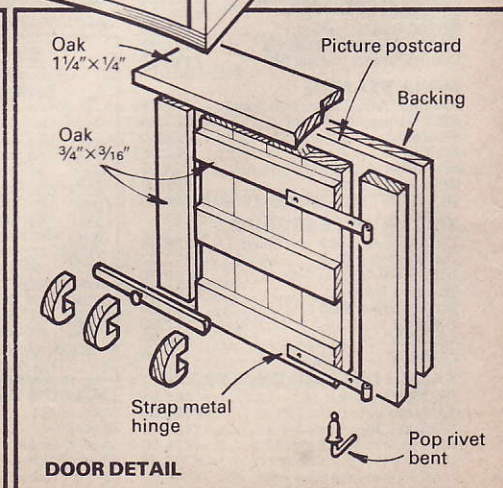
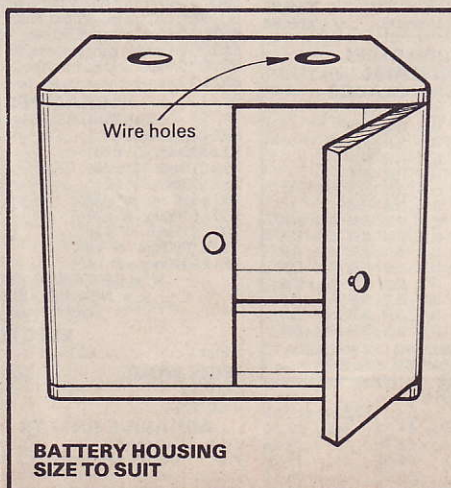
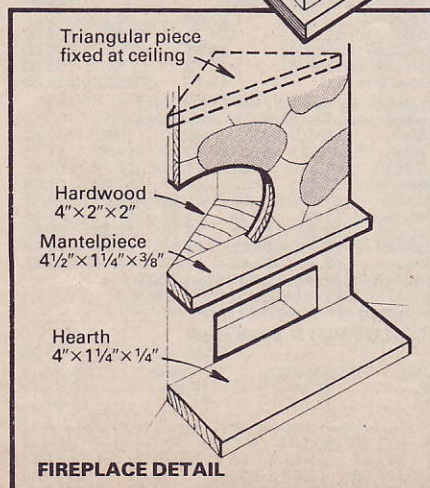
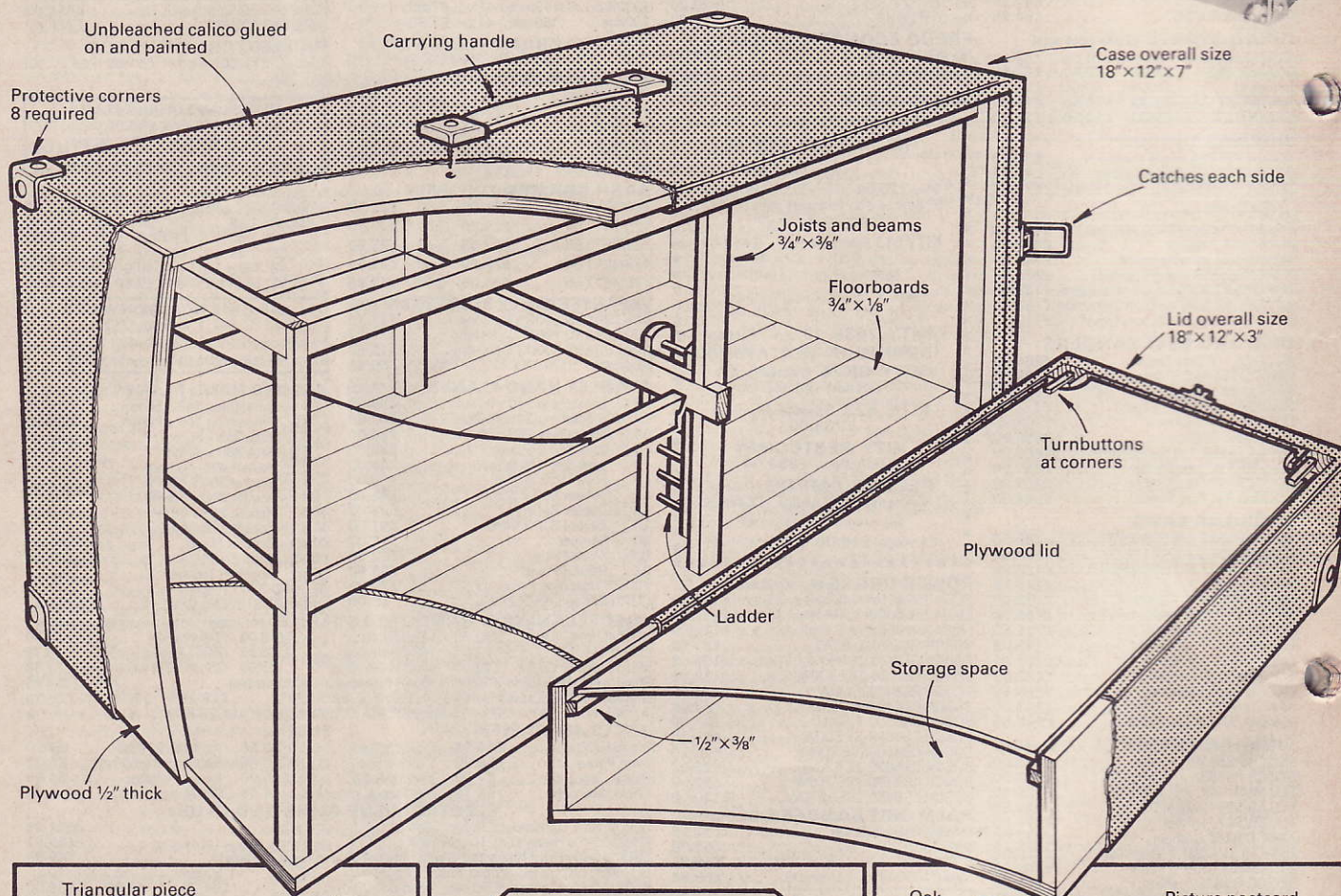
