

RIDERS IN THE SKY 1944

**The Liberator GR Mk.III and GR Mk.V
in RAF Coastal Command Service**

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First Edition

Introduction

Supply of Liberators to the United Kingdom

At the beginning of 1940, Europe, notably the United Kingdom and France, realized that war with Germany was inevitable. To their surprise, they learned that the Luftwaffe was armed with modern aircraft the likes of which their own forces could not match. Importantly, neither the British nor the French fielded a heavy bomber. As their domestic producers were not able to promptly fill the demand for such an aircraft, the purchasing commissions turned to the United States. Consolidated had both a suitable four-engined bomber aircraft and the production capability to go with it.

In 1938, prompted by the prospects of a looming war and the lack of a heavy bomber in the USAAC fleet, General H. H. Arnold asked Consolidated to consider license production of the Boeing B-17, produced by their competitor. The president of the company, Major Reuben Fleet, after thorough consideration and consultation with his chief design engineer, Isaac Machlin Laddon, who visited Boeing, decided to offer the USAAC a modern bomber of their own design. The construction of the aircraft, the Model 32, began at the beginning of January 1939. On February 1st, 1939, the USAAC issued a new public tender based on the proposal of Consolidated. On February 21st, 1939, the Model 32 was declared the winner and on March 30th, of the same year, a contract for one prototype XB-24 was signed. The process leading to the first test flight of the XB-24 (s/n 39-556) took place in a historically short time - on December 29th, 1939.

The design of the B-24 incorporated proven elements used on previous aircraft

types made by the company such as two large oval vertical tail surfaces (which later enabled easy installation of the tail turret) and most notably the wing with a profile designed by David R. Davis. This wing profile was characterized by providing high lift while generating little drag, resulting in a higher speed, longer range and larger payload capacity, but at the cost of a lower operational ceiling and being more demanding to fly (in comparison, the wing area of the Boeing B-17 was one third larger).

The high demand for the B-24 Liberator required production at four plants (and wartime production demanded that competitor firms also be involved). These were Consolidated San Diego (coded CO), Consolidated Fort Worth (CF), Ford Willow Run (FO) and North American Dallas (NT). Douglas, based in Tulsa (DT), also assembled these aircraft. Components were first supplied by Consolidated San Diego (B-24D), and later by Ford Willow Run (B-24E, H and J). This accounts for the variety of differences even among the same versions of the aircraft. The total production of Liberators and Privateers was 19,257; with almost 11% being purchased by the United Kingdom.

On June 4th, 1940, France signed an A.F.7 Contract for the supply of 175 LB-30MF aircraft. At the same time, the UK placed an order for a mere six LB-30s under Contract A-5068. After the fall of France, the British government took over the A.F.7 Contract, but the number of planes was lowered to 159 and the contract received a new identifier, F-677.

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The total supply of LB-30 bombers to the UK was 165. With respect to the situation

in Europe and the demands of the USAAC, production of the LB-30 was, following a

mutual agreement, terminated with the 139th produced aircraft. The remaining 26 were substituted by the YB-24 and twenty modified B-24As. At first, Liberators were supplied to the UK through direct purchase and later through the Lend-Lease Act.

Out of the twenty modified B-24As, dubbed LB-30B Liberator I, nineteen actually reached the UK. One plane crashed in the United States. This crashed plane was rebuilt as a transport and, after much modification, it has been flying in the US till today. The majority of Liberator Is (15 aircraft) was allocated to the Royal Air Force Coastal Command. The first Liberator I was handed over to Heston Aircraft Ltd. to be modified in accordance to Coastal Command requirements on April 10th, 1941.

The planes produced according to Contract F-677 received the British designation LB-30 Liberator II. Due to America's subsequent entry into the war, the UK never received all its ordered Liberator IIs. The first two Liberators arrived in the UK on October 17th, 1941 and final delivery of this version totalled 86 planes. The majority was assigned to bomber squadrons; Coastal Command units only received ten aircraft (another five Liberator IIs assigned to No. 160 Squadron conducted several maritime patrols as part of training by No. 120 Squadron, but these were not modified in accordance with the needs of RAF Coastal Command).

In 1942, the ever-growing success of German submarines caused a serious threat to the supplies of Britain's wartime economy and increasingly concerned British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He correctly perceived the German submarine threat to be a major one. The biggest losses occurred in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The Allied naval convoys were in need of air escort covering the full length of the North Atlantic route from North America to the UK. This could only be provided by an aircraft with suitable long range capability. The Liberator met the demand. As a result, subsequent versions of the aircraft were supplied with emphasis on maritime capabilities rather than those of straight bombers.

The first version supplied under the Lend-Lease Act was the Liberator III. The aircraft concerned were Consolidated B-24Ds adapted to British needs. They were produced in San Diego and partly assembled at Fort Worth, while three came out of Tulsa's Douglas Company plant (which, following the installation of ASV radar received the designation GR Mk.V). The first Liberator III arrived in the UK on May 16th, 1942, and in June it was assigned to No. 120 Squadron. Initially, the Liberator IIIs were not distinguished between B Mk.III and GR Mk.III variants, although the navy escort patrol aircraft had different equipment from the bombers. These version designations came into use later; the first Liberators equipped with centimetric radars were still supplied as the Liberator III. Only with the adoption of the official designation GR Mk.V, reserved for centimetric radar equipped aircraft, did the Liberator III serve in the maritime patrol role (either without radar or with metric radar equipment) as the GR Mk.III. This was done from the beginning of 1943, the designation being retroactive. The RAF accepted a total of fifty-seven GR Mk.IIIs.

The Liberator IIIA designation was intended originally for aircraft supplied under the Lend-Lease programme and for a time was used to identify Liberator IIIs equipped with centimetric ASV radar installed in North America. Ultimately, the designation was given to eleven B-24D-COs made available by the USAAF in response to a request by Winston Churchill and an order by F. D. Roosevelt during the critical phase of the Battle of the Atlantic. The aircraft did not have standard RAF equipment and the majority of those were supplied to the UK during April and May 1942.

The Liberator GR Mk.V was a version of the B-24D modified as per RAF Coastal Command requirements. The aircraft produced in San Diego and Fort Worth received the centimetric ASV radars in the United States. The radars were first mounted inside an aerodynamic cover under the chin of the planes, the appearance of which earned them the nickname 'Dumbo', inspired by the Walt Disney animated character. Later, they were mounted inside a retractable

dielectric radome in place of the ball turret. The first Liberator GR Mk.V 'Dumbo' arrived in the UK on November 24th, 1942, but it wasn't until January,

1943 when a steadier supply began to be felt. Ultimately, there were 220 Liberator GR Mk.V aircraft.

Maritime Service of Liberators in RAF and RCAF Squadrons

During WWII, Liberators were used for maritime service by the following RAF Squadrons: No. 8, No. 53, No. 59, No. 86, No. 120, No. 160, No. 200, No. 203, No. 206, No. 220, No. 224, No. 311, No. 321, No. 354 and No. 547. Air Sea Rescue was tasked to No. 292 Squadron and three units focused on training (No. 1 (C) OTU, No. 111 (C) OTU and No. 1674 HCU). The RAF received in total 2,091 Liberators of all versions and approximately 40% of them were assigned to these squadrons.

The following RAF Coastal Command squadrons operated over the Atlantic: No. 53, No. 59, No. 86, No. 120, No. 206, No. 220, No. 224, No. 311 and No. 547. Training duties conducted by No. 160 Squadron under No. 120 Squadron (and later under No. 86 Squadron) were the only ops conducted by the former over the Atlantic. Subsequently, the unit was transferred to the Middle East and India. No. 200 Squadron, which operated above the Atlantic from military bases in West Africa, fell under West Africa Command and in March 1944 it was also transferred to India.

Except for these two squadrons there were other squadrons operating over the Indian Ocean during WWII: No. 8,

No. 203, No. 321 (Dutch) and No. 354 Squadron. These squadrons, including No. 292 Squadron dedicated to Air Sea Rescue, fell under the jurisdiction of Air Command South East Asia (ACSEA).

The squadrons patrolling the waters of the Atlantic Ocean mainly used bases located in the British Isles, Iceland and Gibraltar. Exceptions were the aforementioned No. 200 and No. 220 Squadrons, which operated their Liberators from the Azores.

Within the RCAF, there were only two squadrons equipped with Liberators and dedicated to maritime patrol service. The squadrons concerned were No. 10 (BR) Squadron and No. 11 (BR) Squadron. Liberator GR Mk.Vs were only allocated to No. 10 (BR) Squadron, which operated from Gander, Newfoundland. No. 10 (BR) Squadron was formed as a bombing squadron in Halifax, Nova Scotia on September 5th 1939. This squadron mobilized on September 10th and on October 31st its role changed to bombing-reconnaissance patrol. It flew the Westland Wapiti, Douglas Digby and Consolidated Liberators on the east coast and conducted U-boat missions.

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No. 10 (BR) Squadron conducted its first combat flight on June 17th, 1940 with Digby 744; the last flight being on May 26th 1945, with Liberator 599 'R'. The squadron attacked twenty-two U-boats and succeeded in sinking two. This was a record performance and earned this squadron an unofficial title 'North Atlantic Squadron'. After the end of WWII, on August 15th, 1945, the unit was decommissioned in Torbay, Newfoundland.

No. 311 (Czechoslovak) Squadron, RAF

The decision to introduce the Consolidated B-24 Liberator to No. 311 (Czechoslovak) Squadron, RAF, came from a meeting of high ranking officials of RAF Coastal Command on April 24th, 1943 at Northwood HQ, which included commander AM Sir John C. Slessor CB, DSO, MC. The squadron used RAF Station Beaulieu for conversion training and re-equipping. On May 20th 1943, a unit freshly reassigned departed RAF Talbenny and the following day nine crews under the command of S/Ldr Nedvěď MBE moved to Beaulieu. As soon as on May

23rd, 1943, they began training at No. 1 (C) OTU. Two days later, on 25 May 1943, a motorized transport left RAF Talbenny, the next day it was followed by the bulk of the remaining (ground) personnel. The transfer was completed on May 27th, 1943 when the main air component of the unit under the command of W/Cdr Breitcetil DFC landed at RAF Station Beaulieu and joined the training the following day.

The very first B-24 assigned to No. 311 Squadron was Liberator GR Mk.V BZ743 on June 5th, 1943. This aircraft received the A.L. (Aircraft Letter) 'B', but didn't conduct its first flight with the Czechoslovak Squadron until June 21st, 1943, commanded by S/Ldr Nedvěď MBE. This Liberator was the only one assigned to the squadron in June and therefore the training went rather slowly. The prescribed number of aircraft in the fleet, as required by the RAF and totalling 15 (twelve serviceable 'Initial Equipment' and 3 'Immediate Reserve' aircraft), was not reached by the squadron until August 2nd, 1943. On August 21st of that year, at 09:47, the Liberator GR Mk.V BZ780 with the A.L. 'O', took off for its first operational flight. The aircraft, under the command of W/Cdr Breitcetil DFC, never returned from its mission.

Except for two Liberators (BZ743 and FL948) equipped with ASG-1 radar (Dumbo), all other Liberators allocated to No. 311 Squadron till the end of 1943 were equipped with the ASG-3 unit. Most of the planes had rocket projectile racks on the sides of the nose. The squadron gradually sent these aircraft to Scottish

Aviation Ltd. (SAL) for further modifications at the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944.

From the beginning of 1944 to March, No. 311 Squadron began receiving replacements for returned Liberator GR Mk.Vs equipped with ASG-3 radars and rocket projectile racks. It was a replacement in the form of older Liberator GR Mk.Vs equipped with ASG-1 (Dumbo) and retractable rocket launch racks relocated to the rear bomb bay. The squadron later (between February 7th and 19th, 1944) received nine GR Mk.VI Liberators equipped with ASG-3 radars. At the end of February 1944, the squadron was moved again, this time to RAF Predannack (No. 19 Group) in Cornwall.

Thanks to the successful invasion by Allied forces in June 1944, the German U-boat fleet lost their bases on the French Atlantic coast. The RAF Coastal Command counter U-boat operation headquarters thus moved to the North Sea. For No. 311 Squadron, this meant another transfer, this time to the north of Scotland, to RAF Station Tain.

Operational flights of the Liberator GR Mk.V by No. 311 Squadron concluded by March 2nd, 1945 and preparations for their handover commenced. The aircraft were replaced by the Liberator GR Mk.VI and between January 31st and March 4th, 1945, a total of fifteen aircraft were accepted by No. 311 Squadron. The aircraft were equipped with ASG-3 radar and the Leigh Light searchlight. This version remained in the fleet of No. 311 Squadron till the end of its existence in the RAF.

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The First General Reconnaissance Liberators

A map of the Atlantic Ocean showing the Allied forces' aircraft operational flight range. The map clearly identifies the size of the area in the middle of the Atlantic that remained unprotected till the end of 1942.

Liberator IIIs designated for maritime service (later redesignated as the GR Mk.III) were, contrary to the bomber versions of the aircraft, optimised for

flights at low and medium altitudes and at long-ranges. Very often, these Liberators were equipped with extra fuel tanks in their bomb bays and carried an abundance of markers and flares. Their armour and defensive weaponry was often reduced and offensive armament consisted mainly of depth charges. Initially, the GR Mk.III Liberators did not carry any search radar but later ASV Mk. II metric radars were installed.

The GR Mk.V Liberators differed from the GR Mk.III by carrying the centimetric ASV radars first mounted inside the aerodynamic chin fairing and later inside a retractable dielectric radome that replaced the lower ball turret. Other distinguishing elements concerned the installation of the rocket armament. At first, the rocket launchers were mounted on both sides of the nose and later became retractable affairs mounted in the rear bomb bay. The final distinguishing feature was the frequent installation of the Leigh Light beneath the starboard wing next to the No. 4 engine.

Top Photo: On the 28th of May 1941, Liberator Mk.I AM923 arrived at Prestwick. On October 12th of that year, after modifications for the purposes of service with RAF Coastal Command, No. 120 Squadron took over the aircraft. Here, the aircraft was coded 'OH o W'.

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AM923 remained with this squadron till December 13th, 1944, after which it was flown to SAL Prestwick. This picture was taken after the modifications had been made and presumably prior to its transfer to No. 120 Squadron or shortly after its delivery, because the sides of the fuselage have not yet been marked with neither the S.C.L. nor A.L. Noteworthy features of this aircraft are all the LRASV (Long Range Air to Surface Vessel) antennae that include the Yagi transmitting antenna protruding through the glass nose and the two receiving Yagi homing antennae beneath each outer wing, side-looking dipoles on four rods located on the spine of the fuselage and the two rows of receiver dipoles on the side of the fuselage. Note also the open doors of the rear turret and under-fuselage gondola containing four 20mm cannon underneath the nose of the aircraft.

Liberator Mk.II AL507 (Consolidated LB-30) bearing the colours of No. 59 Squadron. The numeral '1' indicated affiliation with No. 59 Squadron and was the Squadron Code Letter (S.C.L.) while the letter 'Z' was the individual aircraft letter (A.L.) assigned to this bird. The aircraft got a new camouflage scheme consisting of Extra Dark Sea Grey and white. The Boulton Paul Type 'A' dorsal turret was dismantled. The picture was taken at SAL Prestwick in the autumn of 1943. The code letters and serial number were painted in Light Slate Grey.

The British accepted this aircraft on August 9th, 1941, but as she was committed to the installation of the first prototype of the American centimetric ASV DMS-1000 radar, she remained in the United States. The installation was overseen by Radiation Laboratory MIT specialists at the beginning of December, 1941. The articulated antenna was located in the bottom part of the nose, beneath a Plexiglas cover. The cover gave the aircraft an elephant-like appearance and therefore was named after the Disney character as Dumbo 1. The modifications to this aircraft were conducted at Wright Field and the first flight tests of the equipment took place on the 11th of December, 1941 at East Boston Airport. On March 19th, 1942, the aircraft reached SAL Prestwick and the following day it was handed over to the TFU (Telecommunications Flying Unit) and on May 6th, 1942, the aircraft was allocated to No. 120 Squadron. Operational tests were conducted from Nutts Corner in Northern Ireland during May and June of 1942. Once the tests were concluded, Liberator AL507 returned to the US. On October 15th of the same year and, once more, returned to SAL Prestwick and, again, was allocated to No. 120 Squadron. On November 19th, 1942, the plane was handed over to No. 224 Squadron and on the 29th of July, 1943 to No. 59 Squadron. On October 22nd, 1943, the aircraft concluded its service with the RAF. At that time, No. 511 Squadron took over the aircraft. On May 17th the following year, the plane was leased to BOAC, where it flew under the registration G-AHYC. The plane was stricken off charge on May 23rd, 1947.

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Liberator GR Mk.III

Top picture: Liberator GR Mk.III FK220 '3' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-1126), No. 1 (C) OTU, RAF Beaulieu, May/July 1943. The aircraft reached Prestwick on June 17th, 1942. On December 31st of the same year, after modifications requested for service with RAF Coastal Command, FK220 was allocated to No. 120 Squadron where the aircraft was assigned the A.L. 'K'. On April 1st, 1943 the aircraft was handed over to No. 1 (C) OTU and on October 15th, 1943, along with the whole of No. 1 (C) OTU, became part of No. 1674 HCU. The plane remained with this unit till the end of the war. The upper parts of the plane were painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme. The photograph shows FK220 without machine gun armament or dorsal turret. The aircraft had ASV Mk.II radar mounted; the homing antennae are clearly visible underneath both outer wing sections.

Bottom: Liberator GR Mk.III FK220 '3' of No. 1 (C) OTU taxis on the runway of Beaulieu airfield, May/July 1943. The Boulton Paul type rear turret is lacking its machine guns.

No. 1 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit conducted the retraining of RAF Coastal Command units flying Liberators.

On March 24th, 1943, Liberator Flight was transferred from Thornaby to Beaulieu. By the 1st of April 1943, the unit received its first five Liberator III and IIIs (FK219 '9', FK220 '3', LV339 '4', LV344 '8' and LV345 '5'). On April 3rd, 1943, another two Liberator IIIs arrived (FK215 '10' and FK224 '11') alongside with one Liberator GR Mk.V 'Dumbo' FL981 '7'. On April 26th, 1943, the unit received another Liberator IIIA LV343 '12' and the tenth and final aircraft that came to the unit was Liberator IIIA LV342 '6'. The Liberators were coded from '3' to '12'. Numbers '1' and '2' were not used, most likely due to inevitable confusion with squadron codes (at the time these numerals were used as backup S.C.L.s - Squadron Code Letters.). Training of No. 311 Squadron crews was conducted on the aircraft of No. 1 (C) OTU in Beaulieu from May. The unit moved to Aldergrove between the 6th and 7th of September, 1943. By October 10th, it became part of No. 1674 HCU.

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Above: Liberator GR Mk.III '11', No. 1 (C) OTU, RAF Beaulieu, May/July, 1943. The aircraft is very probably FK224 (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-1120). It lacks the dorsal turret and the ASV Mk.II homing antennae are clearly visible underneath both wings.

Below: Liberator GR Mk.III FK225 'W' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11648) passed its prime at No. 51 MU, Lichfield in 1946. The RAF accepted this aircraft on the 5th of June, 1942 and following the necessary modifications it was supplied No. 224 Squadron on August 10th of that year. On October 24th, 1942, the crew led by P/O B. P. Liddington managed to sink U-599 with this Liberator coded 'QX o G'. On January 28th 1943, No. 120 Squadron took ownership of this Liberator and on the 20th of May, the plane was transferred to No. 53 Squadron where she received the aircraft letter (A.L.) 'W'. On August 25th of the same year, the plane returned to No. 120 Squadron and on December 22nd, 1943, No. 86 Squadron incorporated the aircraft into its fleet. In the end, the aircraft went to the GR Aircraft Pool as a redundant item. Later, on February 7th, 1945, No. 53 Squadron started to use the aircraft as a transport and allocated the A.L. 'A' to it. The last operational unit where FK225 was registered after the 29th of August, 1945 was, again, No. 224 Squadron. This was the unit with which she began her military career. On October 4th, 1945, the aircraft was handed over to No. 51 MU in Lichfield and on March 12th, 1947 it was sold as scrap to International Alloys Ltd.

