

Liberator GR Mk.IIIA LV343 '12' at 1(C)OTU, RAF Beaulieu, on 21st July 1943. The small vent (arrowed) below the fire extinguisher cover, is the outlet for the urinal. An interesting weathering feature! The crewmen are from 311 Squadron.



The numeral '12' is hand painted. According to the AMO aircraft letters on training aircraft should be painted in red, but compared to the red centre of roundel this paint is much darker. Below the 2 is the fire extinguisher cover (not properly marked with red paint and white inscription).

The main differences between the Liberator II and the Liberator IIIA were the engines, engine nacelles, turbo-chargers, cooling system and air ducts, propellers and gun turrets.

LIBERATOR IIIA, LV343 12, 1 (C) OTU, BEAULIEU, JULY 1943



MODELLER'S NOTES

Aircraft:

- Consolidated San Diego plant built
- no radar installed
- Martin A-3 mid-upper turret
- Bendix A-5 lower turret was removed
- Consolidated A-6 tail turret with two asymmetrically mounted Browning 0.50 machine guns
- No astrodome
- Short trim tabs on rudders

Colours:

- Temperate Sea Scheme (Dark Slate Grey and Extra Dark Sea Grey) on upper surfaces, side and under surfaces white
- Dividing line between upper and side surfaces in bold curves
- Propeller hubs painted white
- Number '12' painted in Dull Red
- Serial number painted in Black
- Rubber de-icer boots not painted
- Tail turret framing overpainted in white

Discussion points:

- One of 11 aircraft supplied from USAAF stocks during the "Battle for Atlantic"
- Used for training purposes

Right: The 311 Squadron crew again, now at the tail of LV343. All of the eleven Liberator GR Mk.IIIAs had the A-6 tail turret.

Note: The discolouration of the white paint, obvious against the lower parts that have been wiped clean. The aerial wire anchored at the top of the fin. The fin flash, on white, had only blue and red rectangles. The blue field is notably larger than the red one and it may have covered the old style fin flash.





Left: Liberator IIIA LV344 (41-1093) as delivered in standard USAAF camouflage; Dark Olive Drab on upper and side surfaces and Neutral Grey below. In the background are two more RAF Liberators in standard Bomber Command camouflage

Below: Liberator GR.Mk.IIIA LV345 'E' (41-1124) of 86 Squadron, at Aldergrove, end of March, 1943. At the time when this photo was taken, the aircraft carried the Temperate Sea Scheme on the upper surfaces with the side and lower surfaces in white. The serial LV345 was probably applied in black. LV345 had served with 120 Squadron until 23 October 1942, when it went to 86 Squadron. It moved again on 1 April 1943 to 1(C)OTU, and became '5'. Note the Bendix A-5 lower turret.

In the background is another 86 Squadron aircraft GR Mk.III FL931 'M' with ASV aerials and dorsal turret removed.



Above: The fuselage of Liberator GR.Mk.III FK221 being removed from Binbrook. QX-C of 224 Squadron crash-landed in bad weather on 19 August 1942. It was later repaired by Scottish Aviation and went to a training unit. FK221 had been delivered on 31 May 1942 and it seems that it retained the original USAAF camouflage. A Boulton Paul Type E tail turret is fitted, note the black turret framing as in Bomber Command aircraft.

LIBERATOR III

Further deliveries took place under the Lend-Lease Act. These were Consolidated B-24Ds manufactured in San Diego and also assembled at Fort Worth, all modified according to British specifications. Three other B-24s delivered to the RAF were assembled by Douglas at Tulsa, and re-designated GR.Mk.V after the ASV Radar had been fitted. RAF serial numbers were in the ranges: FK214-FK245, FL906-FL995, and BZ711-BZ959.

Liberator IIIs were powered by Pratt & Whitney R-1830-43 (and later -65) Twin Wasp engines with General Electric turbo superchargers.

The B.Mk.III, GR.Mk.III and GR.Mk.V designations were introduced in early February 1943, as deliveries of aircraft equipped with cm-wavelength ASV Radar began. Until this time all B-24Ds in the UK were Liberator IIIs.

