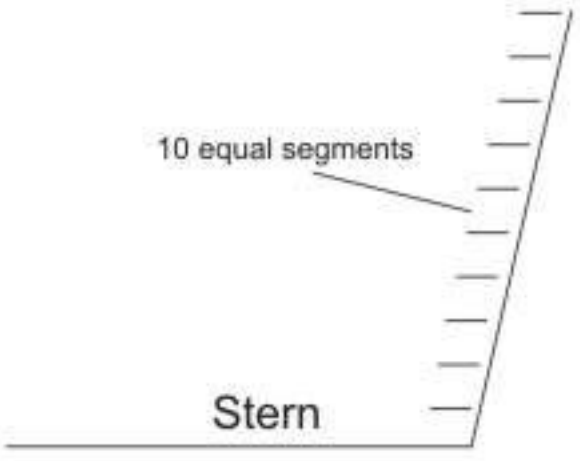
The Final Planking

The race is nearly won now. Just 6 more planks and we're through. Instead of placing another batten, we're going to place a full-width plank all along the edge of the keel. This plank is not tapered at all. Once this plank is laid, place pencil marks on the edge of the stern post, one full plank width apart. We'll use these marks to position the aft ends of the next 5 planks. There should be enough space at the stern post for 10 full-width planks (but make equal divisions even if there's not quite enough room for 10 planks).



Dia. 1: Plank layout on stern post

Now, measure and cut your planks in just the same way you've done them all along. As with the second belt, from bulkhead 6 forward, you'll have fewer planks in this belt than from bulkhead 7 aft. In general, planks in this belt will only be tapered from around bulkhead 7 or 8 forward. At the stern post, they should be full width. You want the aft ends of the planks to be separated by a plank width. This will leave triangular shaped gaps between the planks that we'll fill with scrap material. In Photo 1, you can see the full-width plank running along the keel. Just above it is a wedge-shaped piece filling in the triangular gap. Above the wedge is the second-from-the-bottom full-width plank, with another wedge above it, and so on, alternating planks and wedges.

Photo 1: Triangle-shaped filler planks – darkened in the photo for contrast.

In real shipbuilding practice, when a plank needs to be wider than the material allows (common at the stern), an additional plank is cut in to increase the width. These are called "stealers". The real Bluenose II has a fairly complex pattern of stealers (see page 105 in the Jenson book). It is, of course, entirely possible to put stealers on a model, but the wide gap between bulkheads makes it impossible on a first layer of planking (unless you fill the space with balsa). If you want to attempt to replicate the stealers on the real Bluenose II, consider double planking or filling between bulkheads. The triangle-shaped fillers we're using are, of course, unrealistic, but given their location and the fact that they aren't very visible, they don't actually look too bad on this model. (Note that the triangle fillers in the photo have been darkened so you can see them better.) You'll find it much easier to do the fillers than to do stealers and, this being your first model, I'd recommend it. Refer again to Planking the Built-up Ship Model for an excellent discussion on stealers.

Once all your planks are laid, give the hull a good sanding to smooth it all down. Try using sandpaper wrapped around a ½-inch or ¾-inch dowel for the concave curve at the stern. You can use a bit of wood filler to fill in any small gaps (but there shouldn't be too many of them). I like Elmer's Carpenter's Finishing Wood Filler for Light Woods. Try not to over-do the filler or the sanding. The wood supplied in the kit has a somewhat pronounced grain. If you fill the grain with the wood filler, the filled spots will be more apparent after painting (they'll be smoother looking). A bit of roughness is not such a bad thing anyway. Wooden ships rarely had glass-smooth hulls. The same holds true for a plank that may not lie perfectly even with its adjacent planks. If one plank is a bit low, it's probably more realistic. Finally, don't fill the gaps between planks (unless they are big enough to see through). You've gone to a lot of trouble to plank the hull to make it look similar to a real ship. If you fill in all the gaps and make the hull perfectly smooth, you won't see any of the plank lines once it's painted. Of course, if you plan to put on a

second layer of planking, then none of the above applies. Make the first layer as smooth as possible.