The upper surfaces of the aircraft were originally painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme with some segments painted in Dark Slate Grey and later it was repainted in Extra Dark Sea Grey. This photograph suggests that the new paint was not particularly resistant to weather conditions. The side surfaces and the undersides were white. The code letter 'W' and serial numbers on the lower surfaces of the wings were black. The fuselage serial numbers were painted in Light Slate Grey.

The aircraft pictured in the foreground is Liberator GR Mk.III FK228 'M' (ex USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11692) of No. 120 Squadron. Behind it is Liberator GR Mk.III FL933 'O' (ex USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11604) of No. 120 Squadron and the third plane in the row is Liberator GR Mk.V 'Dumbo' FL952 'L' (ex USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11644) of No. 86 Squadron. The picture was taken in Aldergrove between April 1st and 9th, 1943. FK228 was equipped with ASV Mk.II. The side looking antennae arranged in two rows of dipoles on the sides of the fuselage featured a high frequency switch enabling their use as both transmitter and receiver items. The aircraft was supplied to SAL Prestwick on June 18th, 1942 but only reached its operational unit (No. 120 Squadron) after the installation of Common T&R on February 21st, 1943. The aircraft came off the production line with upper surfaces in the Temperate Sea Scheme of irregular patches of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey. Since the regulation from the beginning of 1943 required the upper surfaces to be painted Extra Dark Sea Grey, the Dark Slate Grey patches were later repainted with the prescribed shade. Several spots, such as the areas near the upper line of dipoles and above the serial number apparently show the original Dark Slate Grey colour. Another peculiarity here is the black A.L. 'M'; this letter is repeated in a smaller size on the nose of the aircraft.

Bottom: Liberator GR Mk.III FL913 'E' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11748) of No. 120 Squadron photographed on August 17th, 1943 at RAF Ballykelly (at the time the unit was based at RAF Aldergrove). The aircraft wore standard RAF Coastal Command colours composed of Extra Dark Sea Grey with white sides and undersides. Unusual is the high position of the demarcation line separating the camouflage colours. The Yagi antennae on the nose and underneath the wing are clearly visible and the side of the fuselage has two rows of dipoles of the ASV Mk.II radars. This Liberator sank two German U-boats. On the 28th of May 1943, the crew commanded by F/O D. C. Fleming-Williams (No. 120 Squadron) sank U-304 and on October 16th, 1943, the crew led by F/Lt R. F. Kerrigan (No. 120 Squadron), along with two other Liberators, shared in the sinking of U-470.

Top: Liberator GR Mk.III FL916 'P' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11751), No. 224 Squadron, late December, 1942. The official caption of this propaganda shot states that the plane is returning to Beaulieu after performing escort duty for a convoy sailing from North Africa. The national insignia is positioned very close to the bomb bay and the A.L. 'P' is painted behind the waist gun position. The national marking was painted in this location after October 4th, 1942, following an order to remove the S.C.L. Before that, the S.C.L. 'TR' had been painted there indicating the previous user of the aircraft, No. 59 Squadron. The black framework of the Boulton Paul rear turret is worth noting. Liberator FL916 reached Prestwick on July 26th, 1942, and on the 2nd of September, No. 59 Squadron accepted the aircraft. No operational flights were conducted while with this squadron and on December 23rd, 1942, it was transferred to No. 224 Squadron. Liberator FL916 conducted only one operational flight during its use by the new unit, conducting a search for an enemy cargo ship on New Year's Day, 1943. Shortly after, on the 4th of January, the aircraft was handed over to SAL Prestwick and on February 7th, 1943, No. 86 Squadron (A.L. 'N') took it over. On June 26th, 1944, this Liberator (piloted by F/Lt G. W. T. Parker) sank U-317. On the 19th of October, 1944, No. 220 Squadron accepted the airplane and on March 20th, 1945, No. 1674 HCU became its final user. On September 12th, 1945, the plane was stricken off charge.

Above: Liberator GR Mk.III FL923 'V' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CF s/n 41-11705) of No. 120 Squadron flying over the hilly terrain of Iceland in September, 1943. On July 17th, 1942, the aircraft was delivered to Dorval airport and on the 18th of August it was assigned to No. 120 Squadron. On 23 April 1943, F/O J. K. Moffatt's crew, flying this Liberator, managed to sink U-189. On October 4th, 1943, this aircraft, this time commanded by W/Cdr R. M. Longmore, went missing while on escort duties for Convoy ON204. The subsequent investigation revealed that anti-aircraft fire from U-539 brought the Liberator down.

Below: On August 19th, 1942, Liberator GR Mk.III FL926 'J' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CF s/n 41-11627) reached SAL Prestwick. On January 25th, 1943, the plane arrived at No. 160 Squadron and on July 10th, it finally reached India. On October 26th of the same year, the plane did not return from a reconnaissance flight over Car Nicobar. The airplane was not equipped with radar. Note the pair of Browning 0.303 calibre machine guns fitted on FN55 mounts in the waist gun positions and the slightly odd shape of the A.L. 'J'. All upper sides were painted Extra Dark Sea Grey while the sides and bottom surfaces were painted white. The photograph was taken shortly prior to or immediately after being supplied for service in India, as indicated by the national insignia still having its red centre and fin flash segment used over European fronts.

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Above: Liberator GR Mk.III FL927 (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11626) reached SAL Prestwick on the 11th of August, 1942. After modifications, the plane was sent for testing at A&AEE. Apart from various other modifications, the plane had the Leigh Light installed as well as the LRASV radar. Modifications included a system of side-looking antennae and had transmitter dorsal antennas positioned between the wing and tail. Receiving antennae comprised four pairs of horizontally oriented dipoles positioned in two rows on both sides of the fuselage aft of the wing. Forward looking transmitter 'homing' aerial was mounted in the nose of the plane and two receiver antennae were mounted below the undersides of the wing outboard of the outer engines. These antennae were pointed away from the fuselage at about a 20 degree angle.

Bottom: Between the 16th of April and June 4th, 1943, Liberator GR Mk.III FL927 underwent testing of rocket launch rails and the Mk.IIIA gunsight at A&AEE in Boscombe Down. The aircraft was armed with eight rockets carried on two Rocket Projector Mk.I assemblies. The 'rocket projectors' were composed of stub wings with aerodynamic covers that were attached to both sides of the nose of the aircraft between bulkheads 2.1 and 4.0. This type of installation was called Type 'C'. At the time the transmitter antennae of the ASV Mk.II radar had been removed from the dorsal positions of the plane (the side-looking aerial system underwent modernization allowing the aerials mounted on the side of the fuselage use for both transmitting and receiving using a high-frequency switch). For the purposes of flight tests (with rockets) the Leigh Light was substituted with a dummy.

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Top: On July 16th, 1943, Liberator GR Mk.III FL927 returned from SAL Prestwick to A&AEE with the aerodynamic cover for the parabolic antenna of the ASG-1 centimetric radar below the nose of the aircraft (although neither the radar nor the antenna were actually installed yet). The waist gun positions were equipped with Browning 0.303 calibre machine guns on FN55 mounts. Both Rocket Projectors Mk.Is are empty. The aircraft was stricken from inventory on April 24th, 1947.

Bottom: Liberator GR Mk.III FL940 'P' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11694) reached SAL Prestwick on October 9th, 1942. On the 29th of November, the aircraft was transferred to No. 160 Squadron. On June 16th, 1943, it arrived at Ratmalana Air Base in Sri Lanka. The photo was taken in July 1943.

The aircraft lacked radar. Note the design of the national insignia - the centres are not red, but the outer thin yellow border remained. The Canadian members of No. 160

Squadron walking from the aircraft towards the camera are (left to right): Sgt B. Taylor, F/Sgt J. Follis, Sgt J. Fudge, P/O J. Boyle, Sgt J. H. Roberts and Sgt S. Heffer. From December 1944 to February 1945, the aircraft was used for training of No. 321 (Dutch) Squadron crews. It was retired on May 31st, 1945.

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Liberator GR Mk.IIIA

Top: Members of No. 311 Squadron posing with Liberator GR Mk.IIIA LV343 '12' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-1111), No. 1 (C) OTU, RAF Beaulieu, July 21st, 1943. Standing in the front row are, left to right: Hanuš Polák, Karel Jiří Meisl, Eduard Blaháček, Stanislav Duba, Heinz Lothar Hahn, Ladislav Černohorský, Ludvík Košek (pilot). LV343 had the dorsal gun position in place but lacked the lower Bendix turret. The upper surfaces of the plane were painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme. Note the wavy demarcation line between the top and bottom camouflage colours. Pitot tubes were placed ahead of the side windows of the navigator's station.

Bottom: No. 311 Squadron members (standing on the ground left to right: Marián Patzelt, Jaroslav Liška and Alois Volek. Protruding from the waist gun window are (left to right): Ladislav Kadlec, an unidentifiable member, Miroslav Styblík, and Hanuš Auer. All are posing with Liberator GR Mk.IIIA LV343 '12' during their conversion training to Liberators at No. 1 (C) OTU, RAF Beaulieu on the 21st of July, 1943. The numeral '12' is hand painted. On May 17th, 1942, the aircraft came to Prestwick as one of eleven planes which were released by the USAAF in response to a request by Winston Churchill and subsequent order of F. D. Roosevelt during a critical phase in the Battle of the Atlantic. On June 11th, 1942, the plane was supplied to No. 120 Squadron, but on August 22nd it went to No. 59 Squadron and on October 5th to No. 86 Squadron, which used the aircraft for training crews of the newly formed No. 160 Squadron. On April 26th, 1943, LV343 was handed over to No. 1 (C) OTU base at Beaulieu.

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The same group of No. 311 Squadron members (left to right): Bohuslav Tobyška, Marián Patzelt, Miroslav Styblík, Ladislav Kadlec, Hanuš Auer, an unidentified member, Jaroslav Liška and Alois Volek) standing by the tail of Liberator GR Mk.IIIA LV343 '12', No. 1 (C) OTU. The photo was taken at RAF Beaulieu on July 21st, 1943. All of the eleven Liberator GR Mk.IIIAs supplied by the USAAF had a Consolidated A-6 rear turret with two asymmetrically mounted Browning 0.50 machine guns. Worth noting is the staining on the white camouflage paint of the vertical tail with its bottom part wiped clean and the connection of the wire antenna anchored at the top of the leading edge of the vertical stabilizer. The fin flash on the white base was a simple affair that only included the blue and red rectangles. The blue field is notably larger than the red one and it may have covered the old fin flash.

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Liberator Mk.IIIA LV345 'E' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-1124) of No. 86 Squadron, RAF Aldergrove, end of March, 1943. On May 23rd, 1942, LV345 reached Prestwick and after modifications, it was assigned to No. 120 Squadron on the 23rd of June, 1942. On October 23rd, the aircraft became part of No. 86 Squadron fleet. At the end of November 1942, the aircraft was handed over for maintenance to SAL Prestwick and returned to the unit on January 26th, 1943. On April 1st, 1943, LV345 went on to No. 1 (C) OTU, and received the code '5'. At the time when this shot was taken, the aircraft carried the Temperate Sea Scheme on the upper surfaces with the sides and lower surfaces in white. The RAF serial LV345 was most likely applied in black. LV345 was equipped with the dorsal turret. The rear A-6 turret is worth noting, as is the lower Bendix turret. In the background, another

No. 86 Squadron aircraft is visible, Liberator GR Mk.III FL931 'M'. On November 16th, 1943, the crew commanded by F/O Bookless sank U-280 flying this Liberator.

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Liberator GR Mk.V

Top: Liberator GR Mk.V FL941 'F' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11699). On February 28th, 1943, in accordance with AM Form 78, the aircraft was transferred to No. 224 Squadron (where it flew with the A.L. code 'F') and on December 6th of that year it continued on to No. 547 Squadron. Serving with the new squadron, the plane retained its A.L. 'F'. In April 1944, and again on May 10th, May 12th, June 15th and June 17th, 1944, the plane participated in several operational flights. On July 4th, 1944, the airplane was damaged (Cat B damage) and underwent repairs through to January 4th, 1945 at Scottish Aviation Ltd. (SAL) in Prestwick. On March 3rd, 1945, the airplane went to No. 51 MU and on the 18th of June 1945, No. 32 MU took it over. This was followed by conversion to the transport version, the Liberator C Mk.V. On March 12th 1947, the fate of this aircraft dictated that she be sold for scrap to International Alloys Ltd.

Czechoslovak airmen took several photos with Liberator FL941, but according to all available official documents, the plane had never been part of No. 311 Squadron's inventory. The shots were most likely taken in the summer of 1943 at RAF Beaulieu. The ORB (Operations Record Book) for No. 224 Squadron recorded Liberator 'F' as having been flown by F/Sgt Smith from RAF Beaulieu on August 7th, 1943.

The antenna of the ASV radar DMS-1000 was housed under the dielectric cover under the nose of the aircraft. The plane had a Martin 250 CE-3 dorsal turret, a rear Boulton Paul Type E turret and the waist gun positions contained pairs of Browning 0.303s on FN55 mounts. Worth noting is the absence of the machine guns in the glass nose of the aircraft. Pitot tubes were positioned ahead of the side windows of the navigator's station. At the rear bottom of the plane, adjacent to the rear entrance, the pair of tunnel gun scanning windows is missing and the canopy windscreen lacks the triangular 'direct vision windows' (DVWs). The side cockpit windows were flat and there is some modification visible to the rear bumper ahead of the rear entrance door. The propellers of the aircraft had narrow blades. The front wheel disc was solid. The top surfaces of FL941 were painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme featuring irregular fields of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey. The demarcation line between the camouflage colours on the sides of the fuselage reached all the way to the waist gun windows.

Next Page: Liberator GR Mk.V FL964 'LD' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11670), No. 111 (C) OTU, Nassau, The Bahamas, November, 1943. On April 7th, 1942, this aircraft was accepted by the USAAF and as soon as on April 20th it was assigned to 93rd BG based at Barksdale Base in Louisiana. The RAF then received FL964 and on February 28th, 1943, the plane reached the Bahamas. In August 1945, the aircraft was flown to the UK. On August 31st, 1945, it was handed over to No. 51 MU and on March 12th, 1947, it was sold as scrap to International Alloys Ltd. Liberator FL964 carried the ASG-1 radar in the chin of the aircraft. It had the Martin 250 CE-3 dorsal turret and the waist gun locations were equipped with paired Browning 0.303 calibre machine guns on FN55 mounts. The rear turret was, most probably, the original Consolidated A-6 turret, judging by the fact that the plane had been directly supplied from North America. Note the design of the tail bumper and the absence of the tunnel gun scanning windows. Extra Dark Sea Grey probably covered the original Temperate Sea Scheme paint. Only the area surrounding the serial number remained Dark Slate Grey. The letters 'LD' were in black and the serial number in Light Slate Grey.

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This photo showing Liberator GR Mk.V FL981 '7' (ex-USAAF B-24D-30-CO s/n 42-40098), was probably taken at the beginning of 1944. The side of the aircraft carried the numeral '7', which was the code it was assigned at No. 1 (C) OTU. The retractable rocket launch rack was mounted in the rear bomb bay after the plane was moved to SAL Prestwick at the end of 1943/beginning of 1944, and prior to FL981's assignment to No. 59 Squadron at the end of March 1944. When the shot was taken, the airplane did not have its dorsal turret and it also lacked the machine gun in the glass nose. The Yagi antenna of the ASV Mk.II radar was used for approach during landing. Ahead of the navigator's side window the B-5 drift meter periscope can be seen. Behind the nosewheel is the Type 1 'Lorenz' antenna. The canopy windscreen lacks the direct vision windows (DVWs). The engines have propellers with wide blades.

Bottom: Post-war photograph of Liberator GR Mk.V BZ716 'PP o M' (ex-USAAF B-24D-45-CO s/n 42-40285) painted in the colours of No. 311 Squadron. On April 16th, 1943, this aircraft reached Prestwick and then, on the 7th of May 1943, following the necessary modifications, No. 53 Squadron took the aircraft over. The plane received the A.L. 'B'. On July 8th, 1943, the plane suffered damage in combat with seven Ju 88s and after repairs it continued on to No. 311 Squadron, which received the plane on December 24th, 1943 in an incomplete state. The aircraft kept its A.L. 'B' and on February 17th, 1944, it was flown to SAL Prestwick. Following its return to No. 311 Squadron on April 7th, 1944, it received the A.L. 'K', but over a month later, on the 13th of May, 1944, it went to No. 59 Squadron. On December 13th 1944, seven months later, BZ716 returned to No. 311 Squadron. This time, the plane received the A.L. 'M' and below the waist gun windows the S.C.L. 'PP' was applied, albeit in a smaller rendering than was prescribed. On March 9th, 1945, an order directed that BZ716 be handed over to No. 22 MU. Throughout its career with the Czechoslovak Squadron, the aircraft only served in the training role. The plane was retired from the RAF fleet on January 5th, 1947.

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Above: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ717 '1 o X' (ex-USAAF B-24D-45-CO s/n 42-40287) wearing No. 59 Squadron colours. The photograph was presumably taken in January or February 1944, after the installation of the retractable rocket rail system in the rear bomb bay at SAL Prestwick. At the time the airplane was assigned to No. 311 Squadron. The aircraft lacks the dorsal turret. Worth noting are the waist gun positions modified for the mounting of Browning 0.303 calibre machine guns, but the guns are missing in this shot. The metal frame adjacent to the navigator's station window served as a psychrometer mount. The antenna radome was painted in high gloss white and a handwritten '424' is just visible above the level of the new paint above the radome and behind the nose glazing.

Below: On April 18th, 1943, upon its arrival in the United Kingdom, Liberator GR Mk.V BZ726 (ex-USAAF B-24D-60-CO s/n 42-40448), was handed over to SAL Prestwick for modifications as requested by RAF Coastal Command. On May 17th, 1943, No. 53 Squadron took the aircraft over. Here, the aircraft received the code 'C' and on July 13th, 1943, P/O D. R. Cooper took off in this aircraft from RAF Thorney Island to perform a test flight. On take off, the nosewheel tire burst leading to vibrations in the nose gear strut and its consequent collapse. The damage to the aircraft was classified as Cat AC. The personnel of SAL Prestwick began repair work on July 22nd, 1943. The work was completed on the 8th of October of the same year and the following day the aircraft found its way back into the squadron's inventory.

The photograph shows many interesting details. The ASV Mk.II Yagi antenna in the glass nose of the aircraft, DVW in the windscreen, the bulged side windows of the cockpit, the Type 1 'Lorenz' antenna in the bottom of the fuselage behind the nose wheel, the trailing antenna weight located ahead of the bomb bay and the Boulton Paul Type E tail turret. The propeller blades are of the wide variety. The front part of the nose is painted in a fresh layer of white paint contrasting with the original white coat of the bomb bay doors. The aircraft served with No. 53 Squadron modified as a Very Long Range (VLR) aircraft - the dorsal turret was dismantled and the front bomb bay had additional fuel tanks

installed. Another characteristic sign of No. 53 Squadron's Liberators of that period was the position of the A.L. behind the waist gun position. At the time, the A.L. was smaller than regulations required. Worth noting is the condition of the hangar, damaged during the Battle of Britain when RAF Thorney Island served as RAF Fighter Command base.

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RCAF Liberator s/n 595 'X' (ex-USAAF 42-40469, ex-RAF BZ735) was supplied to the RCAF at the end of April, 1943. In May 1943, it was passed on to No. 10 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron operating from Gander, Newfoundland. On September 22nd, 1943, this aircraft attacked two subs, U-377 and U-402. The vessels did not suffer any major damage, but U-377's commander suffered wounds to both of his arms. On July 6th, 1945, the combat career of RCAF Liberator s/n 595 'X' came to an end. The aircraft was lost over sea conducting a search for a missing pilot off the coast of Newfoundland.

