

Belcher Bits No.10: 8,000/12,000 lb HC Bombs 1/48

Background

At the start of WWII, high explosive bombs used by the RAF were mostly GP series; streamlined cast cases with a charge/weight ratio of around 23%. The damage caused by German mines dropped on England by the Luftwaffe during the Blitz, prompted the RAF to develop something similar. The intention was to develop a weapon which was not intended to penetrate structures, but due to its large size and high charge/weight ratio (around 70%), would cause considerable damage especially in combination with incendiary bombs. These weapons were classed as HC (high capacity) and were developed in 2,000 lb, 4,000 lb, 8,000 lb and even 12,000 lb sizes.

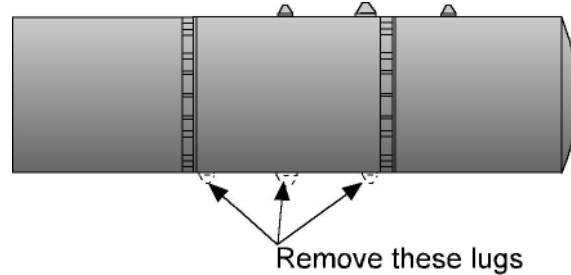
The original concept for the larger bombs was for them to be carried in an ex-troop glider, sort of a low tech V-1. Eventually, this evolved into an 8,000 lb 'Super Cookie'. While the smaller 2,000 lb and 4,000 lb bombs were simple 'cans' filled with high explosive, the larger 8,000 lb and 12,000 lb HC bombs were built in a modular manner. The smaller used two 4,000 lb canisters (not the same as the 4,000 lb bomb; these were 38" in dia) bolted together at a reinforced joining ring, and a simple sheet metal drum tail. Over 1,000 of these bombs were eventually used in service.

The larger 12,000 lb bomb was seen as being useful for blasting canal banks and viaducts. It used the same components as the 8,000 lb HC but added a third canister. This monster was aerodynamically unstable with anything but a traditional ballistic cone end section and tail ring supported by six fins. The great weight (and length) meant that it could only be carried on specially modified Lancasters and in fact, was only used by 617 Squadron (the Dambusters). First delivered in September 1943, nearly 200 were used in service; on 9 February 1944, 10 were dropped on the Gnome-Rhone engine factory at Limoges, reducing it to ruins.

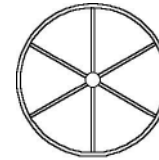
Assembly

This set includes the forward two canisters of the 8,000 lb HC and a drum tail., It also includes a third canister and conical aft end of the 12,000 lb HC and a ring tail.

All parts are cast using a thin standoff, so they can be cut off the bases using a thin razor saw. Sand the bases flat and attach using cyanoacrylate glue or five minute epoxy. For the 8,000 lb HC, remove the aft set of hoist brackets and suspension lug. For



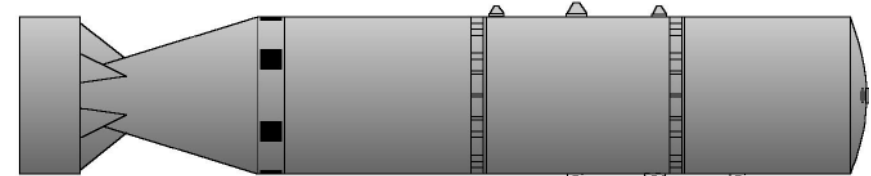
Bomb HC 8,000 lb Mk II



Rear View



Template for Tail Fin (6 req'd)



Bomb HC 12,000 lb Mk II

the 12,000 lb HC, cut six fins of 0.015" plastic using the template supplied. Glue these to the strips on the tail of the cone. The ring tail should slip over these fins. Remove the forward set of hoist brackets and suspension lug.

Painting

Pretty easy, actually: overall Dark Green. Typical markings comprised a light green band (~2" width) about halfway between the nose and the suspension lug and a thinner red band (~1" width) just behind the nose.

Stencilling in 1" white letters on the top (suspension lug side) was as follows. Just aft of the green band was the Amatol mix ratio (i.e. 60/40). Aft of the suspension lug was the bomb designation (i.e. HC 8000 LB), next line the lot number (varied, some references give 5 digit numbers), next line the date of filling (11/7)

These bombs were stored in open dumps, rolled in the mud and generally treated with less respect than one would normally give tons of high explosive. Therefore, heavy weathering is in order ... often the suspension lugs were touched up with fresh paint to reduce rusting.

References

1. Bombs Gone by J. MacBean and A. Hogben, 1990 (excellent reference on RAF bombs of all sorts)
2. RAF Pocket Book 1937 (info on bomb marking scheme)