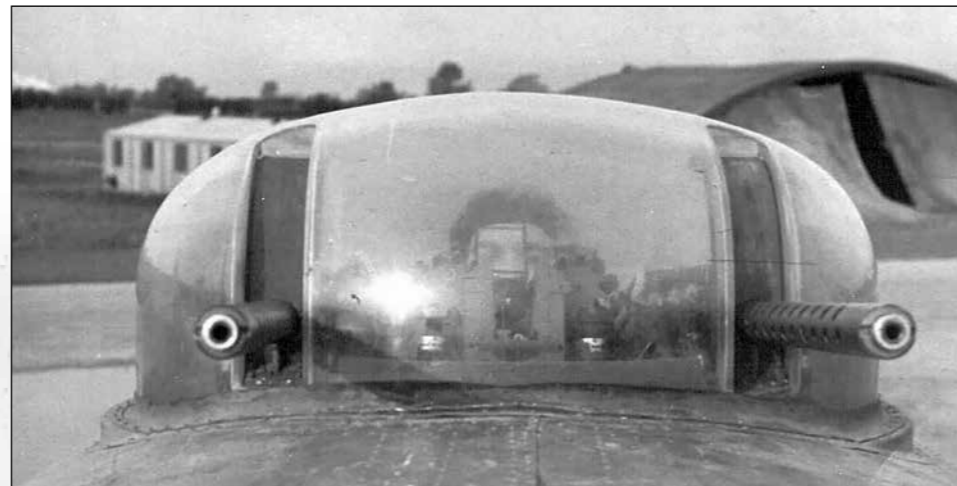


Main photo: Liberator GR.Mk.III FK222 in Coastal Command colours, Temperate Sea Scheme on top, side and lower surfaces white, in August 1942. Propellers, including hubs, were black, de-icer boots on the wings and fins were painted with aluminium dope. Undercarriage legs and wheel discs were over-sprayed white.

57 GR.Mk.IIIs were delivered in the serial ranges FK214-FK245 and FL906-FL945.

Below: An unidentified Liberator GR.Mk.III of 224 Squadron at Beaulieu, December 1942.

Right: The Martin 250 CE 3 (US Army Type A-3) dorsal turret on a Liberator GR.Mk.III of 120 Squadron. Note the N-3A gun sight in front of the gunner.

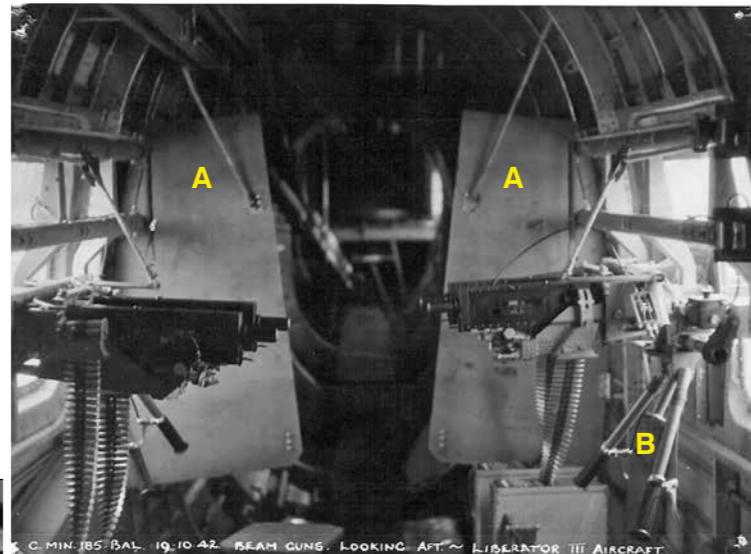
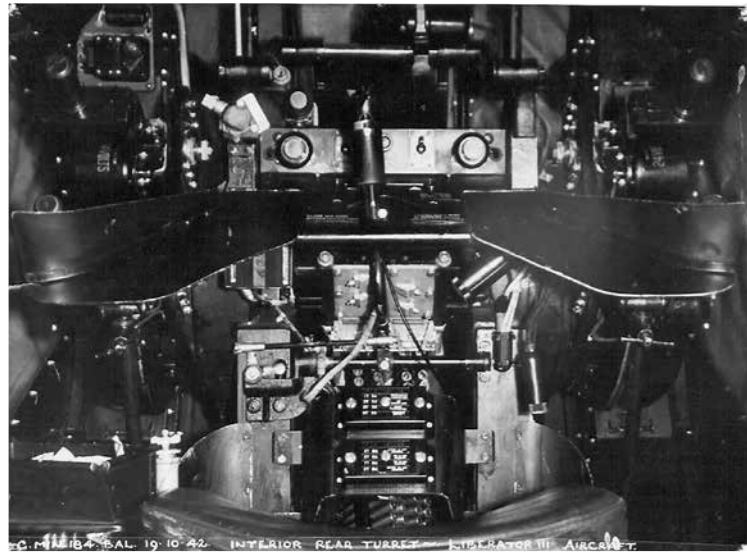


Above: The Boulton Paul Type E tail turret on a Liberator GR.Mk. III, 1943. This is the early version without the 'Clear Vision Sighting Panel' and defectors. The original black turret framing has been partially over-painted with white. The close up inset shows the DTD stencilling which describes the type of paint used, (DTD stands for Directorate of Technical Development).