The upper surfaces of Liberator 'X' were painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme of irregular fields of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey. The colour demarcation line on both sides of the fuselage reached to the tops of the waist gun positions. The RCAF serial 595 on the cover of the radar antenna and the A.L. 'X' on both sides of the fuselage were painted light grey. Note the flare chute in the bottom of the fuselage behind the bomb bay and the jack supporting the tail. The propeller blades were of the wide variety, the windscreen had DVWs installed and the side windows of the cockpit were bulged.

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Above: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ745 'E' (ex-USAAF B-24D-60-CO s/n 42-40464), No. 311 Squadron, 1944. The plane had the dorsal turret installed and the barrels of the machine guns were supplied with Flash Eliminators. Ahead of the observation dome, the antenna of the GEE navigation system is just visible. The propellers with thin blades are worth noting. Between May 1944 and February 1945, this 'Dumbo' (chin radar equipped) aircraft flew the fourth highest number of operational flights (56 in total) of all No. 311 Squadron Liberators. Originally serving with British No. 53 Squadron (with the A.L. 'E'), an order dated May 2nd, 1944 assigned the aircraft to No. 547 Squadron (still coded 'E'). On May 7th, 1944, it flew to No. 311 Squadron base at Predannack. The plane retained the A.L. 'E', later being expanded by the addition of 'PP', the letter code combination identifying No. 311 Squadron. The marking thus evolved into 'PP o E'. The attack armament of the aircraft consisted of sixteen unguided rockets placed in the rear bomb bay. The front bomb bay only had space for eight DC250 Mk.XI depth charges. On June 16th, 1944, as part of Operation Cork committed to anti-submarine patrol in the area of Ouessant (Ushant) Island, the crew commanded by S/Ldr Alois Šedivý DFM, dropped six depth charges in response to a moving oil spill on the surface of the water. This netted no major success. On June 24th, 1944, another crew, this time commanded by Irving, had a bit more luck in the same area. At 1301h, approximately 60 km east of Brest, they spotted a submarine cruising on the surface about 11 km away. The Liberator attacked the submarine with four rockets and the submarine started to submerge rapidly and the captain of the plane estimated two hits right below the conning tower. They later dropped eight depth charges resulting in a visible oil spill. The Admiralty assessed the attack a Level 'E' - probable slight damage to the submarine. On March 5th, 1945, the aircraft was readied to be handed over to No. 22 MU, which took it over on March 11th, 1945. The aircraft was stricken from RAF inventory on June 2nd, 1947.

Air to air shot of Liberator GR Mk.V BZ757 'LR' (ex-USAAF B-24D-75-CO s/n 42-40587) of No. 111 (C) OTU. The aircraft was accepted by the USAAF on April 3rd, 1943 and on April 8th it was delivered to Fort Worth Modification Center followed by delivery to Nassau in the Bahamas on May 25th of the same year. On August 18th, 1945, the aircraft left the Bahamas. In all likelihood, the aircraft suffered some damage as along the way as indicated by AM Form 78, which contains a record (dated August 20th, 1945) of a move to SEBRO Ltd. (a civilian repair organization) on August 29th, 1945. On August 31st, 1945, the

aircraft was declared Cat B (medium damage) and on February 5th, 1946 Cat E (a write-off).

The photo clearly shows the rear Consolidated A-6A turret with asymmetrically mounted machine guns equipped with muzzle compensators, tunnel gun scanning windows, ASG-3 radar radome in extended position, the A-3C dorsal turret and the ASV Mk.II Yagi antenna in the nose and a Browning M2 0.50 machine gun. The muzzle compensators were attachments that aided in maintaining the desired level of fire and offset the tendency of the weapon to rise upwards from unwanted recoil.

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Top: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ759 'LP' (ex-USAAF B-24D-75-CO s/n 42-40590), No. 111 (C) OTU, Bahamas. The aircraft was delivered to the USAAF on April 2nd, 1943. On the 15th it went to the Modification Center in Fort Worth and, along with BZ757, it was handed over to No. 111 (C) OTU on May 25th, 1943. On April 24th, 1944, BZ759 'LP' took off for a final navigation flight dubbed the 'Kingsley Exercise'. Unfortunately, the aircraft failed to return.

This Liberator displays several interesting details. The glass nose houses a Browning M2 0.50 inch machine gun attached to a ball mount and the lower part of the front window of the bombardier/navigator station was faired over. The glass nose contained the Yagi antenna of the ASV Mk.II radar. Along the bottom of the fuselage between the nose wheel and the bomb bay was the Type 1 'Lorenz' antenna. The D-1 Pitot tubes were mounted at an angle above the side windows of the bombardier/navigator station and the windscreen contained the DVWs. The aircraft was equipped with an A-3C dorsal turret. Next to the radome of the ASG-3 radar, there would initially have been an American tri-cell launch chute. Next to the rear entrance were tunnel gun scanning windows. The camouflage of the aircraft on the upper sides was of the Temperate Sea Scheme type consisting of irregular fields of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey. There was probable touchup work in Extra Dark Sea Grey. The 'LP' code was in black.

Next Page: Armourers are preparing to load Mk.XI 250lb depth charges into the bomb bay of Liberator GR Mk.V BZ778 '1 o M' of No. 53 Squadron, St. Eval, February 26th, 1944. The depth charges have Mk.III* stabilizers attached.

The USAAF took over B-24D-90-CO s/n 42-40698 on April 24th, 1943, and following modifications at Fort Worth Modification Center the plane was delivered to RAF Dorval on May 30th, 1943. Following the required RAF Coastal Command mods performed at SAL Prestwick, the plane was assigned to No. 224 Squadron on July 16th, 1943. As early as October 4th, 1943, No. 53 Squadron accepted the aircraft and almost a month later, on the 29th, the aircraft was sent to Prestwick to have the Leigh Light searchlight installed. On the 25th of November 1943, after the installation of said searchlight, the plane went back to No. 224 Squadron and on February 2nd, 1944, No. 53 Squadron also became reacquainted with the airframe. On the 7th of June, 1944, this Liberator (piloted by S/Ldr Crawford) did not return from a patrol flight over the Western Channel Area. Note the peeled off paint on the nose of the plane and the hand-painted '589' below the drift meter periscope.

Bottom: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ787 'J' (ex-USAAF B-24D-85-CO s/n 42-40696) of No. 120 Squadron at Meeks Airport, Iceland, July, 1944. No. 311 Squadron used this plane from July 16th, 1943. On 7 November 1943, it was flown to SAL Prestwick. On January 5th, 1944, following the installation of a Leigh Light, the plane went to No. 120 Squadron, where it received an A.L. 'J'. The dorsal and tail turrets were removed and the resulting openings were faired over. On January 29th, 1944, the aircraft hit a snowdrift during take off and crashed. Repair work on BZ787 was completed on July 27th, 1944 and the following day saw a test flight and handover to the RAF. After its return to No. 120 Squadron, the aircraft performed only one operational flight, that being armed reconnaissance during its move from Iceland to Ballykelly on August 22nd, 1944. Two days later, the plane was handed over to SAL Prestwick for further modifications. On December 9th of the same year, upon completion of the modification work, the plane was moved to No. 51 MU. On March 12th, 1947 it was sold to International Alloys Ltd. for scrapping.

The photo was taken at Meeks Field and features the aircraft without machine guns. The front of No. 2 engine cowl was not repainted white, and the A.L. 'J' and serial number were sprayed onto the fresh white base, probably in black.

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Top: On June 9th, 1943, Liberator GR Mk.V BZ791 (ex-USAAF B-24D-5-CF s/n 42-63814) reached Prestwick, and on June 28th was handed over to A&AEE at Boscombe Down for testing for the first time. During its stay at A&AEE, the plane was sent back several times to SAL Prestwick for modifications. The photo shows BZ791 at Prestwick prior to its move to A&AEE on October 14th. The aircraft carries the standard RAF Coastal Command camouflage scheme consisting of Extra Dark Sea Grey topsides and white sides and bottom surfaces. The demarcation line between the upper and side colours is consistent with Pattern No. 2 regulations. The serial number is clearly visible on the white base and located below the demarcation line.

Previous Page: This beautiful shot could be titled 'The Czechoslovak Air Force in the UK'. From mid September, 1943, all three Czechoslovak fighter squadrons in the RAF were moved to Ibsley (about 32 km from RAF Beaulieu). During September and the first half of October, 1943, the Liberators of No. 311 Squadron, in conjunction with No. 310 (Czechoslovak) Squadron's Spitfires, conducted several test flights aimed at honing defences against attacks by enemy fighters. This photograph captures Spitfire Mk.Vb BM121 'NN o K' of No. 310 Squadron alongside Liberator GR Mk.V BZ789 'N'. Liberator GR Mk.V BZ789 'N' (ex-USAAF B-24D-5-CF s/n 42-63812) served with No. 311 Squadron from July 16th, 1943. On November 7th of that year, the aircraft was flown to Scottish Aviation Ltd. in Prestwick and afterwards was not reassigned to the Czechoslovak unit. From December 10th, 1943, it served with British No. 120 Squadron, and on December 29th, 1943, it was transferred to British No. 224 Squadron (with the A.L. 'H'). On October 26th, 1944, No. 86 Squadron accepted the aircraft (where it was assigned the A.L. 'A'). On February 5th, 1946, the aircraft fell into the category 'E', meaning 'write-off'.

Bottom: Aerial study of Liberator GR Mk.V BZ791 (ex-USAAF B-24D-5-CF s/n 42-63814) during a test flight at A&AEE in October, 1943. Typical characteristic of the GR Mk.V was the centimetric radar located either in the chin fairing or in the retractable dome in place of the lower turret (as shown here). The aircraft lacked the tail turret as it mainly served for test flights of various types and was never used for combat from its delivery in June, 1943.

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Above: This photograph of No. 311 Squadron Liberator GR Mk.V BZ789 'P' was probably taken between October 25th and 28th, 1943, or possibly on November 6th, 1943, during the filming of a wartime documentary at this unit. After its supply to No. 311 Squadron, this aircraft was assigned the A.L. 'N' and this code is also specified in all available official records. The reason for the change in the A.L. shortly prior to the plane being moved to SAL remains unclear but it may have been due to the aforementioned filming. At that time, No. 311 Squadron's fleet also included Liberator BZ776, which was assigned the A.L. 'P'. Both aircraft, BZ789 and BZ776, were flown to SAL Prestwick on the same day, November 7th, 1943, and neither of them returned to the squadron. Visible in this shot is the pair of machine guns in the nose glazing, a very unique modification within No. 311 Squadron.

Bottom: Taxiing Liberator GR Mk.V BZ810 'MA' (ex-USAAF B-24D-5-CF s/n 42-63833), No. 111 (C) OTU, Nassau, The Bahamas. The aircraft left Fort Worth Modification Center on June 28th, 1943 and landed at Nassau on July 20th. Its ultimate fate remains unclear. AM Form 78 lists the plane as Cat 'E' but the date column only specifies 'August' (presumably of 1945). The photograph clearly shows the Consolidated A-6A tail turret, Tunnel Gun Scanning Windows, radome housing the ASG-3 antenna, the dorsal A-3C turret, the Type 1

'Lorenz' antenna along the bottom of the fuselage behind the nose wheel and the Yagi ASV Mk.II radar antenna protruding ahead of the nose glazing which also contains a Browning M2 0.50 machine gun. The size and position of the second window of the bombardier/navigator station were typical of Liberators manufactured at Fort Worth and modified for RAF Coastal Command use. Liberator B Mk.III BZ762 'LO' makes its way ahead of 'MA' in this scene.

Top: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ825 (ex-USAAF B-24D-10-CF s/n 42-63848), Chakeri, Cawnpore, India, May, 1947. The aircraft flew in from Gander to Prestwick on July 26th, 1943 and continued on directly to the African base of Yundum, where No. 200 Squadron took delivery of it. It arrived there on July 30th, 1943. In March 1944, the squadron began its move to India and this aircraft first appeared there on April 30th, 1944. In August of that year, BZ825 became part of No. 160 Squadron and from June to September, 1945 (with the A.L. 'O') it was used for Special Duty (S. D.) operations. It was retired from duty on June 13th, 1946.

The upper surfaces of Liberator BZ825 were painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme consisting of irregular fields of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey. The camouflage of this Liberator shows clear signs of touch-up where neither the size, position nor colour shades of individual fields appear to correspond to given regulations. The number '206' was painted on the nose of the aircraft while at the scrapyard.

Bottom: Liberator BZ875 'R' (ex-USAAF B-24D-15-CF s/n 42-63916) of No. 311 Squadron at RAF Beaulieu, end of October/beginning of November, 1943. This aircraft was assigned to the squadron by an order dated September 20th, 1943, as a brand new aircraft. It had the dorsal turret installed. The bottom part of the Boulton Paul Type E tail turret was white and the remainder of the framework was black. Next to the ASG-3 radome location the opening of the flare chute is visible. Notice the crate supporting the retractable bumper. On December 30th, 1943, the aircraft was withdrawn from the squadron's inventory and flown to Prestwick to Scottish Aviation Ltd. for Leigh Light installation. It did not return to No. 311 Squadron and on January 31st, 1944, it was assigned to No. 53 Squadron ('1 o V') and later to No. 86 Squadron ('V'). The RAF struck this aircraft off inventory on June 2nd, 1947.

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These fine studies depict Liberator GR Mk.V BZ877 (ex-USAAF B-24D-15-CF s/n 42-63918) of No. 86 Squadron '2 o Q' in November, 1943. BZ877 reached SAL Prestwick on August 22nd, 1943, and one month later it went to No. 86 Squadron. On January 4th, 1944, it was handed over to No. 224 Squadron and on September 28th the same year it returned to No. 86 Squadron. On June 9th, 1945, No. 12 MU accepted the aircraft and it was retired on June 3rd, 1947.

The numeral '2' on the fuselage was a substitute for the S.C.L. and identified aircraft of No. 86 Squadron at Ballykelly. The numeral does not comply with regulations, being of smaller size when it should have been dimensionally the same as the A.L. Upper surfaces are painted in Extra Dark Sea Grey only, and the national insignia on the upper surfaces are of a smaller size as well. Note the colour demarcation line of the camouflage on the engine covers, the nose and in front of the cockpit. This line is fully compliant with regulations. The propeller hubs were white and the framing of the Boulton Paul Type E tail turret was black. The censor plied his craft to the top photo, eliminating the pylon with rails for the RPs mounted on the nose. This feature is clearly visible in the bottom shot.

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Liberator GR Mk.V BZ880 'VD' (ex-USAAF B-24D-15-CF s/n 42-63921) of No. 1674 HCU (Heavy Conversion Unit), a unit that retrained crews for four-engined aircraft. The aircraft served with No. 311 Squadron (with the A.L. 'J') from November 11th, 1943 to January 7th, 1944, after which it was sent to SAL Prestwick for Leigh Light installation.

From January 31st, 1944, the aircraft served with No. 1674 HCU. The aircraft was written off after a crash during landing at Aldergrove on April 22nd, 1945. The upper sides of BZ880 were Extra Dark Sea Grey, fully in compliance with given regulations. The 'VD' letters used at No. 1674 HCU substituted both the A.L. and S.C.L. The aircraft had the dorsal turret installed and carried the Boulton Paul Type E tail turret. In the bottom photo, the radome of the ASG-3 radar can be seen just past the Leigh Light and below Engine No. 4. Below the fuselage immediately behind the nose glazing is the B-3 drift meter periscope.

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Liberator GR Mk.V BZ888 (ex-USAAF B-24D-15-CF s/n 42-63929), No. 322 MU, Chakeri, Cawnpore, India. The aircraft flew from Dorval to Prestwick on August 21st, 1943 and then it continued on to India. It landed at Karachi on August 26th, 1943 and was subsequently accepted by No. 354 Squadron (with the A.L. 'S'). In July, 1944, the plane moved to No. 160 Squadron (A.L. 'D'). This squadron used it for laying mines and in the final months of the war also for S. D. operations. It was taken out of inventory on April 11th, 1946. The number 39 on the nose and under the waist gun position were painted on the aircraft at the scrapyard.

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Inset: S/Ldr Terence M. Bulloch's crew in front of their Liberator GR Mk.V BZ721 'R'. Left to right: F/Lt T. 'Brandy' Hennessey, Sgt R. 'Jock' McColl (flight engineer), an unidentified member, F/Sgt D. Purcell (radio operator/gunner), F/O F. B. 'Sandy' Lewis (radio operator/gunner), Sgt A. G. Dyer (front gunner), F/Sgt N. E. 'Ginger' Lord (second pilot), F/O D. E. H. Durrant (navigator). Note the rockets with 25 lb. A.P. No. 1 Mk.I loaded in the launchers and the Nose Art underneath the cockpit. The GEE navigation equipment antenna can be seen ahead of the observation dome.

After Liberator GR Mk.V BZ721 (Consolidated B-24D-45-CO, USAAF s/n 42-40300) ('Dumbo' version with ASG-1 radar in the chin position underneath the nose of the aircraft) had been supplied to the UK, it had the rocket launchers installed by Scottish Aviation Ltd. On June 13th, 1943, the aircraft was assigned to No. 224 Squadron, where it was assigned the A.L. 'R'. On July 8th, 1943, S/Ldr Terence M. Bulloch, managed to sink the German sub U-514 (type IXC) with rockets and depth charges fired and dropped from this aircraft. On June 22nd, 1944, for a short time, the aircraft was assigned to No. 59 Squadron (as 'W') and on August 11th it was handed over to Scottish Aviation Ltd. for installation of the retractable rocket launchers into the rear bomb bay (the exterior RP launchers had probably been removed earlier). On October 17th, 1944, the aircraft was assigned by order to No. 311 Squadron and was given the A.L. 'T'. To this later was added the squadron code 'PP' resulting in the complete coding 'PP o T'. Until December 19th, 1944, the aircraft conducted a total eight operational flights with No. 311 Squadron. Up to the end of December, 1944 and through January and February, 1945, the squadron used the aircraft for training flights. On February 14th, 1945, the plane was assigned by order to No. 51 MU and on February 27th it was flown to Prestwick. On March 12th, 1947, the plane was sold to International Alloys Ltd. as scrap. The upper surfaces of the plane were painted Extra Dark Sea Grey, the sides and undersides were white. The code letters and serial number were painted Light Slate Grey.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ721, S/Ldr Terence Bulloch, No. 224 Squadron, St. Eval, July, 1943

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February 19th, 1916 / November 12th, 2014

Terence Malcolm Bulloch was born in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. He graduated from Campbell College in Belfast.

At the end of 1936 he filed an application to join the RAF with the Short Service Commission and was accepted. On February 6th, 1937, he was assigned to No. 6 FTS in Netheravon for training. On September 4th, 1937, he completed his pilot training with excellent results gaining a 'Distinguished Pass' and the same day he was assigned to No. 220 Squadron, which was conducting maritime reconnaissance flights in their Avro Ansons from Bircham Newton base. In May 1939, he was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer. One year later, in May 1940, he was transferred to the RAF Coastal Command unit No. 206 Squadron, which had just received new Lockheed Hudsons. He flew patrols over the French, Belgian and Dutch coasts and also took part in operational flights aimed at supporting the British Expeditionary Force evacuation from Dunkerque. On September 3rd, 1940, he got promoted to Flight Lieutenant. On November 22nd, 1940, His Majesty, King George VI, approved his DFC.

In December 1940, F/Lt Bulloch, finished his operational tour of duty. As part of his 'holiday' he requested a transfer to the Atlantic Ferry Organisation, whose task was to fly American made aircraft to the UK.

In mid 1941, the RAF Coastal Command established No. 120 Squadron. This squadron was the first squadron to receive new four-engined Liberators. F/Lt Bulloch was one of the first members of the squadron, joining on August 12th, 1941. Only five days prior, the squadron CO, W/Cdr Cummings, flew Liberator I AM928, fully armed and equipped, from Prestwick to Nutts Corner, which was home to No. 120 Squadron.