Now, go pour yourself a good stiff celebratory drink (if you're so inclined) and admire your completed planking job! Let me stress again that the methods we've used here are somewhat simplified because this is your first model and I want you to get past the planking stage. But I'd encourage you to learn more about planking the way it's done on real ships and strive to incorporate those techniques on future models. Even so, you should be pretty proud of a planking job that closely resembles the way a real ship is planked.

With the main body of the hull planked, we can now turn our attention to the decks, the bulwarks, and the transom.

Planking the Deck

The deck-planking scheme shown in AL's plans bears no resemblance to that of the real Bluenose II. If you refer to page 42 of the Jenson book, you'll see that the deck planks are 4 ¾-inches wide – a bit less than 2mm wide at this model's 1:75 scale. AL provides planking material that is 5mm wide, so you'll have to cut it in half lengthwise. Also, note on page 110 of Jenson that the planks on the afterdeck follow the curve of the bulwarks, whereas the planks on the foredeck are laid parallel with the line of the keel.

The grain of the supplied planking material is very coarse and out of scale. My own choice would have been to replace the supplied material altogether with appropriately sized basswood strips. But, this can add a lot to the price of building this model and, in my opinion, isn't worth the cost given the other problems with this kit. Many modelers like to simulate deck caulking between planks. There are several ways of doing this, including coloring the edges with a black Sharpie permanent marker or black paint, or a charcoal artist's pencil. If you want to do this, try different approaches on some scrap planking to see what you like best. When you cut the planking strips in half, you'll likely find that the edges are quite rough due to the large grain of the wood. This will make it hard to effectively mark the edges to simulate caulking. I decided to not mark my edges at all.

Before laying the planks, you need to add the waterways (use the kit-supplied material). On the real ship, the waterways are at the same level as the deck planks, not on top of them as AL shows. You'll fit the deck planks inside the waterways as you lay the planks.

After fitting the waterways, I laid all the planks on both decks. Since the edges of the planks were uneven, there were gaps between planks that looked bad. So, I spread a thin layer of wood filler (Elmer's Carpenter's Wood Filler) over the entire deck. When the filler was dry, I sanded it down to the bare wood. This left some filler in the pores as well as in the gaps between the planks and, once stained, served to delineate the planks as much as I wanted. I tried several different stains (on scrap material) and finally decided on red oak. The planks on the real Bluenose II are made from Douglas fir and are a reddish-orange color (similar to a light mahogany). The coarse grain of the kit-supplied

wood makes it impossible to get an ideal finish that resembles the real ship decking, and, if you choose basswood instead, you'll get much better results. Once the decks were stained, I masked off the waterways and painted them a light blue. I chose this color because the real boat was painted this way at one time. However, this color seems to have changed from time to time. In 1997, the waterways were a much darker blue.

Photo 2: Afterdeck planking

As you will see from the Jenson drawings, the deck planks are nibbed into the waterways on the foredeck. Real deck planks typically don't end in sharp points because it would be hard to fasten and seal the points. Instead, the points are cut off square and fitted into a corresponding notch in the waterway – the process known as nibbing. On a 1:75 scale model with such narrow deck planks, nibbing is quite a chore and probably more than you should tackle for your first model (especially if you are using the kit-supplied decking). You'll also notice in the picture above that I didn't attempt to score any planking butts on the deck, nor did I try to simulate plugs that would cover the spikes on the real ship. At this scale (and particularly with the coarse-grained planking material) I feel that neither would look good. But, as ever, suit yourself. There's no information in Jenson's book about the typical length for deck planks, so I can't tell you where to place butt joints should you choose to add them.

Building the Bulwarks and the Transom

With the decks complete, we're ready to build the bulwarks. We won't be using the plywood bulwarks supplied in the kit for several reasons. First, the shape of the transom in the kit is incorrect – it looks nothing like the real ship. We'll be modifying the transom and changing the transom means changing the bulwarks. Second, the plywood would look bad when painted and it would be very hard to cut in the correct sized scuppers. Third, the plywood bulkheads in the kit simply don't fit. With a little bit of extra effort and a small amount of extra material, we can make bulwarks that are much more like those in the real ship.

Let's begin by making some modifications to the transom. The plane of the transom should be constant from top to bottom as shown in Photo 3 (refer also to page 110 in the Jenson book).

