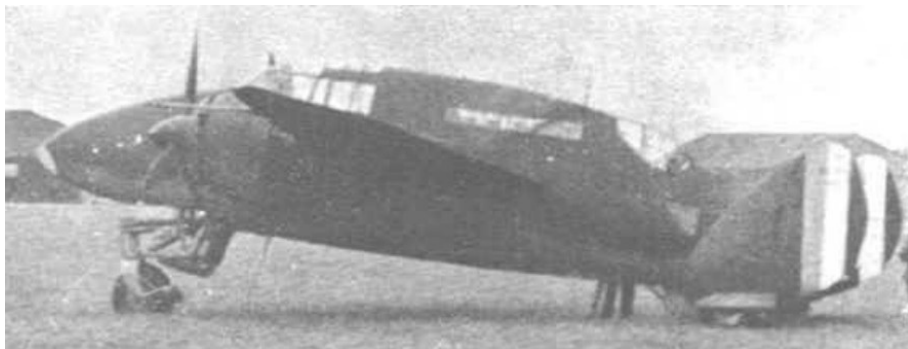


SNCASE SE-100

History: One of the most important debates in air power theory in the 1930s was what to do about bombers. Designers of bombers and fighters argued about how vulnerable bombers would be to defending aircraft and what effect bombing would have on civilian populations. Photographs of heavily bombed cities in Spain and China seemed so horrific that planners sought new ways to intercept and destroy bombers before they could reach their targets and one idea that gained currency was that of the heavily armed bomber interceptor that could destroy bombers while they were still flying towards their targets. The result was several interesting designs including the German Bf110 of fundamentally conventional design and the novel American Bell XFM which had cannon armed pods for gunners on the wings forward of engines. In France there were several attempts to design an aeroplane to intercept and destroy bombers. One, the Hanriot NC-600, was a basically conventional design but although the prototype possessed exceptional performance it was not put into production. Another unusual design was the Aresenal-Delanne 10 that used a tandem wing and had a rear gunner with a wide field of view. The design that found favour with French officials was the SE-100.

P E Mercer and J Lecame began development of a new heavy fighter around 1937 at Loire-et-Olivier, under the designation LeO 50. When the French aviation industry was nationalised Loire-et-Olivier became part of the Société Nationale de Constructions Aéronautiques de Sud-Est (SNCASE) and the new aeroplane was redesignated the SE-100. This aeroplane was designed with several novel innovations that included a rear firing cannon with a very wide field of fire, a wing with flaps across most of the trailing edge and the ailerons across the tips and a large complicated front wheel that incorporated breaking and steering, claimed to have been the world's first steerable nosewheel. To save cost and design effort the engines and their fairing were taken from the Leo 451 bomber and the wheels in the tail fins came from the Dewoitine 500 fighter. Because of its unusual shape the prototype was nicknamed Limande (lemon sole).



Construction of the prototype began in April 1938 and the first flight occurred on 29 March 1939. It was extensively tested and proved to have good performance although it was underpowered. Test progressed well until 5 April 1940 when the prototype crashed from low altitude in an accident caused by the pitch reversal of one of the propellers. It was not rebuilt and did not fly again. Construction of a second prototype had begun, larger with an armament of eight 20mm cannon and a more conventional undercarriage arrangement. In June 1940 the Paris Citroën car plant began tooling up for the mass production of SE-100 components and mass manufacture of the aeroplane was planned for the end of the year. However, after Germany defeated France in June 1940 the second prototype was not completed and the SE-100 was not put into production. We can only wonder how effective this novel aeroplane might have been in combat.

Data: Three seat heavy bomber interceptor. *Engine* two Gnome-Rhone 14N-20/21

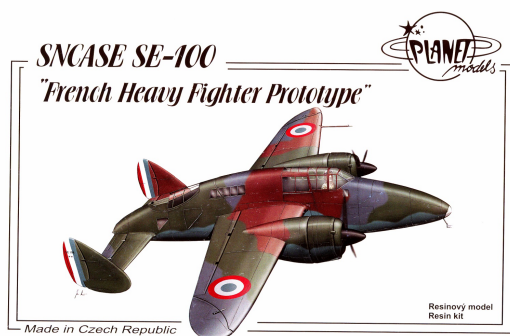
fourteen cylinder radial engines of 1,080hp. *Wing span* 15.70m (51ft 6in). *Length* 11.80m (38ft 8in). *Maximum take-off weight* 7500kg (16,534lb). *Maximum speed* 580km/h (360mph). *Range* 1300km (808miles). *Armament* five 20mm cannon.

The kit: Planet 1:72

In about 1962 I was given, as a Christmas present, a copy of William Green's *War Planes of the Second World War, Fighters Volume 1*. It was a small book that I devoured, and almost read the print off the page. It contained good histories of the fighters of several countries including Australia, France and Germany. One of the French aeroplanes written of in the book was the SE-100, and its amazing shape appealed to me. At that time I could not imagine that anybody would ever make a kit of it, so I tried to think of ways to scratch-built it. However there wasn't much detailed information and the project looked too difficult for my limited skills, so I resigned myself to never having a model of this unusual aeroplane. Then, almost 45 years later, a kit of the SE-100 did appear. As soon as it was announced on the NKR web site two club members sent me copies of it because it was another 'ugly' French aeroplane and they amuse themselves with such trivial matters at my expense.

Since I had wanted to model this aeroplane for so long, and to put my tormenters straight I ordered the kit and Mr NKR kindly dropped it in the following day. Planet make highly detailed resin kits of obscure aeroplanes. They are far from cheap but the cost is bearable if it makes it possible to make a long desired model. I seem to have made a few resin kits in the past year or so, which probably tells you something about my aviation interests.

I'm starting to get used to working with resin, in fact I find it a very nice material to work with because of its qualities. It cuts easily and is easy to work into fine details. In the best resin kits there are few, if any, bubble holes and there is usually good, fine engraving. It is sometimes a bother to liberate fine parts but, in comparison to vacform kits, resin is wonderful.



Putting this kit together was no more difficult than assembling a high quality limited run plastic kit. There were only two problem area. The most difficult was the complicated nose wheel that has six separate and fragile components that all have to be joined together at the same time and need delicate alignment to get right. How I achieved it is still a mystery to me. The second is the rear cannon. It has a long barrel that, in its resin form, is very fragile and refused to stay straight. Fortunately a club member had a number of spare syringe needles and one happened to be just the right diameter.

The overall accuracy of this kit appears to be very good. However, when it comes to the details, things get a bit hazy. There are a few bits and pieces that are visible on photos of the SE-100 that don't appear to be on the model, or vice versa. For example, the shape of the cannon barrel, the components of the nosewheel and the engine nacelles. There are other variations in the colour scheme and decals. I also came across a web site about a scratch built, large scale SE-100 that had different variations again. In the end I selected the versions that seemed most likely, judging from the photos. However they were, of course, taken at different stages in the short life of this aeroplane and also show variations. Consequently the completed model is a bit of a collage of how the full scale SE-100 might have appeared during its existence. However, which every way you look at it, if you had to think of a one-word description of the appearance of this aeroplane, 'ugly' would be way from the mark. 'Unusual' might be more apt. I'd say elegant, but then I'm more partial than most to French aeroplanes.