On October 22nd, 1941, at 1445h, F/Lt Bulloch, flying Liberator I AM926 'OH o F', attacked a surfaced submarine with three depth charges. This was the first attack of the squadron and, at the same time, the first attack by RAF Coastal Command Liberator against an enemy submarine. The submarine was recorded as being damaged.

Other submarine attacks followed on April 25th and May 3rd, 1942, but the results of these were not considered a success.

On August 16th, 1942, S/Ldr Bulloch took off on a patrol mission in Liberator I AM917 'OH o F'. At 1935h, he attacked a surfaced submarine, U-89. The skirmish with the Liberator cut short what was only the second operational mission of the U-89, forcing its return to Brest.

Another attack came two days later, on August 18th. At 1846h, Bulloch's Liberator I AM917 'OH o F' went after surfaced sub U-653, which was on its fourth operational sail. U-653's day ended the same way as U-89's two days prior, with an early return to Brest due to damage sustained from the Liberator attack. Repairs to the sub required over three months of work.

On October 12th, 1942, Bulloch's crew took off in Liberator I AM929 'OH o H' from Reykjavík, Iceland. At 1223h, the crew spotted another submarine and attacked it, but the result was unobservable and could not be determined. Over the course of its return flight, the crew encountered another submarine at 1540h. This time, the attack, dropping depth charges, proved fatal for the submarine. U-597, with 49 men

aboard, was sunk. This was the first sub kill for the future anti-U-boat ace.

Four days later, on October 16th, 1942, at 1415h, another Bulloch's attack on an enemy submarine took place. This time, unfortunately, the results of the attack could not be verified.

On October 27th, 1942, S/Ldr Bulloch received the Bar to add to his DFC for the seven attacks on enemy submarines.

On October 28th, 1942, Bulloch's crew spotted a submarine at 1310h, but the target managed to submerge and an attack was not feasible. A second submarine was spotted at 1330h, and was engaged with six depth charges but with an indeterminate result. At 1536h, the crew spotted a third submarine, but it also managed to submerge prior to a possible attack by the Liberator.

An operational flight on November 5th, 1942 was far more successful. Bulloch's crew spotted the first submarine at 0839h but it managed to drop below the surface and escape. A couple of hours later, at 1223h, Bulloch's crew spotted a second sub and immediately reacted with six depth charges, hitting the target. This submarine (originally identified as U-132) was clearly a success for S/Ldr Bulloch and the submarine was credited to Bulloch as a kill. However, the submarine in question was in fact, once again, U-89. The submarine was seriously damaged and had to return to Brest for repairs. At 1456h, a third submarine was spotted prompting two depth charges being dropped at this submarine, but the results were again indeterminate.

A day to remember in the fight against the U-boats came on December 8th, 1942 when S/Ldr Bulloch attacked a total of seven submarines during one operational flight. The first submarine was spotted at 0929h precipitating an immediate attack using six depth charges.

The sub was deemed as sunk and was identified as U-611. At 1245h, another two submarines were spotted, one of them managed to submerge in time to make good its escape while the other was attacked by the Liberator with two depth charges. There were five more attacks on surfaced submarines that day but these were limited only to 20mm cannon fire.

S/Ldr Bulloch flew his final operational flight with No. 120 Squadron on December 11th, 1942. On that day, Bulloch received a DSO for two sunk submarines (from October 12th and November 5th, 1942).

In recognition of his success he was offered a scholarship at RAF College Cranwell with the prospect of returning to No. 120 Squadron as Wing Commander. This would have meant, on the one hand, a distinct promotion and the possibility of remaining in the RAF after the war, but on the other hand, a lot of bureaucracy and minimal flying time. The latter proved decisive, and Bulloch declined the offer. Consequently, he would remain a Squadron Leader for the duration of the war.

On December 31st, 1942, he was transferred to RAF Coastal Command HQ and then to RAF Ferry Command. On January 12th, 1943, The London Gazette announced the awarding of the Bar to his DSO. At the end of February 1943, he had enough of administrative work and requested reenlistment to operational duty. His application was approved and S/Ldr Bulloch joined No. 1 (C) OTU at Beaulieu as chief instructor. During his service at this OTU he was involved in the testing of the British ASV Mark III centimetric radar, Leigh Light and unguided rocket weaponry.

In July 1943, S/Ldr Bulloch was sent with 'his' Liberator GR Mk.V BZ721 'R' with external rocket rails to No. 224 Squadron at St. Eval to test the system under

operational conditions.

On July 8th, 1943, during a BZ721 operational flight, waist gunner F/O C. Campbell, spotted a surfaced submarine. S/Ldr Bulloch stated in his report that they first fired off all eight rockets, then dropped the depth charges and finally a Mk. 24 acoustic torpedo, but he reiterated that he was virtually certain that the cause of the sinking of U-514 were direct hits with the rockets. The vessel was credited to him as having been sunk.

On August 20th, 1944, after short stays with No. 59 and No. 86 Squadrons, Bulloch was transferred to RAF Transport Command. There, he flew the transport version of the Liberator, the C Mk.VII (Consolidated C-87), and later the Liberator C Mk.IX (Consolidated RY-3). He undertook transport flights with No. 231 Squadron from San Diego across the Pacific Ocean.

Up to the end of the war, S/Ldr Bulloch flew a total of 4,568 hours (of which 1,721 were in Liberators). He performed 350 operational flights (corresponding to 2,059 operational hours) and became the most successful submarine killer in RAF Coastal Command. During the war he conducted a total of 19 submarine attacks. Officially, he is credited with four submarines sunk, two severely damaged and one slightly damaged.

After the war, he left the RAF and became a BOAC airways captain (today's British Airways). He mostly flew transatlantic flights to the USA and Canada. In 1957 he broke the record in terms of flight time from Montreal to London, doing it in 8 hours and 10 minutes. Large four-engined aircraft were Bulloch's life's destiny and the Boeing 707 was his favourite. During his work for British Airways he flew more than 6 million miles and crossed the Atlantic Ocean in total 1,113 times. 'Too old' for British Airways did not mean 'too old' for TAP, the Portuguese airlines, where he continued flying the Boeing 707. After he retired, he returned to England where golf became his new passion.

Terence Malcolm Bulloch died on November 12th, 2014, aged 98.

Above: Terence M. Bulloch wearing a BOAC captain's uniform and standing in front of a company Avro Lancastrian. From 1945 to 1950, BOAC operated a total of twenty-four aircraft of this kind. The aircraft was derived from the well-known Avro Lancaster bomber, optimized for the transport of passengers and cargo. Though BOAC had a fair number in its inventory, T. M. Bulloch's logbook does not record him as flying the type.

S/Ldr Terence M. Bulloch standing on the stub wing of the rocket rails of Liberator GR Mk.V BZ721. Nose Art was very rare on RAF Coastal Command aircraft and the shark pierced with an arrow is one of the few exceptions. It did not remain on the aircraft very long since the base commander ordered its removal, seeing as how RAF regulations did not allow such decorations. According to T. M. Bulloch, the painting was initiated by one of the NCOs in his crew and the author of the painting was a member of the ground personnel. Visible to the left of the Nose Art is the USAAF serial 42-40300.

Above: Crew commanded by S/Ldr Alois Šedivý DFM, standing in front of another Liberator GR Mk. V, FL948 (ex-USAAF B-24D- DT s/n 41-11754) 'D'. Standing from the left are two unidentified members, F/Sgt R. Soudek (radio operator/gunner), F/Lt F. M. Doležal (second pilot), another unidentified crewman, F/Lt A. Šedivý DFM, (Captain), F/Sgt A. Pecen (radio operator/gunner), and finally another unidentified member. The photograph was taken between May and September, 1944, when the aircraft not yet carried the S.C.L. 'PP'.

Between June, 1944 and March, 1945, Liberator BZ723 (ex-USAAF B-24D-45-CO s/n 42-40302) 'H' of No. 311 Squadron flew the second highest number of operational flights of all the Liberators in the unit with a total of sixty.

On May 8th, 1944, this aircraft, originally serving with No. 224 Squadron and then with No. 547 Squadron (A.L. 'V'), was assigned to the Czechoslovak unit by order from SAL Prestwick. At Scottish Aviation Ltd., the aircraft received the retractable RP rocket launchers in the rear bomb bay and probably also had the upper turret reinstalled. The aircraft carried a Leigh Light searchlight. On May 19th, 1944, the plane flew its first flight with No. 311 Squadron.

On October 29th, 1944, the crew led by S/Ldr Alois Šedivý DFM, flying BZ723 'H', along with another Liberator from the unit, FL949 'Y', shared in the sinking of German submarine U-1060. The sub ran aground in shallow water at Fleina Island off the Norwegian coast, roughly on the Arctic Circle following an attack by No. 1771 Squadron Firefly aircraft flying off of HMS Implacable. Liberator 'H' used rockets and depth charges over the course of four attacks. Out of the total of sixteen rockets with AP25 Type J armour-piercing warheads (four salvos of four rockets each), eight direct hits were made (the first and last salvos missed the target). Out of four depth charges, three exploded behind the submarine, the fourth one landed on the shoal and did not explode. After the attacks, the aircraft conducted two overflights collecting a series of photographs. The Admiralty considered the attack by the Liberators as Level 'A', considering the submarine sunk. The proportional percentages of the kill were credited by HQ in the following way: Liberators 'H' and 'Y' of No. 311 Squadron - 50%, Fireflies of No. 1771 Squadron - 10% and Halifaxes 'D' and 'T' of No. 502 Squadron - 40%. On March 12th, 1945, the aircraft was flown to Silloth to No. 22 MU and on March 12th, 1947, it was sold for scrap to International Alloys Ltd.

Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ723, S/Ldr Alois Šedivý DFM, No. 311 Squadron, Tain, October, 1944

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During the second run, captain S/Ldr A. Šedivý DFM, fired the second salvo of armour-piercing AP25 Type J tipped rockets at his prey.

This photo of U-1060 was taken from the cockpit of Liberator GR Mk.V BZ723 'H', its No. 1 engine clearly visible.

A diagram of the attack performed on October 29th, 1944 by captain S/Ldr A. Šedivý DFM, with Liberator GR Mk.V BZ723 'H'. On the first pass, four RPs were launched and, at the same time, four Mk.XI 250 lb depth charges were dropped onto U-1060.*

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38 S/Ldr Alois Šedivý DFC, DFM

May 25, 1915 / September 16, 1990

After undertaking an apprenticeship as a locksmith with the firm ČKD in Prague-Libeň, Alois Šedivý attended the State Trade School in České Budějovice and graduated as an auto mechanic. He continued his studies at the Academy of Air Youth in Prostějov (1934-1936) where he graduated with honours and became a pilot on the Letov Š-328 reconnaissance aircraft with No. 1 Air Regiment. After night flying certification, he began flying Aero MB-200 bombers at No. 81 Bomber Flight of No.5 Air Regiment in Brno. His escape to the foreign resistance movement in 1939 led him along the so-called 'Northern Route' across Poland and France. He went through retraining on French bombers at airfields in Avord, Istres and Châteauroux, but he did not make it to the front before the fall of France.

In August 1940, he became one of No. 311 Squadron's founding members and after a quick brush up course at the unit he began his operational tour on January 9th, 1941. He was given the military rank of Sergeant and as the skipper of a Wellington bomber he conducted a raid on the Dutch town of Vlaardingen. He was considered to be a very deliberate captain who fulfilled all given tasks at hand. He completed his operational tour on July 16th, 1941 as the second pilot in the squadron's history. At that time he had carried out 37 raids spanning over 194 operational hours. Later, on September 24th, 1942, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) for his combat deeds. In the meantime, on September 13th, 1941, he began a monthly course for instructors at the Central Flying School at Upavon airfield. He later joined No. 311 Squadron Operational Training Flight, which on December 16th, 1941 became the independent No. 1429 COTF. At that time, Šedivý had already been promoted to Pilot Officer. He instructed on Wellingtons and Ansons. He also piloted Lysanders, high wing monoplanes used for target towing for the purpose of training gunners. At the end of May and beginning of June, 1942, he participated in two 'thousand-bomber' raids on Cologne and Essen as the captain of a crew in training. He conducted his instruction duties for a year and half which, from the summer of 1942, included the overseeing of advanced training with the rank of Acting Flight Lieutenant. For this, he received a written commendation from the Inspector of the Czechoslovak Air Force in the RAF in August, 1943.

Šedivý was firmly committed to a return to combat duty and so, in the summer of 1943, he sailed to the Bahamas to undergo operational training at No. 111 (C) OTU. In December 1943, he once again became a member of No. 311 Squadron and on January 14th, 1944, he carried out his first anti-submarine patrol as a Flight Lieutenant. On March 10th, 1944, he experienced his most dramatic operational flight during his second tour of duty. His Liberator GR Mk.VI BZ975 'R' encountered the Japanese submarine I-29, accompanied by four other vessels. He immediately initiated the attack and the Liberator received anti-aircraft fire emanating from the accompanying vessels. At the same time, fire came from a German escort in the form of four long range Junkers Ju 88C-6s. The Liberator, conducting evasive manoeuvres through the crossfire, was hit in the area of the navigator's station (F/O Jaromír Franců suffering a light head injury), and there were hits sustained also to the right wing, right inboard engine and the fuselage. The Liberator managed to return safely to Predannack on three engines. A second attack on a submarine was conducted on June 16th, 1944, during air support of the Allied invasion into France. During a patrol in Liberator GR Mk.V BZ745 'E', near the Isle of Ouessant, the crew spotted a moving oil spill on the surface of the water, possibly indicating a damaged submarine. The crew conducted two attacks dropping depth charges, but saw no results. In the autumn of 1944, he was recognized as one of the most experienced captains within the squadron and so it came as no surprise when he later, in

September of the same year, became 'A' Flight Commanding Officer with the rank of Acting Squadron Leader. He thus became one of the few Czechoslovak pilots in the RAF who made it all the way from the non-commissioned rank of Sergeant to the officer rank of Squadron Leader. The biggest success for S/Ldr Šedivý came on October 29th, 1944, when he, along with a crew led by F/O Josef Pavelka, shared in the destruction of the German sub U-1060 near the Norwegian island of Fleina. The fourth and final attack on an enemy submarine was performed on the night of the 23rd/24th of March, 1945, as part of Operation Chilli II aimed at enemy vessels in the Baltic Sea. He flew Liberator GR Mk.VI EV955 'PP o D' and used the Leigh Light searchlight during the encounter. On April 13th, 1945, he was awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his more than successful operational career and became the only member of No. 311 Squadron to be awarded both the DFM and DFC. One month later, he landed from his final operational flight and thus concluded his second combat tour which included 39 anti-submarine patrols spanning over 642 hours.

After WWII, Šedivý returned to his liberated homeland with the rank of Captain and on February 1st, 1946, he was appointed Commanding Officer of No. 1 Flight of the newly established No. 25 Air Regiment at Havlíčkův Brod. In August, 1946, he left the military and began working for the Ministry of Transportation as a government pilot. During the Communist coup in February, 1948, he demonstrated a great deal of foresight and on April 22nd, 1948 he did not return from a service flight to Geneva. He reunited with his family in the United Kingdom where he rejoined the RAF in 1949. He was retrained as a transport pilot and flew long-haul flights with Hastings aircraft at No. 511 Squadron with the rank of Flying Officer. In May 1955, he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and one year later he joined operations during the Suez Crisis. On January 1st, 1957, he received Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air and in the same month he was transferred to No. 24 Squadron, where he flew passenger flights for a period of three years (his passengers being mostly British politicians). At the age of forty-five he was forced to give up flying and worked in Catering Branch. He retired at own request on May 25th, 1965, and moved with his family to Australia. In 1983, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and he died in Adelaide on September 16th, 1990.

P/O Otakar Žanta

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20 March 1915 / 13 March 1944

As an administrative worker at the age of eighteen, Žanta had always been attracted to flying and so he voluntarily tried to join the Academy of Air Youth in Prostějov in 1933. He was not admitted. He did not give up and one year later he joined. He finished his training in August, 1936 as the second best among sixty-six pilots and started his military service at No. 1 Air Regiment, where he was promoted to Leading Aircraftman. At the time of the German occupation he had already reached the rank of Sergeant and three months later he headed for Poland. After his arrival in France, he did a short stint in the French Foreign Legion. After the war broke out, he retrained and on May 19th, 1940 he joined Groupe de Bombardement GB 1/21. Prior to the collapse of France, he managed to fly 14 night raids spanning over 46 flight hours in Marcel Bloch MB-210s and Amiot 351/354s against gathering areas of enemy troops. For this activity he was awarded the French Croix de Guerre. He left defeated France on June 18th, 1940 aboard a 'borrowed' Amiot 354 along with Jan Irving.

He started his RAF pilot career in May 1941 as a Sergeant at the Czechoslovak Depot in Wilmslow. After a pilot refresher course in July came ongoing pilot training on twin-engined aircraft in August. In order to better synch his pilot skills to British

practices, he attended practical training with wireless operators at No. 2 Signals School in Yatesbury from October 2nd. It was not until August 1942 that he reported to RAF Station Woolfox Lodge to start operational training as a crew captain at No. 1429 COTF. Before the end of November, 1942, he was transferred to No. 311 Squadron and on December 13th, he began operational activities on Wellingtons flying as second pilot for F/Sgt Ferdinand Kepka. Through the spring of 1943, he flew as second pilot with other captains as well. On March 1st, he was promoted to the rank of Flight Sergeant. On April 26th, 1943, he became a skipper and began flying patrols but only managed three such flights before the squadron began the conversion to Liberators. He resumed operations from August 24th, 1943. His big day came on the 10th of November of that year. Flying Liberator GR Mk.V BZ774 'D', he and his crew participated in the sinking of the German sub U-966 off the Spanish coast. At the end of 1943 he was commissioned to the rank of Pilot Officer.

'Kocour' ('Tomcat') as he was known to his friends, met his fate on March 13th, 1944, when he and seven other airmen, flying Liberator GR Mk.VI BZ995 'J', went missing over the Bay of Biscay. This was Žanta's fortieth operational flight. His name is engraved on Panel No. 213 at the Runnymede Air Force memorial near London. This memorial is dedicated to missing RAF personnel. German archives claim no fighter kills against Liberators that coincide with Žanta's disappearance. There is speculation that Žanta crashed into the sea during the course of the night flight, fed by the fact that there was no communication with the aircraft after take-off. The cause of the accident also may have been an incorrectly calibrated altimeter or a sudden drop in the plane's altitude due to severe weather conditions.

Right: Four members of No. 311 Squadron which were destined to make history. Left to right: F/Sgt O. Žanta (pilot), S/Ldr V. Nedvěd MBE (former navigator, now pilot), F/O Z. Hanuš (navigator) and F/O M. Šebela (pilot).

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Profiles: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ774, F/Sgt Otakar Žanta, No. 311 Squadron, Beaulieu, Autumn, 1943

Liberator BZ774 (ex-USAAF B-24D-80-CO/n42-40652) was assigned as a new aircraft to No. 311 Squadron by order on July 13th, 1943. It was flown from No. 51 MU to No. 311 Squadron base at Beaulieu on July 16th, 1943. The Liberator was assigned the A.L. 'D' and its armament consisted of, being standard items, six anti-submarine DC250 Mk.XI depth charges in the bomb bay, and eight RPs hung under the external stub wings mounted on both sides of the nose of the aircraft.

Between August 24th and November 25th, 1943, the aircraft conducted a total of thirteen operational flights with No. 311 Squadron.

On October 23rd, 1943, at about 1330h, over the course of an operational mission flown by P/O Stach and his crew over the Bay of Biscay, heavy combat engagements took place between the Czechoslovak airmen and a total of seven intercepting Junkers Ju 88C-6 long-range heavy fighters, probably of I/ZG1 (from October 13th, 1943, reorganized part of original V(Z)/KG40). The combat took place over about a 45 minute total span and the Liberator gunners claimed one Ju 88 shot down and one damaged. The Liberator managed to escape and after a 12 hour and 3 minute flight, safely landed at its base.