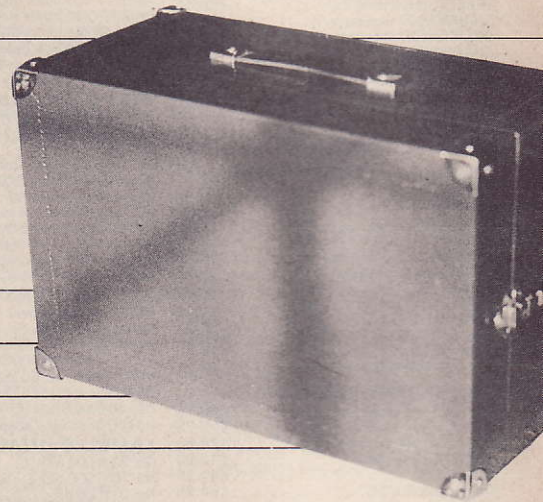
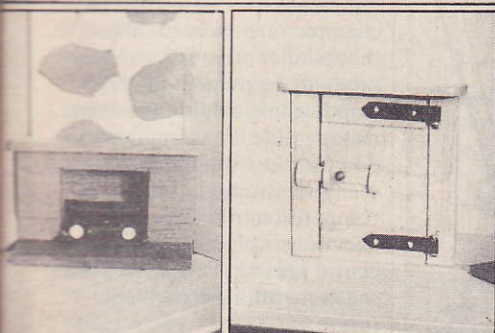
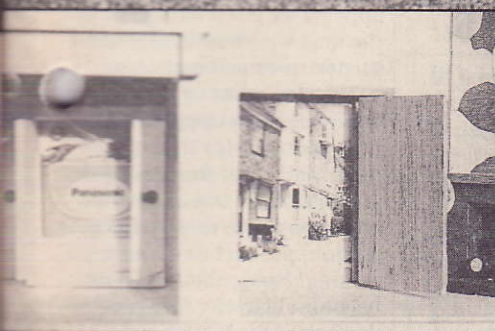