Top right: Before the introduction of the Mk.III LL (low level) bomb sight, Liberators of Coastal Command were equipped with CSBS Mk.IX (course setting) bomb sights, which were more suitable for bombing from higher altitudes. Note the Yagi aerial installation in the glazed nose.

Right: A tail gunner sits on the ammunition tracks in the fuselage of Liberator GR.Mk.III.





Below: WOP/AG F/Sgt Ronald Johnson at the starboard beam of a GR.Mk.III from 224 Squadron during a convoy escort to North Africa, December 1942. The guns were fed by belts from ammunition boxes on the floor. A Sea Marker, Aluminium, Mk.III (arrowed) is stored on the wall to the left.



Above: Inside a Boulton Paul Type E tail turret on a GR.Mk.III, The guns breeches are visible on the sides and ammunition belts are below the control column.

Above right: Beam guns, two pairs of Browning .303 machine guns in FN55 mounts, in a Liberator GR.Mk. III. Armour plates (A) behind the beam positions protect the gunners from attacks from astern.

The gunner sat to the right of the guns, which he controlled with 'V' shaped handles (B).



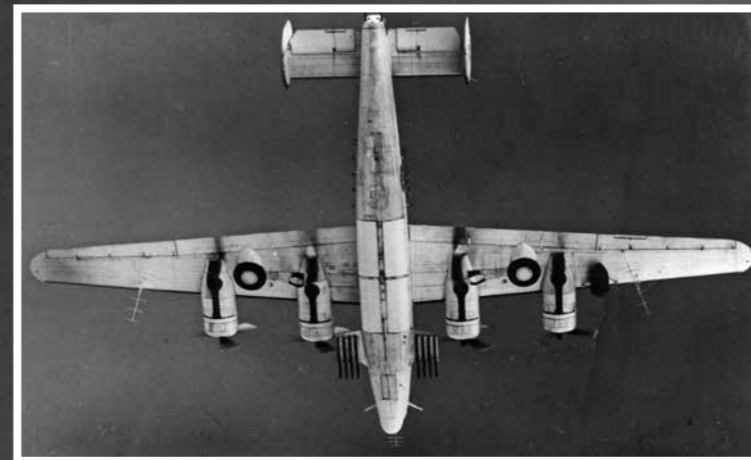
Left: Consolidated B-24D-CO s/n 41-11619 at the San Diego plant, 1942. This became FK235, with 120 Squadron in July 1942. FK235 was from the batch 41-11588 to 41-11671, earmarked for the RAF, but 46 of 83 aircraft were taken over by the USAAF. The camouflage is unusual; upper and side surfaces Dark Olive Drab, but the lower surfaces Deep Sky Blue. This scheme was the 'RAF High Altitude Bomber Scheme', but was soon repainted in the Coastal Command scheme.

Below: GR.Mk.III FL926 'J' (41-11627) of 160 Squadron upon arrival in India on 10 July 1943. On 26 October 1943 it failed to return from a reconnaissance over Car Nicobar. All upper sides were painted Extra Dark Sea Grey while the sides and lower surfaces were white. The aircraft was not equipped with radar.



Below: Liberator GR.Mk.III FL927/G (41-11626) was sent to A&AEE Boscombe Down for tests. It had a Leigh Light fitted as well as the ASV Mk.II Radar with a complete set of aerials.

Right: Between 16 April and 4 June 1943, FL927/G was used to test rockets and the Mk.IIIA gun sight. It was armed with eight rockets on two pylons (stub wings) on each side of the nose. The Radar aerials on the top of the fuselage have been removed by this point.



Main photo: On 16 July 1943 FL927/G returned to A&AEE after the cover for the ASG-1 Radar had been fitted at Prestwick (although neither the radar nor the aerial were actually installed). Both Rocket Projector Mk.IIs are empty.

Inset: FL927/G reveals a number of interesting details not usually visible; the trim tab on the starboard aileron only, retracted landing lights in front of the undercarriage legs, strengthened bomb bay doors (a result of ground firing the rockets), the shape of the nose wheel doors and typical exhaust stains.