On November 10th, 1943, off the coast of Spain, there was an attack on the German U-Boat U-966 (Type VIIC, Oblt. z. S. Ekehard Wolf), and it was successfully sunk. Several Allied aircraft participated in the sinking of that submarine. The first was a Wellington Mk.XI, 'B', commanded by W/O I. D. Gunn of No. 612 Squadron with six depth charges shortly after 0400h. Two German sailors suffered slight injuries from the aircraft's machine guns.

At 0859, Lt. Leonard E. Harmon of VB-105, flying PB4Y-1 Liberator 'R' (BuNo. 63929), came across the surfaced sub. Defensive fire from the U-boat damaged the bomb bay doors, preventing the Liberator from engaging the sub with depth charges.

At 1140h, another US Navy Liberator spotted the submarine. At 1150h, Lt. Kenneth L. Wright of VB-103 conducted his first attack on the sub and dropped five 250-lb depth charges (the sixth would not release) and during the second attack, they dropped an acoustic torpedo. With the use of the acoustic torpedo, the captain of the Liberator not only broke secrecy protocols, but also needlessly wasted an expensive weapon, which was not designed to eliminate surfaced submarines. At 1310h, the aircraft, coded 'E', was forced to disengage and head back to base due to a lack of fuel.

Immediately prior to that, at 1305h, another aircraft of the US Navy appeared. This was PB4Y-1 Liberator 'E' B-5 (BuNo. 63926) of VB-110, piloted by Lt. W. W. Parish. At 1315h plane dropped six 250-lb depth charges at the fully surfaced submarine and at 1352h, the aircraft left the scene.

At 1325h, the crew of Liberator 'D' (F/Sgt Otakar Žanta) spotted the submarine located at 44°00' N., 08°00' W. (not far from Cape Ortegal) on their radar screen. At 1345h, the Liberator launched five RPs (one RP of the first pair failed, the second pair also failed, but the remaining salvos launched successfully) at the submarine cruising at 10 knots (18,5 km/h) at a distance of a mere 180 m from the Spanish coast, not far from the town of Ortigueira. After the attack, the speed of the submarine dropped first to between 6 and 8 knots (11 to 14.8 km/h) and then to around 2 knots (3.7 km/h). The Liberator skipper decided not to use depth charges due to the proximity of fishing boats. At 1510h, the Liberator was forced to set a return course and this was the last time the submarine was seen, sailing in a northwestern direction along the coast of Ria De Santa Marta de Ortigueira Bay. Žanta's Liberator spent an hour and thirty-seven minutes in the combat zone and landed at Beaulieu after 11 hours and 55 minutes of total flight time. Over the entire course of their attacks, the Liberators received flak fired from the U-Boat.

The frequent attacks made by the Allied aircraft severely damaged the sub (there was fuel leakage and several sailors were wounded by machine gun fire from the attacking aircraft), prompting the commander of the sub to order the destruction of all documents and to ready the submarine for sinking. However, the submarine (due to the proximity to the coast) hit the rock and the order to abandon ship was given. The chief engineer set up a five minutes delay on the explosives and opened the shutters. Since the emergency inflatable life rafts floated away from the submarine in all the chaos, the sailors were forced to attempt their escape by swimming to shore. They were lucky as several of the fishing boats came to their rescue. In total, eight sailors died and 42 were rescued.

The Admiralty attributed Žanta's crew a 50% share in the destruction of the submarine, the remainder being distributed among the two American crews (Liberator 'E' of VB-103 40% and Liberator 'E' of VB-110 10%). Testimony of the German sailors stated that the most significant damage (damage to the steering and to one of the main bearings) was caused by the very first attack in the morning by Wellington 'B' of No. 612 Squadron.

On November 29th, 1943, BZ774 was flown to Scottish Aviation Ltd., Prestwick for Leigh Light installation. Following this modification, on December 30th, 1943, it was assigned to British No. 86 Squadron (A.L. 'J'), and later to No. 86 Squadron (A.L. 'R'). On August 5th, 1944, during take off on a training flight, a tire burst and the aircraft suffered damage. The level of damage was assessed as Cat B, but on September 22nd, 1944, it was reassessed to Cat E.

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A set of photographs showing taxiing Liberator GR Mk.V BZ774 'D' of No. 311 Squadron, RAF Beaulieu, in the autumn of 1943. Liberator GR Mk.III and GR Mk.Vs serving with RAF

Coastal Command only had one Browning M2 0.50 machine gun in the nose of the aircraft. The machine gun had to be mounted in the upper part of the larger front triangular panel due to the Yagi antenna being installed in its original place. A hand painted '580' appeared below the drift meter periscope. The dorsal turret was installed, the Boulton Paul Type E tail turret had black framing and the propeller blades were of the wide variety. The A.L. 'D' was painted next to the national insignia. In the bottom of the fuselage behind the bomb bay was the ASG-3 radar radome. Between the nose gear and front bomb bay was the Type 1 antenna dipole, part of the instrument landing system known as 'Standard Beam Approach' (SBA) for landing with support of radio signal guidance. Notice the alignment of the launch rails for the rocket projectiles; the outer rails are the most inclined, and the inclination reduces closer to the fuselage.

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Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ779, F/Sgt Josef Kuhn, No. 311 Squadron, Beaulieu, October, 1943

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Liberator BZ779 (ex-USAAF B-24D-90-CO s/n 42-40703), as a new aircraft was assigned to the squadron by order dated July 16th, 1943. It was flown from Prestwick to No. 311 Squadron's base at Beaulieu and the aircraft received the A.L. 'J'. The standard combat armament consisted of six to nine DC250 Mk.XI anti-submarine depth charges carried in the bomb bay and eight rocket projectiles hung in two clusters of four on both sides of the fuselage.

Serving with No. 311 Squadron, this aircraft flew twelve anti-submarine reconnaissance flights, the first on August 22nd, 1943 and the last flown by the crew led by F/Sgt Josef Kuhn on October 7th, 1943.

At about 1600h of the last operational flight, above the Bay of Biscay (47°28'N, 10°17'W), there was some very intense combat with four German long-range Ju 88C interceptors (probably of V.(Z)/KG40) that lasted 26 minutes. The attack took out the tail turret, hit the navigator's station and damaged fuel tanks, the hydraulic system, the elevators, radar and the GEE navigation equipment. German machine gun fire wounded waist gunner/radio operator Sgt Alois Matýsek in the shoulder and leg and the tail gunner F/Sgt František Veverka, suffered a leg injury after German projectiles exploded in the tail turret. Although he had been injured, receiving shrapnel to the face, he and the dorsal turret gunner, Sgt Josef Reitler, managed to hit and damage one of the Ju 88s. The Liberator also sustained heavy damage to the fuselage and wing. The Germans attempted to finish the Liberator off with one final, fatal blow, but F/Sgt Josef Kuhn performed a skilful evasive manoeuvre allowing him to make good his escape. The German interceptors did not remain unscathed with each disengaging one after another with some sort of moment of the encounter. After a flight lasting six hours and 38 minutes, the Liberator managed to get back to RAF St. Eval at 1940h, where it performed an emergency landing on just the nose wheel and right main gear. Putting the severely damaged aircraft down without functioning landing flaps and no injuries to those on board is a testament to the superb flying skills of the pilot. He, F/Sgt Josef Kuhn, and the tail gunner, F/Sgt František Veverka, were awarded the British DFM medals.

The Liberator was so severely damaged that it had to be decommissioned and was handed over to No. 67 MU in St. Eval as a Cat E case. (being written off on October 31st, 1943). The unit 14./KG 40 lost Ju 88C-6 W.Nr.750434 on that day. It was flown by OLt. Gustav Christner (the plane was shot down in Quadrant 24W/1951 with the loss of the crew). Ju88C-6 W.Nr.750374. flown by Uffz. Hans Schulzke had to belly in near Lorient (the aircraft sustained 20% damage). Unfortunately, it is hard to determine exactly who was responsible for these losses. Another two Ju 88s of the same squadron likely fell victim to

Beaufighters of No. 143 Squadron. One damaged Ju 88s was claimed by Capt. G. L. Mosier piloting B-24D 'P' of the 2nd Squadron, 480th Anti-Submarine Group, USAAF.

Bottom: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ779 came from the same Production Block as BZ782 (s/n 42-40700), with only two other aircraft separating them on the assembly line. This shot features BZ782 'K' painted in the colours of No. 311 Squadron, probably parked at Prestwick, in the spring of 1944. The new aircraft was assigned to the squadron on July 16th, 1943. It was equipped with ASG-3 radar and had the outer RP launchers mounted. On March 2nd, 1944, the plane was flown to Prestwick and Scottish Aviation Ltd. to have the Leigh Light installed (and rocket launchers removed) and on March 20th it was assigned to No. 120 Squadron. Visible ahead of the observation dome is the GEE navigation antenna and behind the nose gear, on the bottom of the fuselage, is the Type 1 antenna of the SBA equipment. The aircraft is exceptionally clean with the upper surfaces painted in a manner consistent with regulations in Extra Dark Sea Grey. Of note is the relatively sharp demarcation line indicating freshly retouched paint and aluminum coating applied to the leading edge of the wings and tail surfaces.

44 F/O Josef Kuhn DFM

December 21st, 1914 / October 4th, 1945

A business graduate, Josef Kuhn undertook pilot training between 1933 and 1935 at the Academy of Air Youth in Prostějov as part of his military service. After its successful completion he served as a reconnaissance aircraft pilot flying the Letov Š-328 with No. 3 Air Regiment at Nitra. Prior to the German occupation in March 1939, he was an instructor at the Air Force Academy for Officers in the reserves. His journey to join the western powers started on August 17th, 1939, in Poland, where he, among a small number of Czechoslovaks, joined the Polish Air Force. During the short Polish campaign he fulfilled reconnaissance and courier tasks in archaic biplanes. He was a member of a squadron dubbed 'Czechoslowacka Eskadra Rozpoznawcza'. During a retreat from advancing German troops, he reached territory occupied by the Red Army and on September 17th, he was captured. He would languish in Soviet captivity for over a year before being able to leave the Soviet Union on February 16th, 1941. He would travel virtually half the globe by boat before arriving in the Scottish port of Glasgow on July 12th.

On July 25th, 1941, he became a member of the RAF VR at the Czechoslovak Depot in Wilmslow. In December, 1941, due to a longer period of inactivity, he first had to attend a refresher course. On May 12th, 1942, after three months spent undergoing advanced pilot training, he started operational training with No. 1429 COTF in East Wretham. He graduated as second pilot for Sgt Václav Jílek. On the 1st of October, 1942, he joined No. 311 Squadron operating twin engined Wellingtons from Talbenny, South Wales and on October 27th he took off on his first anti-submarine patrol. He initially flew as second pilot for several different captains. His first taste of combat came on December 4th, 1942, shortly after he had been promoted to Flight Sergeant. On that day, F/Sgt Ondřej Špaček's Wellington, patrolling above the Bay of Biscay, was ambushed by three German Ju 88 long-range heavy fighters. The crew managed to defend themselves and returned home not only with no injuries, but also without the plane being hit. Furthermore, the gunners reported that during the 38 minute encounter, they managed to hit one of the enemy aircraft.

A significant event in his career came on March 11th, 1943 when he took off for an operational flight as the captain of a Wellington. In the summer of 1943, in the position of crew captain, he went through conversion training to Liberators and on August 25th, 1943, he flew his first operational flight with the new aircraft. On October 7th, 1943, his guardian angel was on duty when he and his crew, flying Liberator GR Mk.V BZ779 'J', managed to defend themselves against a numerically superior force of four Junkers Ju 88s. For this deed he was awarded the British Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) on February 15th, 1944 and in the meantime, on November 27th, 1943, he was commissioned to the rank of Pilot Officer. On August 18th, now as Flying Officer, he completed his tour of duty with 65 anti-submarine patrols spanning 654 flight hours with no further outstanding events. His pilot and commanding skills were an excellent prerequisite for his following career as a transport pilot. Between September 5th and December 3rd, 1944, he attended a course for transport pilots at No. 105 (T) OTU in Bramcote. From December 12th to the end of the Second World War he flew Liberators with No. 246 RAF Transport Squadron and transported both passengers and cargo on long-haul flights between the UK, Mediterranean, Africa and the Far East.

After WWII, upon his return to his liberated homeland, he continued flying as a Lieutenant at the Air Transport Group providing nation-wide air transport services. His promising military career ended very abruptly, though. On October 4th, 1945, he

was piloting a captured German Siebel Si 204D, which crashed near Bučovice, Moravia with the loss of the eight member crew, half of which were former RAF airmen. Josef Kuhn, a talented pilot who managed to perform outstanding manoeuvres in combat against numerically superior enemy interceptors, most likely died due to wartime sabotage to the German aircraft produced by ČKD in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. On October 12th, 1945, he was buried in his hometown of Bílá Třemošná and on February 1st, 1947, he was posthumously promoted to First Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve.

F/O Jan Roman Irving

45

March 7th, 1915 / April 24th, 1997

A native to western Bohemia, Jan Irving attended an apprentice school to become a locksmith at the Škoda Factory in Pilsen. In June, 1934, he became a pilot of sport aircraft in the West Bohemian Aero Club in Pilsen and continued his pilot training at the Military Air Force Academy in Prostějov. In June 1935, he successfully completed training and started his military career with No. 1 Air Regiment. Until the occupation in March, 1939 he flew reconnaissance Letov Š-328 aircraft. On May 5th, 1939, he crossed the Polish border and sailed on to France shortly after. In France, he first served in the French Foreign Legion and when the war broke out, he attended an accelerated version of conversion training for French bombers. Through May and June 1940, as one of a very few Czechoslovak bomber airmen, he participated in operational missions as a member of Groupe de Bombardement 1/21 performing five operational flights with this group.

After the fall of France, on June 18th, he and some colleagues 'borrowed' a twin-engined Amiot 354 bomber to fly to the British Isles. In the end, the circumstances surrounding their flight forced them to fly across the Alps and land in Zagreb. The airmen ended up in internment. In December, 1940, they managed to escape and headed for Turkey. In mid-May 1941, after a short stay in Palestine, they sailed to the British port of Liverpool. At the beginning of July, shortly after his admission to RAF VR, Sgt Irving went to the Central Flying School at Upavon airfield to convert onto British aircraft. At the end of August, he underwent advanced pilot training. From October 2nd, he gained further piloting experience flying with wireless operators under training at No. 2 Signals School in Yatesbury. A month later, Irving reported to East Wretham, where he, between February and June, 1942, attended operational training at No. 1429 Czech Operational Training Flight (COTF) as a crew captain. During that training he would already be credited with his first operational flight as second pilot on one of the 'thousand bombers' raids over Cologne on the night of May 30th/31st, 1942.

His operational debut as a Wellington skipper with No. 311 Squadron took place on July 12th, 1942. By the end of April, 1943 he conducted a total of 58 operational anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay. Apart from those flights, on September 17th, 1942, he also participated in a raid on shipping in the French port of Bordeaux. On September 3rd, after converting to four-engined Liberators, he continued in operational flying, now with the rank of Pilot Officer. On June 24th, 1944, when he finished his operational tour of duty as a Flying Officer, he had flown 95 operational flights spanning 930 flying hours. He was the third highest ranking member of No. 311 Squadron in terms of operational flying hours within the squadron while with RAF Coastal Command, and the first amongst pilots. He also excelled in attacking German submarines. He ranked at the top in terms of the number of U-Boats attacked with eight. He was unlucky, though, and none of his attacks resulted in serious damage to an enemy submarine.

Jan Irving's outstanding piloting skills brought him to the Bahamas where he would serve as instructor with No. 111 (C) OTU in July, 1944. According to the memoirs of some airmen who attended his training, he was the only instructor who demonstrated flight on a Liberator with only one engine running. On one occasion, he performed such outstanding manoeuvres with the four-engine colossus that American interceptor pilots flying two North American P-51 Mustangs were not able to record a hit to his Liberator during simulated combat with gun cameras. He spiced up his Bahamas instruction activities by conducting nine operational flights spanning approximately 81 flight hours. These operational flights were conducted in the area of Bermuda and over the Gulf of Mexico. In July, 1945, his flight logbook read a respectable 3,098 flight hours. The No. 111 (C) OTU Commanding Officer, at the time when Irving left the OTU, evaluated him as an outstanding pilot and above-average instructor.

Shortly after his return to his homeland, he left the military and in February, 1946 began flying for Czechoslovak Airlines (ČSA). He flew both nationwide and international flights around Europe and the Middle East. He mainly piloted the Douglas Dakota and from 1949 also the Ilyushin Il-12. Three years after the 'victorious' communist coup of February, 1948, he was fired from ČSA and imprisoned for two years. In 1956, he was arrested and imprisoned for a second time, this time for what were deemed as treasonous statements he made in connection with the political situation in Hungary. Partial vindication came at the beginning of the sixties and he was able to come back to ČSA and work, once again, as a captain, this time flying the Ilyushin Il-14. He served in this function until his retirement in 1977. As part of the political and moral rehabilitation of the nineties, he was first promoted to the rank of Colonel and, in May 1995, he was elevated to the rank of Major General (Ret). He died on April 24th, 1997, in Prague.

Bottom Photo: F/O Jan Irving photographed in the cockpit of a Liberator.

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Liberator GR Mk.V BZ786 (ex-USAAF B-24D-5-CF s/n 42-63810) was assigned to No. 311 Squadron on September 1st, 1943 as a brand new aircraft and was flown from Prestwick to Beaulieu and was assigned the A.L. 'G'. The combat weaponry of the aircraft included the standard six DC250 Mk.XI anti-submarine depth charges in the bomb bay and eight RPs carried on the nose of the aircraft, four on each side of the plane.

This Liberator conducted a total of twenty-four operational flights with the Czechoslovak Squadron, the first on September 14th, 1943 and the last on January 5th, 1944. It only had to return from an operational flight prematurely due to technical failure on two occasions.

On September 27th, 1943, flying as part of Operation Percussion Z-3, the crew commanded by P/O Jan Irving performed two attacks on German submarines. During the first attack (a submarine spotted at 1114h), the crew dropped all six anti-submarine depth charges at their target. During the second attack (a submarine spotted at 1520h at 49° 30'N, 09° 45'W), P/O Irving used the unguided RP projectiles, making him the first pilot of No. 311 Squadron to do so. Even though the crew of P/O Irving was convinced that they sank the submarine, or at least seriously damaged it, HQ was somewhat more sceptical. In both cases, the official reports of the Admiralty assessed the attacks to be Level 'F', confirming target identification but without sufficient evidence of its damage.

Between December 24th and 27th, 1943, the aircraft was tasked with attacks on enemy surface vessels. For the first mission it was armed with three MC500 bombs and a GP250 bomb and an MC500 with a GP250 and RPs for the second. The goal of these flights was to

attack each and every German transport ship and take it out or, at least, prevent it from reaching the port. The German ships targeted were armed transport ships trying to break through the British blockade carrying strategic materials from Japan to French harbours. On the night of December 24th/25th 1943, there was a sighting of a convoy of nine enemy vessels in the Bay of Biscay. The first plane reached the convoy at 2351h, Liberator BZ763 'O' with P/O Jan Vella and his crew. The attack split the convoy into two parts. The HQ No. 19 Group RAF Coastal Command then vectored in Liberator BZ786 'G' of P/O Stanislav Huňáček, which made initial radar contact at 0115h. At 44° 57'N, 07° 55'W, they found two groups of ships sailing eastwards. At 0120h, they spotted two destroyers after launching flares, and a bit further a larger vessel estimated at about 5000 tons displacement in a formation of seven vessels. The sailors, already agitated by the previous attack by P/O Jan Vella's Liberator, immediately began a strong anti-aircraft barrage against Liberator 'G'. Huňáček's crew unloaded the entire contents of their bomb bay onto the large ship from a height of 370 meters. In the illumination of the flares, the crew observed a direct hit and a subsequent fire they could monitor for about thirty minutes. Then, the Liberator circled several times over the enemy convoy and one hour prior to critical fuel exhaustion levels being reached set for home because the bomb bay doors could not be closed. After a flight of thirteen hours and 31 minutes, shortly before 0800h, the aircraft landed at Predannack Airfield. The ship that was hit and damaged was the German 'blockade runner' Osorno with a 6,951 GRT displacement, which, accompanied by her escort, finally managed to get through the British blockade and reach the harbour of Bordeaux. On December 27th, 1943, the crew led by S/Ldr Kostohryz were unable to make contact with the fleet.

