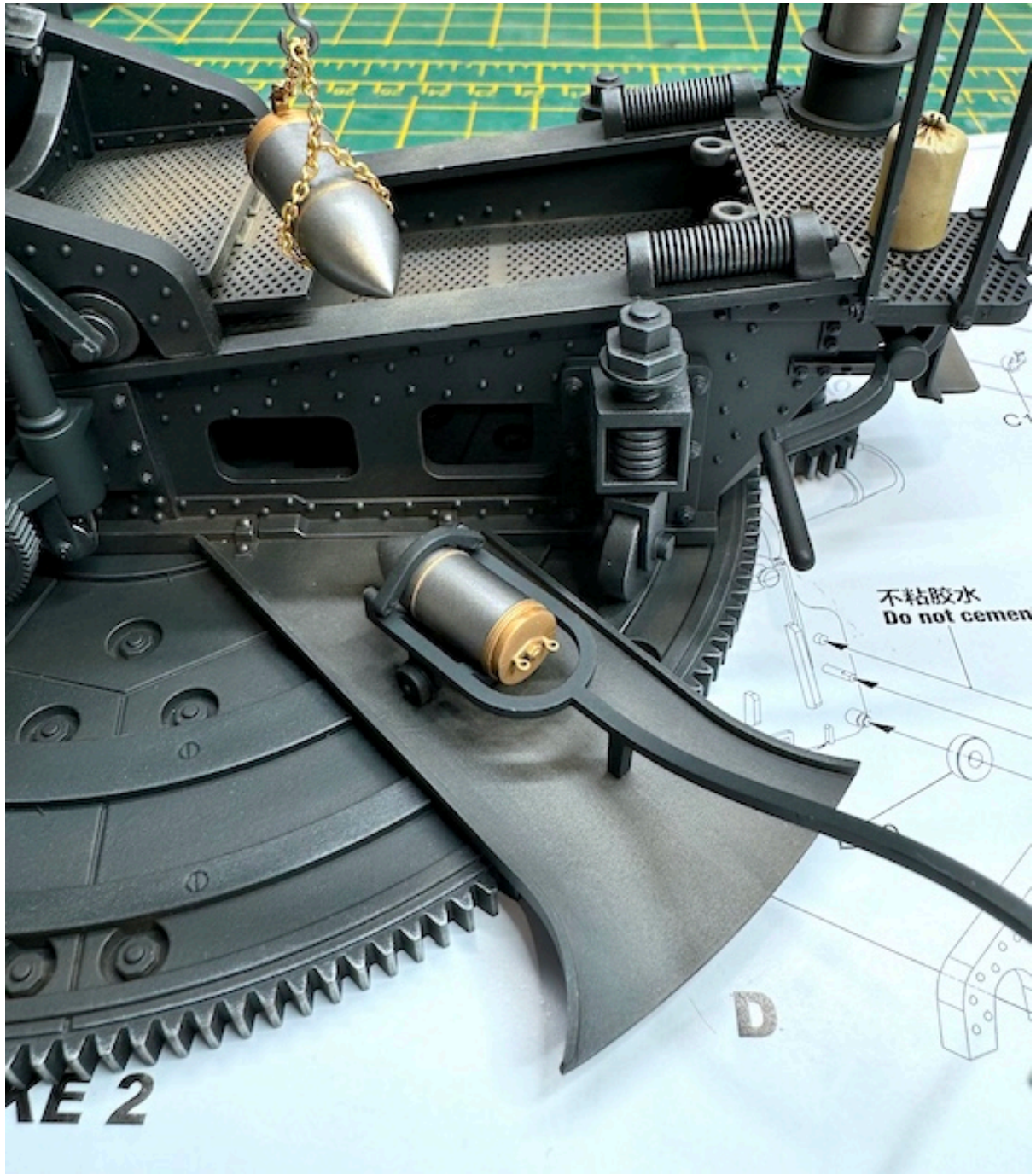


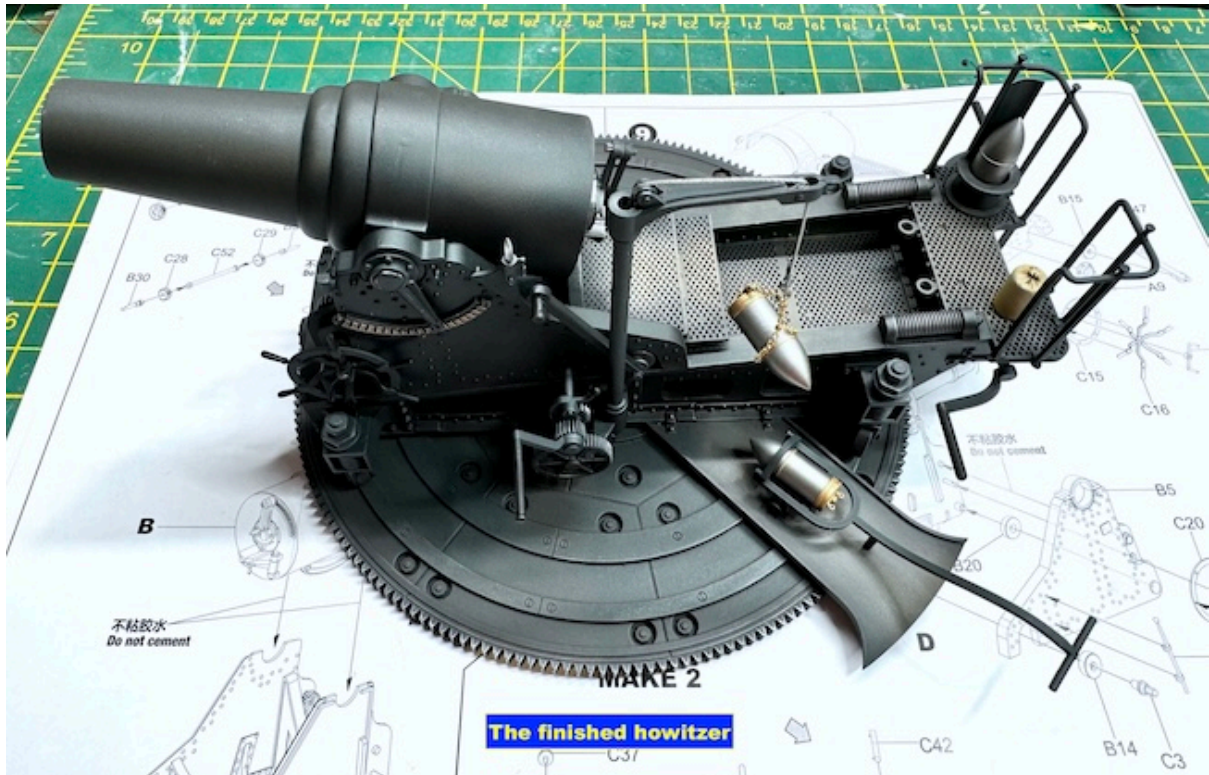
The kit contains 3 shells and a powder bag. One shell was used on the crane, the second was placed on a trolley that comes with the kit and the third shell along with the powder bag was placed on the rear crew loading platform.





The base is a single piece moulding that the previously described assembly drops onto and that is pretty much the model finished.





Summary...

This was not a subject that I would normally have shown interest in and would have ignored it in the model shop but having completed it I'm really pleased that I took it on. The build is very straightforward and the final model really interesting and makes a nice addition to my display cabinet. The build is easy and the painting quite basic, 'black' with some small areas of colour. There are no decals but with some simple weathering the simple black finish can be made to be quite interesting.

Overall this is a very easy kit but also very interesting as a modelling subject. The build is well within the capabilities of all but the most novice of modellers and I highly recommend it.

Dave C.

| Quick summary | Star rating out of 5 |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Quality of moulding | **** |
| Accuracy | **** |
| Instructions | **** |
| Subject choice | *** |
| Build enjoyment | ***** |
| Overall | **** |