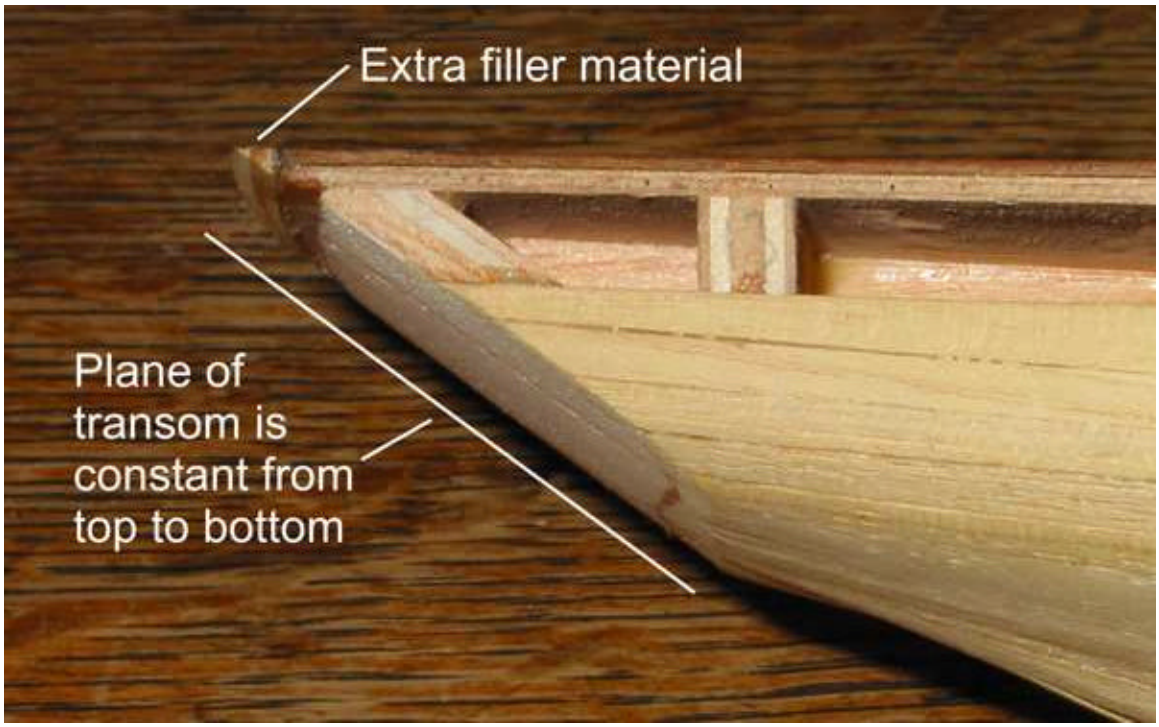


Photo 3: Shape of transom plus extra filler material

Note that I had to add some extra material to the deck to fill in the gap. The top of the transom (filler material) is curved to match the deck camber. The transom is also rounded slightly from port to starboard. We'll be adding additional material to the transom later to cover the plywood, but for now, all you need to do is shape the curves.

Now, we can move on to the bulwarks. We'll start by applying a piece of 1/16-inch thick basswood sheet to the sides, following the line of the top-most plank. This piece of sheet basswood will first need to be cut (spiled) to fit. You'll need to make a paper template of the shape of the required curve. Use some manila folders or poster board cut into a long strip about 2 or 3 inches wide. Tape the template to the side planks, allowing the template to follow its natural curve along the hull. Once you're satisfied that it's lying flat, use a pencil to mark along the line of the deck on the template.

Of course, the deck is in two levels, but the bottom of the bulwarks needs to be on one continuous level. Once you've marked the deck line on the template, simply drop down the line of the afterdeck to continue the line of the foredeck. Cut the template along the line and test it against the hull. Make some reference marks on the template and the hull so you can put the template back in the same place every time. Once you're satisfied with the fit, transfer the line to your sheet basswood, along with the reference marks. You're going to need extra length at both ends to be trimmed to fit later, so be sure to account for

that when you draw your line. Now, make a second line two full plank widths (10mm) up from the first line (you can use your paper template to draw this second line). Cut this out and you have your first part of the bulwark.

Before you glue the bulwark in place, you may want to scribe a line longitudinally down the center on both sides to give the impression that this piece is really two planks. If you're double planking, then of course, this is unnecessary. You'll need to make a second bulwark for the other side. Test your template against the other side before you cut the basswood to final shape.