On January 7th, 1944, F/O Irving flew the aircraft from Beaulieu to Prestwick's Scottish Aviation Ltd. for modification, most likely for the mounting of the Leigh Light searchlight. On February 3rd, 1944, the aircraft was taken over by No. 1674 HCU and in August, 1945, was modified for transport duties as a Liberator C Mk.V, and served at RAF Transport Command with No. 102 Squadron and later by No. 53 Squadron. On March 12th, 1947, the plane was sold to International Alloys Ltd. as scrap.

Part of Irving's crew standing in front of one of No. 311 Squadron's Liberators. Left to right: British F/Sgt G. W. Shaw (navigator), F/Sgt A. Polák (radio operator/gunner), F/Sgt V. Spitz (gunner), P/O J. Irving (captain), Sgt J. Hájek (radio operator/gunner) and Sgt Z. Sedlák (flight engineer).

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Top: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ786 'G' of No. 311 Squadron shortly after take off from RAF Beaulieu, summer/autumn 1943. The main landing gear has not yet fully retracted. The Boulton Paul Type E tail turret had black framing. Clearly visible is the size of the rocket launching platform and the relative slant of the rails, the outer rails being mounted at the steepest angle with a decreasing slant in the rails approaching the fuselage.

Bottom: An in-flight study of Liberator BZ786 'G' of No. 311 Squadron clearly showing the antennae arrangement along the bottom of the fuselage. This photograph was probably taken between October 25th and 28th, 1943, or possibly on November 6th, 1943, during the filming of the wartime documentary "Faithfulness We Pledge" at No. 311 Squadron.

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Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ786, P/O Jan Irving, No. 311 Squadron, Beaulieu, Autumn 1943

Previous Page: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ786 'G', No. 311 Squadron, RAF Beaulieu, summer/autumn, 1943. The machine gun installation in the glazed nose of the aircraft remained as produced, the upper mount being taken up by the Yagi antenna of the ASVBA system. In front of the observation dome was the GEE navigation system antenna and behind the front nose gear along the bottom of the fuselage was the dipole for the Type 1 SBA antenna. The aircraft was equipped with the ASG-3 radar and had the exterior rocket launchers and the dorsal turret installed. Photo: Ladislav Sitenský.

Inset: A photograph showing a two ship formation of No. 311 Squadron Liberators. The lead airplane closer to the camera is BZ789 'P', and behind it is BZ786 'G' with exterior rocket launch rails. The photograph was taken in the autumn of 1943.

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50 F/O Oldřich Doležal DFC

March 1st, 1912 / November 28th, 1983

For four years Oldřich Doležal studied with a small company Richter producing radios in Ostrava. In 1931, he started to work for the Bata Shoe Company in Zlín as a machinist. On October 1st, 1934, after leaving Bata, he joined the military with No. 4 Telegraph Battalion in the Slovak town of Prešov. After training to become a wireless operator he served in Košice and Spišská Nová Ves, and then he left for the army reserves with the rank of Lance Corporal. He returned to the Bata Shoe Company, this time as a ground wireless operator at Otrokovice airfield. After gaining higher qualification, he began flying as wireless operator and also graduated from sport pilot training. On March 11th, 1939, he flew a company Lockheed L-10A Electra aircraft on business to Krakow, Poland, and continued on to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, where he learned of the German occupation of his homeland. This prompted him to fly to the British Isles where he worked at a branch of the company in East Tilbury until September 24th, 1940 when he started military service in Cholmondeley Park in the UK.

In March 1941, at his own request, he was transferred to the Air Force. Due to his pre-war military training, he began his air force career in May 1941 as a ground wireless operator with No. 312 Czechoslovak Squadron in Jurby on the Isle of Man. He was not satisfied with this assignment and ultimately managed to persuade his commanders to sign him up for pilot training. From July 1941, he attended the elementary part of the pilot course in Watchfield and continued with advanced training at the airport in Brize Norton. On December 24th, 1941, he graduated as a pilot for twin-engine aircraft with the rank of Sergeant. From April to September 1942, he underwent training at No. 1429 COTF as a second pilot to Sgt Václav Soukup. His first operational flight with No. 311 Squadron took place on October 24th, with F/Lt Bohuslav Eichler's. In March 1943 he became the captain of his own crew with the rank of Flight Sergeant. From August 26th, as a newly commissioned Pilot Officer, he continued flying patrols over the Bay of Biscay in four-engine Liberators. He did not encounter any German submarines for over a year. Finally, he got a great satisfaction on December 27th, 1943. During his 52nd operational flight he was credited with one of the greatest successes in the history of No. 311 Squadron. He and his crew managed to sink the German blockade runner 'Alsterufer'. This deed earned him a DFC, which he received in January, 1944. He completed his operational tour of duty on 17 August with an accumulation of 69 patrol flights spanning a total amount of 662 flight hours. On September 5th, he commenced the RAF Transport Command course at No. 105 (T) OTU in Bramcote.

From December 12th, 1944 until the end of war, he captained transport Liberators at No. 246 Squadron.

Upon returning to his liberated homeland he continued serving in the Air Transportation Group with the rank of Lieutenant. At the end of March, 1946, he retired from military service and returned to the Bata company. In March 1948, he joined Czechoslovak Airlines and on March 25th, 1950 he became one of the participants of a group escape. The crews of three transport Dakotas flying from Brno, Bratislava and Ostrava to Prague changed direction and headed for the Bavarian town of Erding. He piloted the plane flying from Bratislava while his wife and 6-month-old son were onboard the flight from Ostrava piloted by captain Ladislav Světlík who served in the RAF with No. 312 Squadron during the Second World War. After his return to the UK, he struggled to find employment and during the day he worked as an office worker and in the evenings he studied hard towards a commercial aircraft pilot license, which he managed in March, 1954. First he shuttled tourists around Europe and from 1957 to 1959 he had been conducting aerial research for petroleum companies in Libya. During that time, he participated in one of the first expeditions looking for the wreckage of the American Liberator 'Lady Be Good'. That Liberator went missing after a raid on Naples in 1943 and was reported as missing over the Mediterranean. That assumption proved wrong and the plane had been lying in the Libyan desert all that time.

After his return from overseas, he continued flying up to the spring of 1965 when he was forced to quit for medical reasons. For a short time he ran a retail business and for several years he also worked as a journalist for an anti-communist organization called the Free Czechoslovak Information Service and in the Autumn of 1969 he returned to his original profession as an electronics technician.

In January 1970, this pilot who flew thousands of hours during and after the war without so much as a scratch, accidentally fell and became paralyzed and was bed ridden till his death at the age of 71. In 1991, he was posthumously promoted to the rank of Colonel.

Top: On December 27th, 1943, at 1607h, Doležal's crew flying Liberator GR Mk.V BZ796 'H', attacked the armed German merchant vessel 'Alsterufer'. The attack took place at 46°30'N, 18°50'W. An MC500 bomb hit the target directly and exploded inside the vessel. This photograph shows the fire caused by the bomb spreading across the vessel with thick smoke coming from the ship.

Bottom: A sketch describing the attack on the blockade runner 'Alsterufer', as recorded in a SURFAT report by Doležal's crew.

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Liberator GR Mk.V BZ796 (ex-USAAF B-24D-5-CF s/n 42-63819), originally serving with No. 53 Squadron (with the assigned A.L. 'J'), was handed over to No. 311 Squadron on September 27th, 1943. On October 3rd, 1943, it performed its first flight and was assigned the A.L. 'H'. Combat armament of the aircraft usually consisted of six or seven DC250 Mk.XI anti-submarine depth charges carried in the bomb bay (or one GP250 and one MC500 bomb in case of an attack on surface vessels) and eight RPs hung in fours on the exterior launchers mounted on both sides of the nose of the airplane.

The aircraft conducted a total of 13 operational flights with No. 311 Squadron. The first flight took place on November 10th, 1943 and the last on February 4th, 1944.

On December 27th, 1943, at 0945h, Sunderland 'T' of No. 201 Squadron came across the armed German merchant vessel 'Alsterufer' (2,729 GRT), at 46°40'N, 19°30'W, sailing with a cargo of strategic materials from the Japanese harbour of Kobe to the French port of

Bordeaux. 'Alsterufer' was equipped with one 105mm cannon, two 37mm cannons, four 20mm cannons and an anti-aircraft weapon that deployed rocket propelled cables with explosives in the path of a bomber known as 'P.A.C.' (Parachute and Cable).

The attack by the Sunderland was unsuccessful because the aircraft was forced to bomb through clouds. At 1135h, Sunderland 'Q' of No. 422 Squadron conducted another attack, but the bombs missed the target. Afterwards, another aircraft attacked, this time Sunderland 'U' of No. 201 Squadron, which also dropped bombs through cloud cover and the vessel, again, was not hit. At 1607h, Liberator 'H' flown by Doležal and his crew, attacked the ship at 46° 30'N, 18° 50'W. The vessel was hit by five RPs above the waterline, the GP250 bomb missed the target, and the MC500 bomb hit the hull of the ship behind the funnel. It exploded inside the vessel and ignited a large fire. The ship's crew immediately began evacuating the vessel. Liberator FL907 'F' of No. 86 Squadron then attacked the burning Alsterufer between 1615h and 1630h with one MC500 bomb, but the bomb missed the target. At 1714h, Liberator FL943 'L', another No. 86 Squadron aircraft, attacked the evacuated vessel at 46° 42'N, 18° 44'W with two MC500 bombs. Both bombs missed the target, one of them by a mere nine meters. At 1800h, Liberator FL907 'F', dropped a second MC500 bomb, but it too missed the target. At 1758h, the crew of Liberator FL907 'F' spotted other Allied aircraft in the form of four Halifaxes and FAA Tarpons. At 1800h, Halifax 'Q' of No. 502 Squadron reported the ship sinking at 46° 33'N, 18° 55'W. Four hours after being abandoned by her crew, the 'Alsterufer' sank. A total of 74 sailors were plucked from four lifeboats by ships of Escort Group 6 on the afternoon of December 29th, 1943, at 46° 06'N, 19° 10'W.

This remarkable success by No. 311 Squadron was celebrated in the British papers and the captain of the aircraft, P/O Oldřich Doležal, and navigator/bombardier, F/O Zdeněk Hanuš, were each awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). All other members of the crew were awarded the Czechoslovak War Cross 1939. The aircraft (engine No. 4) was slightly damaged (Cat A) by fire from the ship.

On February 8th, 1944, the Liberator was flown from Beaulieu to Scottish Aviation Ltd. at Prestwick. On 8 March 1944, after the installation of a Leigh Light searchlight, the plane was assigned to No. 1674 HCU. The plane was retired from the RAF fleet on June 21st, 1947.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ796, P/O Oldřich Doležal, No. 311 Squadron, Beaulieu, December, 1943

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F/Lt Zdeněk Hanuš DFC

July 30th, 1912 / November 28th, 1982

A graduate of grammar school in Rimavská Sobota, Zdeněk Hanuš began his military service with No. 109 Artillery Regiment in Bratislava on October 1st, 1932. On the 1st of March 1934, after he graduated from the Academy for Reserve Artillery Officers, he was appointed a Second Lieutenant. Between 1934 and 1936, he studied at the Military Academy in Hranice and later served as Platoon Commander of No. 3 Mountain Regiment in Poprad. He first came in contact with flying in 1938 attending a course for artillery air observers at the Military Air Academy in Prostějov. He then served as an air observer with No. 3 Air Regiment in Spišská Nová Ves.

His first attempt to get to Yugoslavia in December, 1939, ended with his detainment and imprisonment in Hungary. After a few days, he was expelled to Austria. He was undeterred and crossed the border into Hungary again and his second attempt successfully brought him to Belgrade. From there, he travelled in an organized military transport through the Greek city of Thessaloniki and Constantinople in Turkey, and on to Beirut in Lebanon. On February

3rd, 1940, he reached the French port of Marseille and even though he was a qualified observer, he was made to serve at No. 1 Infantry Regiment upon his arrival to France. He first became commander of No. 5 Company and in May, 1940, he took command of No. 2 Company. At the beginning of June, he left with this brigade to the front and participated in battles that were part of the retreat. After evacuation to the British Isles in July, 1940, he and the rest of the Czechoslovak Army there found refuge in the tent camp at Cholmondeley Park. During the August reorganization he was assigned to No. 1 Infantry Battalion. At the end of April 1941, due to the redundancy of officers in the Czechoslovak Army, he was transferred to the commander reserves and fulfilled the duties of a regular soldier. He was not comfortable with the inactivity this brought and so applied for a post in the RAF and in September 1941, was accepted.

At the beginning of February 1942, he left to attend theoretical navigation training at No. 1 Elementary Air Observers School to Eastbourne which led to practical navigation course at No. 10 Air Observers School in Scottish Dumfries. It was not until he had finished the training on June 15th, 1942, that he was formally accepted to the RAF VR with the officer rank of Pilot Officer. From August to November 1942, he underwent operational training with No. 1429 COTF as a member of Sgt Otakar Žanta's crew. On December 15th, as a newly appointed member of No. 311 Squadron, he was promoted to Flying Officer. His operational debut in the form of a submarine patrol over the Bay of Biscay took place on January 4th, 1943. On 26th, August 1943, after the squadron received their Liberators, he continued in his previous operational activities, this time as a navigator in F/Sgt Oldřich Doležal's crew. He remained with this crew till the end of his operational tour of duty and on the 27th of December, 1943, he and the crew made history by sinking the German blockade runner 'Alsterufer'. In January 1944, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for this daring deed. He finished his operational tour of duty with a total of 49 submarine patrols spanning over 484 flight hours as a Flight Lieutenant on August 17th, 1944, with no further exceptional events occurring. He followed his captain to No. 105 (T) OTU at Bramcote and after retraining for RAF Transport Command duty, he flew for No. 246 Squadron till the end of WWII.

On August 24th, 1945, he returned to his liberated homeland with the military rank of Major and in November 1945, he became head of the Academy for Reserve Air Force Officers at the Military Air Force Apprentice School in Prostějov. From October 1946, he fulfilled the same post at the Military Air Force Academy in Hradec Králové. In the spring of 1948, he quickly understood the political changes that were coming down the pipe and opted for a second emigration. On April 26th, 1948, the ruling communist regime declared him a deserter and issued a warrant for his arrest. The UK did not turn its back on him and allowed him to re-enter the RAF with the rank of F/Lt. After he fulfilled his contractual obligations, he moved to Australia where he died on November 28th, 1982, in Salamander Bay.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ796, P/O Oldřich Doležal, No. 311 Squadron, Beaulieu, December, 1943

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Liberator GR Mk.V FL961 (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11610) was the oldest Liberator to ever see service with No. 311 Squadron. The aircraft left the San Diego production line on March 11th, 1942. After its delivery to the UK it was first assigned to No. 59 Squadron and then to No. 224 and No. 53 Squadron. Prior to its assignment to the Czechoslovak squadron, No. 547 Squadron used the aircraft (with A.L. 'O'). On March 12th, 1944, it was assigned by order to No. 311 Squadron as a 'Dumbo' version (with the radar antenna installed under the chin of the aircraft), and after the RP rails had been installed in the rear bomb bay (by Scottish Aviation Ltd. in Prestwick), the aircraft was ready to be flown to A&AEE in Boscombe Down for their harmonisation on March 21st, 1944. On April 8th of the same year, the harmonisation was concluded and on April 13th the Liberator was flown to Predannack. The aircraft kept its A.L. 'O'. It was rather incomplete in terms of the armament and

equipment it possessed (the plane was missing machine guns, including magazines and ammunition belt feeders, radios and radar). On April 24th, 1944, the aircraft flew its first flight at the squadron (a radar test flight) and the following day one of the engines was changed. The aircraft was not operationally capable until June, 1944. By that time, the aircraft had complete armament and equipment for conducting operational flights, though auxiliary fuel tanks in the wings were not installed. Usually, the aircraft conducted operational flights with an armament consisting of sixteen RPs carried in the rear bomb bay. The front bomb bay carried eight DC250 Mk.XI depth charges.

The aircraft performed a total 22 operational flights with No. 311 Squadron. The first flight was conducted on June 10th, 1944 with F/Lt Rudolf Protiva and his crew and the last flight was on February 14th, 1945 flown by W/O Jaroslav Kudláček.

At 1409h on June 24th, 1944, the Liberator coded 'O' (F/O J. Vella) took off from its base on Anti U-Boat patrol 'E'. At 1537h on a flight course of 140 degrees and an altitude of six hundred meters, the operator spotted two destroyers on radar. Their position was 49° 03'N, 06° 10'W, and they were 37 km away from the aircraft, sailing along a perpendicular course. Visual contact identified the destroyers as friendlies. Nine minutes later, at 1546h, the crew of this Liberator spotted a conning tower of a partially surfaced German submarine sailing roughly 15 km behind the Allied vessels. The submarine was approximately 4 km away from the aircraft, at 49° 00'N, 05° 40'W cruising on a heading of 110 degrees with a speed of six to eight knots [11 to 14.8 km/h]. The Liberator immediately attacked the submarine from the left side. The crew fired two RPs from an altitude of 200 m (one of which went under the submarine and emerged approximately 90 m behind it) and, while going into a dive, the navigator, F/O Reimann, dropped six depth charges in a row into the path of the submarine. An oil spill appeared on the surface of the water at the location of the attack, and the pilot marked the spot with a Marker Marine. About six minutes after the attack, the crew spotted the periscope of another submarine. This vessel was 5 km away, cruising at 48° 57'N, 05° 36'W. At 1554h, F/O Vella again pointed the nose of the Liberator at the target and from a height of a mere 80m he released a further pair of rockets at the newly discovered enemy submarine. Performing a low overflight, F/O Reimann, dropped two remaining depth charges onto the submarine. The first attack by the Czechoslovak aircraft alerted both Allied ships and these were the British destroyer HMS Eskimo (G75) and the Canadian ship HMCS Haida (G63). Both vessels immediately changed their course and headed towards the area marked by the Marker Marine. At 1615h, HMS Eskimo pinpointed the location of the submarine with their equipment. Subsequently, the destroyer lost contact with the submarine but reestablished its location ten minutes later and peppered it with depth charges in response (HMS Eskimo's armament consisted of Minol filled Mk.VII** depth charges). Eskimo performed in total seven attacks, the first one at 1626h, followed by ones at 1640h, 1659h, 1713h, 1730h, 1748h and the last at 1825h. The destroyer HMCS Haida (this Canadian destroyer used Amatol filled depth charges) performed two attacks, at 1704h and 1722h. At 1921h, the sub surfaced at 732 m to the left of HMCS Haida, which immediately began firing its cannon, hitting the conning tower of the submarine. The submarine crew abandoned ship and the U-boat sank immediately thereafter. One German sailor was killed, 52 others were rescued by the destroyers and taken captive.

The Liberator crew could only observe a short segment of the final attacks by the two destroyers. At 1642h, the Liberator flown by F/O Vella completed its patrol and headed back to its home base. It landed in Predannack airfield at 2007h. This exciting and very successful operational flight only took five hours and 58 minutes. That night, No. 311 Squadron received a message that the submarine was destroyed shortly after seven o'clock, north of the Island of Ouessant (Ushant) by the aforementioned destroyers. The Admiralty assessed the attack Level 'A' - the submarine sunk (in collaboration with HMCS Haida and HMS Eskimo). The joint effort by the Czechoslovak airmen and Allied sailors thus sank U-971 (Type VIIC, OLTzS Walter Zeplien).

A second attack by Vella's Liberator and her crew was evaluated by the Admiralty as unsuccessful.