CASE'S COTTAGE

With the need to make everything small and easily stored, there's a case for a pack-away doll's house, says Len Clarke, and he made it





NEW houses seem to get smaller every year and so too do little girls' bedrooms. With such limitations in mind, this toy dolls' house was made to try and fit in with modern living and can be packed away after play and even taken on holiday. The furniture is all designed to fit in the lid, leaving plenty of room left to add bits and pieces later on.

The box itself is based on the weekend suitcases that my father used to make when he was in the Royal Flying Corps. He called them 'ditty boxes', wrongly of course, but he had transferred from the Royal Navy, who before the war issued every sailor with a wooden box to put his personal effects in.

To make what I have called Case's Cottage, start by cutting to size some good quality 1/2in. multi-ply. The secret of good box making is to have every angle nice and square. Form the rebated joints as shown in the drawing,

and glue up the box as a one-piece assembly. The lid can be sawn off and cleaned up later, but remember it is better to sand the inside surfaces before gluing up as it is far more difficult to do it later.

To give added strength to the case, it is covered with fabric. In my case I used a metre of unbleached calico which I obtained from an old-fashioned draper's shop.

Initially you should start by cutting the cloth to size with pinking shears. Don't try to turn the edges over – you only get wrinkles that way. Now prepare your size – two parts pva glue to one part warm water. Paint this thickly onto the wood, then with the fabric rolled up, start at one end with a large brush working out all the wrinkles. Do the same on all the sides. Now cut 2in. strips of cloth and glue the edges down, smoothing out as before.

When the glue is dry, give the outside of the case about six coats of gloss paint. I chose a bitter chocolate, but you may think something a bit brighter is needed. Leave a day between coats and about a week for it to really dry out. The inside I coated with four coats of green emulsion.

When the paint inside and out is dry, work can start on fitting out. Here a sensible precaution is to put a piece of old carpet on the bench to protect the finished surfaces.

The easiest way to cut strip-wood is to plane one edge of a thickened board, cut off one strip on a bandsaw or circular saw, plane the sawn edge and then cut again for the next piece. Do this until you have the required number of strips for the floorboards and beams etc, and remember to cut one or two spares just in case you make a mistake.

I glued the floorboards down with contact adhesive, whilst the upstairs

joists and beams can be cut to length and fitted with a touch of pva glue as well as one or two brass screws and nails.

The ladder giving 'access' to the upper floor was made in the simplest of ways with the two side pieces not only being shaped up together to ensure similarity but also drilled through at the same time for the dowel treads.

The fire surround was formed from a block of hardwood cut to shape and with the hole for the fire chiselled out. The imitation stonework above is made by taping two pieces of wood together with double-sided tape and then cutting out the shapes as if it were a jigsaw. The pieces can then be put together as a single board with contrasting colours and glued to a ply backing piece.

The fire in the hearth was made from a few twigs laid and glued on top of each other as shown and a small light bulb, set underneath and connected by discreet wires to a battery hidden in the cupboard, provides the effect of the fire being alight in the grate.

The wires from this light as well as from the ceiling light of the ground floor are fed as inconspicuously as possible to the wardrobe, which is a fixed item screwed to the back wall.

The oak door is again made out of strip-wood, and although the catch was a bit of a fiddle to make I thought it worth it. A friend gave me the idea for hanging the door with the hinge pins being formed from bent pop rivets and the hinges themselves formed from strip metal screwed onto the door.

By gluing a postcard of a street scene behind the door and behind the window frame (again made from strip wood) you can add a sense of depth to the toy and give it a location.

The lid is lined with a green baize and an interior lid of 1/8in. ply added to be retained by small brass turn catches on a 3/8 by 1/2in. rebate. One young lady who played with the cottage told me that this was a walled garden, and I have to admit that didn't occur to me before.

All the framework, front door and other interior fittings were given two coats of polyurethane before final fixing. It only remained to screw on the protective brass corners and suitcase catches.

An incidental thought which occurs to me is that since this type of box is very strong you could make a handy toolbox the same way – in fact quite strong enough to be sat upon.