HOW TO BUILD... ACW DEFENSIVE FENCES

By Paul Davies

This month's article was inspired by the defences constructed by Confederate troops on Missionary Ridge at the Battle of Chattanooga, during the American Civil War, and which are shown in the illustration on this month's front cover.

GENERAL CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIAL NOTES

Building this type of defence is relatively simple, if a bit fiddly. Its a good idea to construct several fence sections per session, rather than single ones; it's a better use of materials too!

As for the materials, ideally you're looking for something with a roughly round cross section as these defences were hastily prepared by cutting down trees etc. in the immediate area, and there was no time for cutting the tree sections into neat planks!

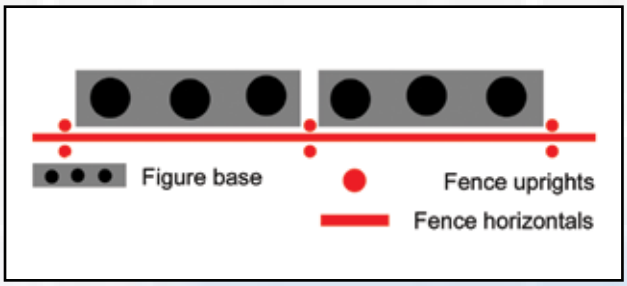
Suggested materials might include barbeque skewers, roller blinds, even willow screening! From a visual aspect, its preferable if the material isn't too regular. I decided to break up an old roller blind that I'd bought a while back at a 'Boot Fair' for a £1, as it was slightly damaged. I knew it would come in useful one day for something!

TEMPLATE

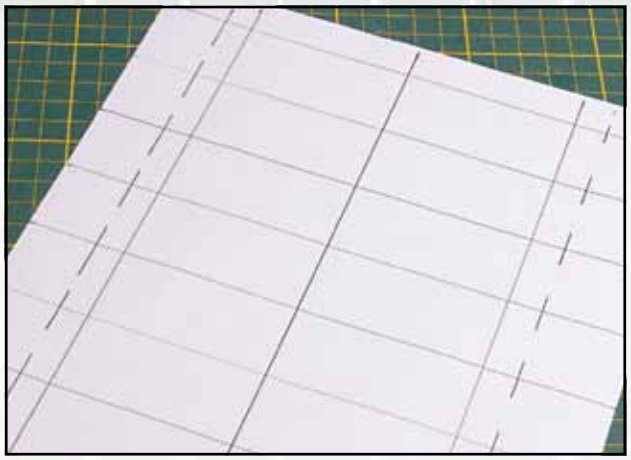
First step is to determine the length and height of your fences and create a master template. The fences in this article needed to be of a height such that a kneeling 28mm figure could 'fire' their musket over them, and also that unit bases would fit neatly between the supporting fence uprights. I decided to build the fences 150mm long and approximately18mm high, but if in doubt, just take suitable measurements from your based figures.

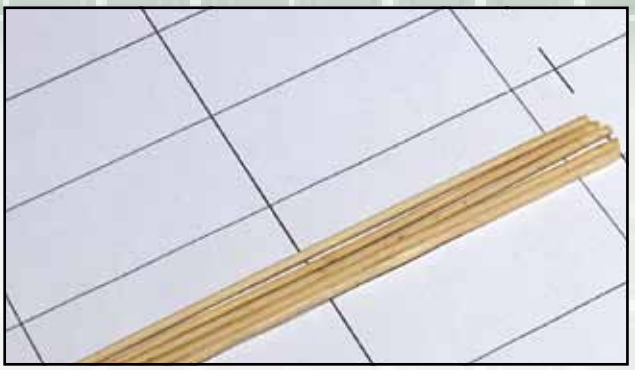
These dimensions formed the basis of a master template on which the fence sections would be constructed.

Below: Paul Davies' fences, made from an old roller blind using the steps in this article, were used in the photography for our ***Siege of Chattanooga*** *article (WI273).*



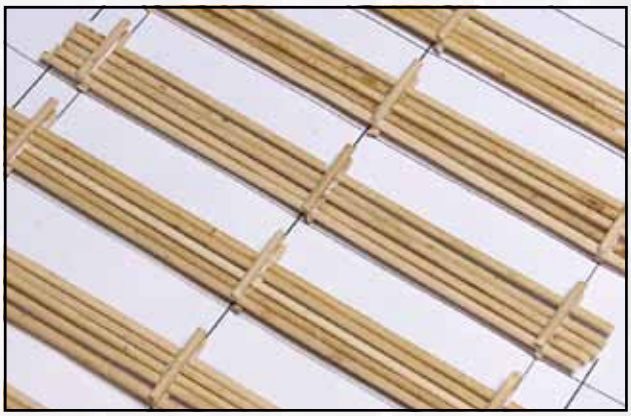
CONSTRUCTION





Cut the fence lengths and carefully position them onto the template (shown left). They don't have to be exactly the same length; after all, the defenders were in a hurry! Ensure though, that the lower fence piece is accurately aligned with the baseline.

Cut the fence uprights to length and carefully glue them to the fence pieces. They should be slightly taller than the height of the fence rails. Make certain that the base of each upright is level with bottom of the lower fence rail.



Once the first series of uprights are firmly glued in place, turn the fence over and glue the remaining uprights into position. And that, basically, is it. A simple 'rail' fence. By varying the number of horizontal beams and the height of the uprights, you can build fences to any configuration.

I decided not to paint the fences as, in the scenario, they would have been freshly cut and would not have had time to 'age'. If you want to portray suitably 'aged' fences, I would paint them matt black, followed by a drybrush of grey. And finally a very light drybrush of white across the tops of the fence rails.

For maximum flexibility of use, these fences were constructed to be freestanding without the need for a base, and when in use they were to have random scenic material scattered around them, both for appearance and added support. I would suggest though, that you don't make them much longer than 15cms (6") to reduce the likelihood of the fence section curling or twisting.

If you want to incorporate bases for more stability, then glue each fence section to a piece of mounting board, thin plywood or mdf. Texture the base with sand and/or small pebbles. Paint the base to match your terrain and add a few clumps of electrostatic grass or lichen.