On July 25th, 1944, at 0320h, FL961 'O' was damaged while performing a nighttime take-off (the damage was categorized as 'AC'). The front undercarriage wheel came loose and the radar radome and antenna suffered damage. The aircraft was sent for repairs to No. 67 MU. On November 7th, 1944, the plane was repaired and on the next day No. 311 Squadron reclaimed it. After the repair, the plane received the new A.L. 'S', which was later accompanied by the S.C.L. 'PP' and so became 'PP o S'. The first operational flight with the new code took place on January 24th, 1945, flown by F/Lt Vladimír Slánský's and his crew. The remaining operational flights of this Liberator were flown without RPs. It carried four DC250s and two AS600vs in the bomb bay.

On March 11th, 1945, the squadron was ordered to send the aircraft for general inspection to No. 22 MU. Thus, the aircraft was put taken out of service and on March 12th, 1945 it was flown to Silloth. Two years later, it was sold to International Alloys Ltd. as scrap.

Right: A view from the rear along the right side of the fuselage of Liberator FL961 'O' of No. 311 Squadron, RAF Predannack, spring/summer 1944. The upper sides of the wings show irregular fields of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey. Note the pair of Browning 0.303 machine guns in the waist gun position and two wire antennas - the first leading from the dorsal turret to the top of the right vertical fin and the second (IFF) antenna leading from the insulator above the waist gun to the tail. Photograph: Ladislav Sitenský.

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No. 311 Squadron crew boarding Liberator GR Mk.V FL961 'O' (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO s/n 41-11610), at RAF Predannack, spring/summer, 1944. The aircraft in question was the oldest Liberator to be used by the Czechoslovak squadron. The aircraft left the production line in San Diego on March 11th, 1942, but did not reach the UK until March 19th, 1943 (during the summer of 1942, the aircraft was used for training by the 90th BG, which was then stationed at Greenville base, South Carolina, and which was sent to the Pacific combat zone at the beginning of September). After being delivered to the UK, Liberator FL961 served with No. 59 Squadron, No. 224 Squadron, No. 53 Squadron and No. 547 Squadron. After the mounting of the retractable rocket launchers into the rear bomb bay and its harmonisation, the aircraft was flown to No. 311 Squadron on April 13th, 1944. On June 24th, the crew led by captain F/O J. Vella flying Liberator FL961 'O' attacked U-boat U-971 with two Allied destroyers and sank it. The aircraft had a Boulton Paul Type E tail turret installed and the waist gun positions were armed with paired Browning 0.303 calibre machine guns attached to FN55 mounts. Tunnel Gun Scanning Windows had not been introduced at the time when this aircraft was produced. The underside of the fuselage, in front of the bomb bay, had a Type 1 'Lorenz' antenna and immediately adjacent to the bomb bay was the trailing antenna weight. The open little hatch on the side of the fuselage ahead of the bomb bay was the manual control for closing and opening the bomb bay doors. Note the retractable rocket launchers in the rear bomb bay. Photograph: Ladislav Sitenský.

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A photograph showing the explosion of depth charges dropped on U-971 by Liberator GR Mk.V FL961 'O' of No. 311 Squadron on June 24th, 1944, at 1548h.

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Page 56 Top: Detailed photograph of run up of Engine No. 3 of Liberator FL961 'O', No. 311 Squadron, RAF Predannack, spring/summer 1944. The antenna lead is visible below the dorsal turret as is the pair of Browning 0.303 machine guns arming the waist gun position. With mechanics sitting on top of the fuselage, the bomb bay doors are in the open position. The cover for the bomb bay door manual open/close handle is not in the

closed position. It may be assumed that the aircraft was undergoing a test of the engine and it was not moving. Photograph: Ladislav Sitenský.

Liberator GR Mk.V, FL961, F/O Jan Vella, No. 311 Squadron, Predannack, June, 1944

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58 F/O Jan Vella DFC

May 10th, 1906 / January 10th, 1945

Jan Vella, a native of the town of Kladno, completed his apprenticeship as an electrical mechanic and between 1924 and 1925 went through pilot and then fighter pilot training at the Academy for Air force Youth at Cheb. In 1927, he attended night flying training in Prague and was assigned to No. 3 Air Regiment at Vajnory Airfield near Bratislava. In 1928, due to general cutbacks within the army, he left and began work as a train engineer. At the end of the thirties, he served as such aboard the Tatra M290.0 train coach dubbed 'Slovenská strela', an express train operating the intercity line between Prague and Bratislava. He remained an active pilot and regularly conducted pilot training to maintain his rating with No. 1 Air Regiment's Training Flight at Prague-Kbely airport. After the German occupation he worked with the resistance group called 'The Defence of the Nation' and was in charge of illegal departures abroad. Prior to the end of 1939, the German Gestapo was on the hunt for him and so, he took an express train to Slovakia on November 6th, 1939. He then crossed into Hungary and then to Romania and ultimately sailed to Beirut. On December 24th, 1939 he arrived in France and joined the Czechoslovak Air Force Group in Agde. In April 1940, he was transferred to a Bordeaux base. Afterwards, he began conversion training to French aircraft but France capitulated shortly thereafter.

After the retreat to the British Isles, he underwent conversion training to British fighters and on October 29th, with the rank of Sergeant, he reported to No. 312 Czechoslovak Squadron at Speke airfield. He saw virtually no operational missions and due to his higher age, he was assigned a test pilot position on March 31st, 1941. He was subsequently posted to three different Maintenance Units. In September 1942 he was promoted to Flight Sergeant and at the end of 1942, he requested a transfer that would put him in an operational mission potential. Proof of his piloting and, indeed, his personal qualities was demonstrated by the fact that upon his leaving of the unit at Silloth, members of No. 22 Maintenance Unit took up a collection and presented him with a wristwatch with a full inscription.

From January 1st, 1943, he attended operational training at 'Czech Flight' No. 6 (C) OTU, a unit that prepared crews for No. 311 Squadron. The seasoned pilot was accepted for training as a crew captain and completed the training on April 5th as a Warrant Officer. During May, he managed to fly seven operational anti-sub patrols with No. 311 Squadron's Wellingtons over the Bay of Biscay. The first five flights he flew as a second pilot, the remaining two as a crew captain. Vella's crew finished converting to the Liberator before the end of August and by August 27th, 1943, they performed their first operational flight on the new aircraft. From September 1943, Vella was commissioned into the officer rank, that of Pilot Officer, and he first got into combat on December 24th. On that day, his Liberator GR Mk.V BZ763 'O' attacked a group of enemy vessels.

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He was soon to join the ranks of a few captains who had a nose for sub hunting. After two unsuccessful encounters on January 28th and March 2nd, 1944, his Liberator Mk.V FL961 'O' sank U-971. The victory took place on June 24th and it was a joint effort with

the Allied destroyers HMS Eskimo and HMCS Haida. On October 12th, 1944, he demonstrated admirable piloting skills when the Liberator GR Mk.V BZ720 'G' he was flying, patrolling over the North Sea, suffered a failure of the two inboard engines. After a three-hour flight, flying with the two remaining engines (at their maximum performance), he managed to bring his aircraft back to home base and land safely. It is little wonder that he was nominated for the DFC award on October 20th. On November 1st, 1944, he completed his operational tour of duty after 68 operational flights spanning a total of 793 flight hours. After he succeeded in passing a special blind flying course, he returned to No. 311 Squadron, this time as an instructor to train new crews. This did not stop him from undertaking one more operational mission on December 25th.

F/O Vella, whose exceptional piloting skills, among other qualities he possessed, had been twice acknowledged by the Czechoslovak Air Force Inspector in the UK (in March, 1943 and in January, 1945), met his fate as a passenger on a routine transport flight. It was on January 10th, 1945 aboard the Airspeed Oxford Mk.I PH404, a courier aircraft, flying from the Scottish airport of Tain to Hornchurch near London. This prevented his hearing of British King George VI's approval of his DFC on January 26th. The crash site was not located until August 19th, 1945, on the side of Beinn a'Bhuird Mountain in Scotland. The five member crew found their final resting place in the Czechoslovak section of the military cemetery in Brookwood.

Above: Between 1941 and 1946, the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) was awarded to a total of twenty members of No. 311 Squadron (16 pilots, 3 navigators and 1 radio operator), half of them were awarded the DFC for honourable service while flying in Liberators.

Previous Page, Bottom: P/O Jan Vella photographed in the pilot seat of a Liberator, September 1943.

Below: A photograph showing the core of Vella's crew. The shot was taken between November, 1943 and April, 1944. Standing from left to right: F/Sgt Z. Fluss (radio operator/gunner), P/O R. Reimann (navigator), P/O J. Vella (captain), Sgt J. Klesnil (second pilot), F/Sgt L. Kondziolka (flight engineer), Sgt J. Novosad (radio operator/gunner).

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Liberator GR Mk.V FL949 (ex-USAAF B-24D-DT s/n 41-11755) 'Dumbo' (with chin mounted radar antenna) first served with the British unit No. 224 Squadron (A.L. 'K') followed by a short stint with No. 547 Squadron (A.L. 'K'). On March 7th, 1944, the aircraft was handed over to Scottish Aviation Ltd., probably for the installation of the retractable RP launchers in the rear bomb bay. On April 8th, 1944, it was assigned by order to No. 311 Squadron and the pilots of No. 4 Ferry Pilots Pool flew the plane from Scottish Aviation Ltd., Prestwick to No. 311 Squadron's base at Predannack. The aircraft, though, was not ready for operational flying and had to be sent to Leuchars to have all necessary equipment installed. It received the A.L. 'Y' while serving with the Czechoslovak squadron, which was later complemented by the No. 311 Squadron code letters 'PP', becoming 'PP o Y'. The first flight of the aircraft with this squadron took place on May 12th, 1944 despite the wiring for the radar not being installed until May 22nd, 1944. The original DMS-1000 radar was replaced by the newer ASG-1 unit. The aircraft was equipped with a Leigh Light. The combat armament of the aircraft consisted of sixteen RPs located in the rear bomb bay and usually carried four or eight DC250 Mk.XI depth charges in the front bomb bay.

The first combat flight with the squadron (which totalled 43) was performed on June 10th, 1944, and the last flight on January 1st, 1945.

On October 27th, 1944, the German sub U-1060 (Type VIIF, OltzS Herbert Brammer), was attacked by Firefly aircraft from No. 1771 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, in Norwegian territorial waters. They were flying off of the aircraft carrier HMS Implacable. During a morning reconnaissance mission, Black Flight, consisting of Firefly Mk.I DK416 '4A' (Lt Cdr Ellis, Lt Greenway), Firefly Mk.I '4B' (S/Lt Ramsden, S/Lt Gullen), Firefly Mk.I Z1978 '4H' (S/Lt S. A. W. Waters, S/Lt C. G. Weir) and Firefly Mk.I Z1961 '4G' (S/Lt J. T. Morgan, S/Lt D. R. Manley) spotted the sub and an accompanying destroyer in the shipping lane from Meloy to Rorvik. Aircraft '4A' and '4B' attacked the destroyer and set it ablaze. The other two Fireflies, '4H' and '4G', damaged the sub, but '4H' was shot down during the attack and fell into the sea, near the sub (S/Lt S. A. W. Waters was killed, S/Lt C. G. Weir was injured and taken prisoner by the Germans). Firefly '4G' returned back to the aircraft carrier with damaged flaps and wing. After that, the combat area was reached by Barracudas accompanied by White Flight consisting of Firefly Mk.I Z1888 '4K' (Lt Donaghy, S/Lt Stevenson), Firefly Mk.I Z1913 '4L' (S/Lt Blackburn, S/Lt West) and Firefly Mk.I DT931 '4J' (S/Lt Johns, S/Lt Westlake). Firefly '4K' hit the ammunition magazines at the conning tower of the submarine and they immediately exploded. The damaged and uncontrollable submarine hit the shallow waters of the Isle of Fleina (65° 24'N, 12° 00'E), where it became stuck and tipped to starboard. Two days later, on October 29th, 1944, Liberator FL949, 'Y', piloted by captain F/O Josef Pavelka (along with another aircraft from the squadron, Liberator BZ723 'H') attacked the damaged submarine. Liberator 'Y' conducted the first attack at 0903h. During six attacks, four salvos of four rockets each with AP25 Type J warheads were fired at the sub (recording seven hits, eight short shots and one impacting the water just below the keel) and one and then three depth charges were dropped (two exploding near the conning tower). At 0940h, the captain conducted what was the seventh overflight of the sub to photographically document the results of the attack. U-1060's fate was sealed on the 4th of November, 1944, by two Halifaxes of No. 502 Squadron, coded 'D' and 'T'. The crews spotted the submarine at 0832h and Halifax 'D' dropped seven MC500s, all of them falling in a line parallel to the submarine about 10 meters off the vessel. Halifax 'T' conducted two attacks, dropping four AS600 bombs, which also fell close to the submarine on the first run and during the second attack, the two remaining AS600s exploded behind the U-boat.

The Admiralty evaluated the attack of the Liberators as Level 'A' - submarine sunk. It was sunk in co-operation with Halifaxes 'D' (F/Lt W. G. Powell) and 'T' (S/Ldr H. H. C. Holderness DFC, AFC) of No. 502 Squadron and with the aircraft from HMS Implacable. The U-Boat Assessment Committee credited Liberators 'H' and 'Y' of No. 311 Squadron with 50% of the sinking, Fireflies of No. 1771 Squadron (HMS Implacable) with 10% and Halifaxes 'D' and 'T' of No. 502 Squadron with 40%.

On January 1st, 1945, at 2202h, W/O Oldřich Bureš, flying Liberator FL949 'PP o Y', took off on a submarine patrol flight. At 2240h, it crashed into the rocky hillside of Cuilags Hill near Rora Head on the Isle of Hoy, Orkney Islands. All eight men died. The cause of the crash has never been determined, but prior to take-off, the crew was reminded of the rocky terrain along their flightpath. The aircraft was officially struck off charge from RAF inventory on January 11th 1945.

Bottom: This photograph shows the second Consolidated B-24D-DT Liberator s/n 41-11755 (with a number '2' below the cockpit) assembled at Douglas, with the third Liberator (Consolidated B-24D-DT s/n 41-11756) behind it. This is the production line in Tulsa in the summer of 1942. Both aircraft were assembled from components supplied by San Diego (from so called 'Knocked-down kits'). The USAAF accepted 41-11755 on August 31st, 1942. At the time when this shot was taken, the aircraft had not had the machine guns installed yet. The Pitot tubes were mounted ahead of the side windows of the navigator's station. The Liberators had the USAAF camouflage in accordance with relevant regulations, with Dark Olive Drab No. 41 upper surfaces and Neutral Gray No. 43 undersides. The national insignia no longer had the red centre. On September 13th, 1942, 41-11755 was taken to the Modification Center in Fort Worth, where it was modified in accordance with RAF requirements, and the aircraft was given the serial FL949.

Top: Liberator GR Mk.V FL949 already painted in RAF Coastal Command colours. As yet, the aircraft had not been assigned an A.L. The photograph was probably taken at the end of 1942. The RAF accepted this aircraft on December 18th, 1942 at Dorval airport and a few days later, on December 22nd, it reached Prestwick. Here, the Liberator is painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme on its upper surfaces while the sides and undersides are painted white and the demarcation line between the upper surface colours and white ran in line with the top edge of the waist gun door. The aircraft did not carry any machine guns yet, but did have the FN55 mounts ready in the waist gun door. At the time the aircraft was delivered to the UK, FL949 already had the DMS-1000 radar installed. The pitot tubes remained in their original position in front of the side windows of the navigator station. Note the modified tail bumper in the bottom of the fuselage below the waist gun doors.

Bottom: On January 13th, 1943, Liberator FL949 was assigned to No. 224 Squadron where it received the A.L. 'K'. The camouflage was modified and the demarcation line between the topside colours and white became higher ahead of the cockpit. The machine gun mount located in the nose glazing of the aircraft was moved to the upper part of the flat triangular panel and the bottom edge of the glazing was also painted white. The aircraft carried a Martin 250 dorsal turret and a Boulton Paul Type E tail turret.

Top: Liberator FL949 'K' of No. 224 Squadron, probably at SAL Prestwick, 1943. The engine propellers had narrow blades. FL949 was assigned to No. 224 Squadron at the beginning of January, although it did not fly its first operational flight until March 10th, 1943. On January 4th, 1944, this aircraft was transferred to No. 547 Squadron.

Bottom: On October 27th, 1944, the damaged U-1060 became lodged in shallow waters off the northern edge of the Isle of Fleina and capsized on its starboard side. This photo was snapped by one of the attacking Fairey Firefly aircraft.

F/Lt Josef Pavelka

September 23rd, 1913 / March 13th, 1997

Born in Velké Pavlovice, Josef Pavelka completed pilot training at the Academy of Air Force Youth in Prostějov (1931-1933) and began service with No. 2 Air Regiment in Olomouc. He later flew Aero MB-200 bombers with No. 5 Air Regiment in Brno. His journey to the foreign resistance began by crossing the border into Poland on June 15th, 1939. At the break of July/August, he sailed from the Polish port of Gdynia to the French port of Boulogne-sur-Mer where he joined the French Foreign Legion. Shortly after the war broke out, he began converting to French aircraft in Pau, but did not manage to get to an operational unit before the French capitulation. In August, 1940, after the evacuation to the British Isles, he became one of the founding members of No. 311 Squadron at Honington. On December 16th, after attending an accelerated training course, he took off as a second pilot on his first night raid on the German city of Mannheim. However, the Wellington he was in crashed shortly after take off and burned. Out of the six crew members only half survived. Sgt Pavelka suffered serious spinal injuries and burns. He underwent a difficult and painful rehabilitation.

When he returned to service, he first worked a desk job and from January, 1942 he was a Warrant Officer with the Czechoslovak Inspectorate General in London. From April, he served at the Czechoslovak Depot in St. Athan. He was not satisfied with administrative duty and desired to go back to flying. He managed to return to flying in September 1942, although initially he flew wireless operators under training at No. 2 Signals School in Yatesbury. In the summer of 1943, he graduated from the course for RAF Coastal Command

crews at No. 3 School of General Reconnaissance in Squires Gate in order to be able to get back to operational flying at No. 311 Squadron. From the 18th of October to the 22nd of November, he flew eight anti-submarine patrols as second pilot on Liberators at this squadron and was promoted commissioned to the rank of Pilot Officer. After this operational experience he sailed to North America, where he went through operational training as a crew captain at No. 111 (C) OTU in the Bahamas. His crew trained from the beginning of February to the end of April, 1944 and on June 5th he reported back to No. 311 Squadron with the rank of Flying Officer. On July 12th, 1944, he flew one more operational flight as a second pilot and all the subsequent flights in Liberators he flew as captain. His only success in the fight against enemy submarines came on October 29th. On that date, Liberators flown by S/Ldr Alois Šedivý DFM and F/O Pavelka contributed with their rockets and depth charges to the destruction of the German submarine U-1060, stuck on a sand bar off the Norwegian island of Fleina. On operational flights lasting twelve or more hours, he felt his old injuries surface and therefore, based on medical opinion, he was prematurely retired from operational duty. By November 26th, 1944, he had conducted 25 anti-submarine patrol flights spanning a total of 304 hours. Up to the end of the war he served in non combat duties; from the end of January, 1945 he served in the Czechoslovak Depot at Cosford and from mid May he worked back at the Inspectorate in London. In the summer of 1945, he was selected to transport one of the two Avro Anson transport aircraft to Czechoslovakia, purchased by the Czechoslovak Government in Exile as part of the renovation of Czechoslovak transport capabilities. The aircraft landed at Prague-Ruzyně Airport on June 14th and Pavelka became one of the first Czechoslovak RAF pilots to land in his homeland after the end of WWII.