Glue both bulwarks in place. You'll find that on the foredeck, the top of the bulwark is about 6mm above the waterway and on the afterdeck, it's about 2mm above the waterway. Clearly, this isn't high enough, but the rest will be built up from 1/16-inch square strip basswood to more closely simulate the look of the real Bluenose II. You'll need four strips per side. Along the foredeck, you can hold the strips in place with clothespins while the glue is drying (I used yellow glue for this). There's not enough of the first bulwark piece along the afterdeck to use clamps though. You'll want to cut about 6 or 8 stanchions and glue them in place along the afterdeck so you can have something to glue the strips to as you build up the bulwarks.

Ah yes – we haven't talked about the stanchions yet. Again, we'll be deviating from the kit because the kit has far too few stanchions. Bulwark stanchions (also known as timberheads) were the tops of the frames on Bluenose (although this was not the case on every ship). Waterways were cut to fit around the stanchions. We've already put the waterways on of course, so we'll simply put the stanchions on top of the waterways. The stanchions will be made from strip basswood 1/16-inch by 3/32-inch. On Bluenose II, the bulwark stanchions are 8-inches square at the waterway and taper to 4½-inches by 6-inches at the rail. Cutting this taper on a model is not easy, however, and probably not worth the effort on a model of this scale.

You're going to need 29 stanchions for each side of the foredeck and 27 stanchions for each side of the afterdeck. Foredeck stanchions should be cut 13mm long and afterdeck stanchions should be cut 9mm long (you'll trim them to exact length after the bulwarks are built). Before you cut them, take a moment to paint 3 sides of the strip wood (leave one of the 3/32" sides unpainted). Painting in advance will make it easier to avoid getting paint on the waterway later. You need to leave one side unpainted so the stanchions can be glued to the bulwarks. Refer to the section on stanchions below to determine the location of the 6 or 8 needed at this point for attaching the bulwarks.

Now, back to the bulwarks. Finish building up the bulwarks with the four pieces of 1/16-inch square strip wood. Again, be sure to leave enough length at the stern for later trimming. You'll have to fit the strips at the bow as you go. Although you haven't yet applied the curved stem piece (Als part number 29) at the bow, you want the bow end of the bulwarks to continue the curve of the stem piece. Photo 4 (taken at a slightly later stage of construction with the stem piece attached) illustrates how the end of the bulwarks at the bow should look. Once the bulwarks are built, you can glue the stanchions in place.

Photo 4: Bulwarks at bow. Note that they match the curve of the stem piece.

The Stanchions

One important aspect of placing the stanchions correctly is that the chainplates (pieces of iron that hold the lower deadeyes) are bolted to the frames (of which the stanchions are an extension on the real ship). The deadeye locations shown on ALs plans are incorrect, but we'll correct this after the bulwarks and stanchions are in place. Each stanchion will be placed 9mm apart.

This is a good time to make a paper template of the stanchion locations. Using a template assures that the stanchion locations on one side mirror those on the other. Simply cut a piece of paper to fit inside the bulwarks on the foredeck and another on the afterdeck. On the foredeck template, mark the location of the first stanchion (going forward from the break beam) 12mm from the front edge of the break beam. Mark the remaining stanchion locations on one side of the template every 9mm until you've marked a total of 29

stanchions on that side. You won't have stanchions all the way to the tip of the bulwark – there will be some space left over at the end. Then, using your template, you can transfer your marks to the bulwarks (flip over the template for the other side) and glue the stanchions in place, centering the stanchions over the marks.

Follow the same procedure for the afterdeck, starting at the aft side of the break beam and placing a stanchion every 9mm. On the afterdeck, you'll have 27 stanchions (and, as with the bow, the stanchions don't run all the way to the end). There's a detail you can add at the bow if you wish. Bluenose II has heavy timbers in the bow that are called hawse timbers or knightheads. These added a great deal of strength in this area where the anchor chain goes through the bulwarks. You can simulate these timbers using the same material as your stanchions. Fill up the space between the last stanchion and the tip of the bow with the pieces placed right next to each other. I had room for nine pieces per side on my model.

End of Part 3