Upon arrival to his liberated homeland, he remained in active service as a captain. He flew on nationwide routes for the Air Transportation Group, where the majority of the equipment were captured Junkers Ju 52s. In March, 1946, he was assessed and based on his wartime injuries, he received 50% disability support. He still managed to remain in his branch and began work as a civilian employee at Brno airport. In 1950, he was fired after being labelled as a 'Westerner'. After a period during which he had not been able to find work, he got a job at the Financial Authority in Hustopeče. He finally got political and moral satisfaction during the fundamental changes the country went through in the nineties and he was promoted to the rank of Colonel (RET) and, on 8 May 1991, he was awarded the Milan Rastislav Štefánik Order III Class. Josef Pavelka died on March 13th, 1997 in Břeclav.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, FL949, F/O Josef Pavelka, No. 311 Squadron, Tain, October, 1944

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Liberator GR Mk.III FL936 (ex-USAAF B-24D-CO 41-11647) was one of the longest serving Liberators of No. 160 Squadron. On August 23rd, 1942, the aircraft arrived at SAL Prestwick and two months later, on October 25th, it went to No. 160 Squadron, at that time located on Thorney Island. On December 6th, 1942, after the training of the first crews, the aircraft was sent to Lyneham. There, on December 12th, it was accepted by No. 301 Ferry Training Unit to be transported to India. On February 1st, 1943, the plane reached India, but it took some time before it flew its first operational flight there. It was on May 10th, 1943. Its A.L. 'V' remained on the aircraft throughout its service with the Squadron. Over the following months, the aircraft conducted several reconnaissance and patrol flights with various crews and there is no record of any significant events occurring during them. The month of October brought about change, however. On October 1st, 1943, at 0445h, the crew led by P/O Ben Hall took off from Sigiriya airfield on the island of Ceylon on a reconnaissance mission over Sabang (Aceh, Dutch East Indies). After successfully conducting said mission, the navigator, F/O J. Segar, set a course for home. Everything went fine until 160 km west of Sabang, where the Liberator was jumped by an aircraft identified by the crew as a Japanese naval fighter. As a result of the combat that lasted 25 minutes, the Liberator suffered damage to its fuselage and tail section and especially to the fuel tanks. Gunner Sgt J. A. Stokes was slightly injured. After base had heard from the damaged

airplane, it dispatched Liberator FL945 'H' at 1414h to escort, but the planes failed to rendezvous. Both Liberators finally landed safely at their base, Liberator 'H' at 1500h and the damaged 'V' at 1515h. Not even the first operational flight after the aircraft had been repaired went smoothly. On November 21st, 1943, at 0149h, the crew led by captain S/Ldr Brady took off for a reconnaissance flight above the Dutch East Indies. Their target was obscured by clouds, so the crew just took photographs of the east coast of Simalur Island and headed for home. At 0943h, the crew reported the loss of No. 3 engine, and also reported their position, speed and flight direction. At 1730h, Liberator FL936, flying with just three engines, managed to land successfully at base. On that day, the aircraft flew 3,557 km, half on only three engines.

Over the course of the following year, the aircraft conducted many operational flights fulfilling various tasks - reconnaissance and meteorological missions, search flights for missing aircraft, and flights focused on fuel consumption testing. On September 28th, 1944, W/Cdr Brady flew Liberator FL936 'V' from Kankasanturai airfield en route to China Bay in order to prop up the reconnaissance unit stationed there. The aircraft received a new coat of PRU Blue paint on all surfaces. There was another pilot that flew Liberator 'V', a Canadian named F/O Jim I. Jackson (who flew operationally with No. 160 Squadron from April, 1944). On April 11th, 1945, he conducted his last reconnaissance flight with FL936 above the Island of Simalur. As far as he could remember, the aircraft had an image of a Viking warrior painted on the nose. On May 15th, 1945, a new pilot to the squadron, F/Lt J. A. Muir, flew Liberator 'V' to Ondal for spare parts. This pilot entered the history books a few months later. FL936 flew its last operational flight with the squadron with W/O J. J. Bates and his crew on June 4th, 1945. This was a reconnaissance flight over east Sumatra lasting sixteen hours and 50 minutes. The aircraft was stricken from RAF inventory on April 11th, 1946.

Prior to its repainting in PRU Blue, the Liberator was painted in the Temperate Sea Scheme on its upper surfaces, the sides were painted flat white and the undersides gloss white. The national insignia was painted on the upper surfaces as well as the undersides of the wing.

Below: Starboard side view of Liberator GR Mk.III FL936 'V' of No. 160 Squadron. The plane carried a Boulton-Paul Type E tail turret and a Martin 250 CE dorsal turret. It was not equipped with any ASV radar; it only had an IFF system installed. Note the very sharp and straight demarcation line of the side and upper camouflage paints.

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Top: FL936 Liberator 'V' on the ramp behind FL945 'H', but the Nose Art of the kangaroo on the nose and the A.L. 'V' are visible. Notice the national insignia on the underside of the wing of FL945 'H' and the pair of Browning 0.303 machine guns in the FN55 mount in the waist gun window.

Bottom Left: Detailed picture of the starboard side of the nose of the aircraft features a bulldog wearing a bowler hat and smoking a cigar. The assumption is that this needs no further explanation. Joe Baker, the tail gunner in P/O Hall's crew, painted the image. The pitot tube remained in its original place, as mounted at the factory.

Bottom Right: This photograph of the port side of the nose of FL936 shows the Nose Art of the boxing kangaroo, a reference to 'Down Under'. An Australian crewmember or groundcrew serving with the squadron most likely painted it.

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The first GR Mk.V Liberators (BZ829 'A', BZ830 'B', BZ831 'C', BZ832 'D', BZ823 'E', BZ824 'F', BZ825, BZ826 a BZ827) arrived at No. 200 Squadron base in Yundum, Gambia, at the end of July, 1943. L. A. Trigg flew one of the aircraft from Dorval (today's P. E. Trudeau International Airport, Montreal, Canada) through Prestwick.

On August 11th, 1943, No. 200 Squadron conducted their first operational flight with a Liberator. On that day, shortly after dawn at 0729h, two aircraft, BZ830 (W/O 'Rikki' Johnson) and BZ832 (F/O L. A. Trigg), took off from the base in Rufisque near Dakar to conduct an anti-submarine patrol scheduled for an area about 724 km southwest of Bathurst. The planes were equipped with American depth charges. During the flight, both aircraft got a command to attack a submarine that had been attacked by a Catalina (W/Cdr D. W. Baird, F/O N. A. Ward) of No. 490 Squadron. After an unsuccessful search the Liberator BZ830 returned to base. The second aircraft, though, disappeared without a trace and a search was organised. The next morning, Sunderland 'H' of No. 204 Squadron found a dinghy full of survivors. The Sunderland crew assumed them to be the crew of the Liberator and dropped them supplies. One day after that, on 13 August 1943, the mystery of the missing Liberator BZ832 started to untangle. On that day, the corvette HMS Clarkia, given the coordinates by the Sunderland, picked up the men in the dinghy. The corvette crew discovered that the survivors were not from the Liberator, but rather German sailors. Their story revealed the fate of Trigg's crew.

On August 11th, 1943, at 0945h, Trigg's crew spotted a surfaced submarine (about five kilometers distant at 12°20'N and 20°07'W). F/O L. A. Trigg immediately initiated the attack. The crew of U-468 (Type VIIC) fired back at the Liberator in response. The German sailors' aim was accurate and they hit the Liberator several times, setting it on fire. Captain Trigg continued the attack despite the fire and dropped six depth charges at the submarine from an altitude of about 15m. Two of them exploded at a distance no more than two meters away from the vessel. After overflying the sub, the Liberator failed to recover from its descent and a couple of hundred meters away from the submarine the plane hit the surface of the water and exploded. But the German soldiers had no time to savour their victory. The explosion of the depth charges damaged the submarine badly. There was a major leak of poisonous chlorine from the batteries and the captain gave the order to abandon ship. Only about twenty sailors managed to escape. Ten minutes after the beginning of the Liberator attack, U-468 vanished below the waves with the rest of the crew.

The blood of the injured sailors attracted sharks and the tragedy continued to unfold. One hour later, the dinghy from the crashed Liberator was spotted and the surviving members of the German Kriegsmarine crew climbed in. One of the survivors was the commander of the submarine, Oberleutnant zur See Klemens Schamong, his first officer, Alfons Heimannsberg, and the lead engineer Emil Giesbert.

Their testimony confirming the valour of F/O Allan Trigg's Liberator crew led to them being awarded the highest honour in the UK honour system, the Victoria Cross. On November 2nd, 1943, The London Gazette newspaper notified that the King awarded the Victoria Cross to F/O L. A. Trigg for his exceptional deed of valour. All names of the members of his crew - the second pilot, P/O G. N. Goodwin, navigator, F/O Ivan Marinovich (who flew in Trigg's original crew on Hudsons), the second navigator, F/O J. J. S. Townshend, radio operator/gunner, F/Sgt Arthur G. Bennett (who also flew in Trigg's original crew on Hudsons), radio operator/gunner, F/Sgt Terry J. Soper, radio operator/gunner, F/Sgt Lawrence J. Frost, and radio operator/gunner, F/Sgt A. R. Bonnick - are inscribed on the Malta Memorial. The Germans lost 42 sailors.

Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ832, F/O Lloyd A. Trigg, No. 200 Squadron, Yundum, Gambia, August, 1943

Below: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ826, No. 200 Squadron, Yundum, Gambia, July, 1943. The aircraft had the ASG-3 centimetric radar installed.

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Liberator GR Mk.V BZ826 'L', No. 200 Squadron, St. Thomas Mount Air Base, Madras, 1944. In February, 1944, the squadron was ordered to move from Africa to India. The majority of its aircraft reached the Indian base at the end of March/beginning of April. The airplane already bears ACSEA markings. Note the Boulton-Paul Type E tail turret with black framework.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ832, F/O Lloyd A. Trigg, No. 200 Squadron, Yundum, Gambia, August, 1943

W/Cdr Ingle welcomes the GR Mk.V BZ829 crew, NO. 200 Squadron, Yundum, July, 1943.

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F/O Lloyd Allan Trigg VC, DFC

May 5th, 1914 / August 11th, 1943

Lloyd Allan Trigg was born in Houhora, Northland, New Zealand. In 1927 he began attending Whangarei High School. Soon after that, his father died followed three years later by his mother. These tragic moments undoubtedly influenced his outlook on life. He first wanted to become a teacher, he even started to attend preparation classes for Auckland University College, but the ongoing economic crisis made him decide otherwise. In 1932, after he graduated from Whangarei High School, he began working on sheep farms. Later he worked as a sales representative for a company providing supplies to farmers. In 1938, he got married and settled in Victoria Valley.

Over the first year of the Second World War he served with the North Auckland Rifles Regiment, subordinate to the Territorial Force (he was a member of the regiment since 1932). He could have asked for exemption from military service, but instead, he filed an application to the Royal New Zealand Air Force on June 15th, 1941. He underwent training in Canada. During his goodbye with his wife and two small sons, he told her 'Don't worry, I am not going there to collect medals'. On January 16th, 1942, after he completed his training, he received his wings and the rank of Pilot Officer. He then continued his training, this time for the Lockheed Hudson. On October 28th, 1942, after completion of the training, he boarded a ship and headed for the British Isles. In December 1942, he was sent to Western Africa where he joined No. 200 Squadron equipped with Hudsons and tasked with maritime patrol flights. He was a dedicated pilot and was willing to fly under all conditions. In March, during escort flights protecting convoys, he attacked two times the submarines, earning him a nomination for the Distinguished Flying Cross. On June 18th, 1943, the award was announced by the London Gazette. Unfortunately, F/O Trigg never learned about this (the message reached Africa after the loss of Liberator BZ832 and its crew). He flew a total 46 operational missions on Hudsons.

In May, 1943, three crews (including that of F/O Trigg) were sent to No. 111 (C) OTU to the Bahamas for conversion to Liberators, to which No. 200 Squadron was to shortly re-equip.

F/O Lloyd Allan Trigg died on August 11th, 1943 during the first operational flight with Liberator BZ832 'D'. His Liberator was shot down during an attack on U-468, but the submarine was sunk. For his valour, F/O Trigg, was awarded Victoria Cross posthumously.

The Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross is the highest military award in the UK honour system awarded to the armed forces of the British Commonwealth (formerly applying to the territory of under the jurisdiction of the British Empire) for deeds of valour in the face of the enemy. The award could be given to any military rank and to civilians under military command. The VC was introduced on January 29th, 1856, by Queen Victoria to honour acts of heroism by soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. The VC thus has applied to all acts of valour since 1854. It was first awarded on the 26th of June, 1857. In association with the award, the survivors of the bearer of the VC get a yearly pension. A total of 1,358 Victoria Crosses have been awarded since 1856 to 1,355 individual bearers (only three people have been awarded this award twice, the VC & Bar, where the bar represents the second award). The last VC was awarded in 2015 (for military actions on August 22nd, 2013). Since WWII, the VC has only been awarded fifteen times.

Through to today there have been 51 airmen in total who were decorated with the VC. Out of that, 32 were for valour demonstrated during WWII. Only on four occasions they were bestowed upon airmen conducting maritime patrol services. The first one was F/O Kenneth Campbell of No. 22 Squadron RAF (Beaufort Mk.I N1016 'OA o X'), who received the award for an attack of April 6th, 1941 against the German battleship Gneisenau anchored in the port of Brest. The second awarded pilot was F/O L. A. Trigg. The third man was a member of No. 162 RCAF Squadron, F/Lt David Ernest Hornell, for his attack conducted with Canso 9754 'P'. During the attack, submarine U-1225 was sunk, and it took place on June 24th, 1944. These three Victoria Crosses were awarded posthumously. The last airman awarded the VC was F/Lt John Alexander Cruickshank of No. 210 Squadron, who managed to sink U-361 with his Catalina JV928 'Y' on July 17th, 1944. After landing, the medical staff found a total of 72 entry wounds in his body, but they still managed to save his life.

With respect to the above mentioned figures it is clear that this award is held in very high regard not only by its recipients, but also among collectors. The Victoria Cross awarded to F/O L. A. Trigg, for instance, was sold at an auction organized by the Spink Auction House on May 6th, 1998, for a record £120,000. The new owner of Trigg's VC was Michael Ashcroft Trust, a holding administering the Victoria Cross collection of Lord Ashcroft. In 1998, when the Triggs VC was sold at auction, the VC was not sold by Trigg's family. It was sold much earlier by his widow. She was able to purchase a house from the value of it.

The Victoria Cross was allegedly (except for a few pieces) been made, and is made, from the metal of Russian cannons captured in the Crimean War. The metal component of the Victoria Cross weighs 27 g and has a height of 41 mm and a width of 36 mm.

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Liberator GR Mk.V BZ862 (ex-USAAF B-24D-10-CF 42-63885) was delivered to the UK on August 4th, 1943 by pilots from No. 45 Group and handed over to Scottish Aviation Ltd. for modifications. As soon as on August 11th, the airplane was flown to Cairo and on August 14th to Karachi, India where Air Command South East Asia (ACSEA) took delivery of it on August 31st, 1943. The following month it was assigned to No. 354 Squadron (with the A.L. 'A'). The records of the squadron state that the plane was handed over in May, 1944. One year later, it went to No. 160 Squadron with the A.L. 'J'. The record about its first flight in the Operations Record Book (ORB) of No. 160 Squadron dates back to June 9th, 1945. The mission was meteorological research and fuel consumption testing and the flight lasted a total of seventeen hours and 51 minutes. The first operational flight with the squadron, on June 27th, 1945, was under the command of P/O L. G. Knowles and the last took place on October 6th, 1945, with a crew led by F/Lt H. K. Morley (operation 'Pontoon 33', an S. D. flight over Malaysia spanning a length of eleven hours and 50 minutes).

Left: Liberator GR Mk.V BZ862 'A' of No. 354 Squadron. It is obvious that the ACSEA markings were painted over the original British national insignia. The light blue centre had

a very small diameter. The Temperate Sea Scheme camouflage on the upper surfaces consisted of irregular fields of Dark Slate Grey and Extra Dark Sea Grey. This Liberator had a Martin 250 dorsal turret and Boulton Paul Type E tail turret.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ862, No. 354 Squadron, 1944

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F/Lt John Archibald Muir, MBE

September 17th, 1918 / April 19th, 2004

John Archibald 'Jack' Muir was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. As a young man he was devoted to sports and in 1936 he graduated from Kitsilano High School. From 1941 to 1946 he served in the RCAF. An instructor, F/O Muir, was a recipient of the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) award, which he was given for bravery in 1943, saving a pilot from a burning Gypsy Moth aircraft.

On May 3rd, 1945, F/Lt Muir, MBE, was assigned to leave the RAF Training Command and serve with No. 160 Squadron. Along with him came his navigator, P/O J. H. Eke. Over the final months of WWII, the Liberators of No. 160 Squadron flew long-haul flights on Special Duties (S. D.) operations. This was the reason why the squadron preferred the Liberator GR Mk.V to the newer GR Mk.VI and GR Mk.VIII. Both latter types had a shorter flight range.

During the final days in May and during the first half of June, F/Lt Muir, conducted several training flights consistent with the tasks commonly assigned to No. 160 Squadron at that time. These included such exercises as circuits and slow flight training on May 25th, 1945, slow flight and supply drop training with Liberator BZ825 'O' on June 1st, reading of radar maps on June 3rd, fuel consumption testing with Liberator BZ867 'P' on June 11th and on 15th, June 1945, slow flight training in Liberator BZ823 'Q'. The next day, F/Lt Muir and his crew (F/Sgt J. A. Stickney, second pilot, F/O J. H. Eke, navigator, F/O J. L. Jones, F/O H. N. Brown, P/O D. A. Cottingham, Sgt A. G. Bero and Sgt J. Hall) flew their first operational mission in this aircraft at the squadron. The operation was a Special Duty mission and the flight lasted 18.5 hours. The second operation followed on June 23rd, 1945. This flight in Liberator BZ866 'G' spanned twenty hours and 47 minutes. The third operational flight was conducted on June 29th, 1945, again in Liberator 'G' and lasted nineteen hours and 47 minutes. The fourth flight, performed on July 10th, 1945 with the same aircraft, took 18 hours and 58 minutes. The other two operational missions, flying Liberator BZ825 'O', were flown by F/Lt Muir's crew on the 15th of July, 1945 (total length 19 hours and 13 minutes) and on July 21st (18 hours and 34 minutes). On July 25th, 1945, the crew first tried out the unit 'special' Liberator Mk.V BZ862 'J', and flew for 22 hours and 34 minutes.

In about a week's time, a historical event occurred, at least from the point of view of aviation history. At 0233h on July 31st, 1945, F/Lt Muir, along with eight members of his crew, took off in Liberator BZ862 'J' from Minneriya airfield in Ceylon for an S. D. operation called 'CARPENTER 70'. The task was to offload a cargo over the 'CAIRNGORM' Drop Zone (near the Kota Tinggi road - Johore Bahru) in southern Malaysia. The weather over the drop zone was unfavourable with low level clouds. The aircraft circled the area for about 35 minutes and waited for the signal from the ground. Ultimately, the payload was dropped on the way back at 06° 20'N and 95° 30'E, and thus the operation was pronounced unsuccessful. The aircraft landed at base the following day, August 1st, 1945 at 0243h. The total flight time was 24 hours and 10 minutes and the Liberator flew a distance of 6,010 km. This operational flight was not only considered to be the longest operational flight in the history of the Liberator, but the crew also managed to break the 24-hour flight time limit. Roger Freeman wrote in his book 'The B-24 at War' that the aim of the operation was a parachute jump of two British officers, but the ORB of No. 160 Squadron does not mention any dropping of paratroops at all. Other records state 'bodies & load' (names of agents are not mentioned, of course). This version is also considered doubtful as

it states seven crew members only. The crew, in fact, had nine members with two new members of the crew as opposed to previous flights.

On August 4th, 1945, during the ninth operational flight, F/Lt Muir tested Liberator BZ830 'T'. The plane landed back at base after nineteen hours and ten minutes. During the following flight with Liberator BZ825 'O', the crew noted into their flight logs a total time of twenty hours and 19 minutes. On August 16th, 1945, the crew, flying Liberator BZ866 'G', had to return due to the failure of an engine and their flight only took seven hours and 21 minutes. The last two operational flights at the squadron were performed by F/Lt J. A. Muir piloting Liberator BZ825 'O'. This mission of August 19th, 1945, took twenty hours and 49 minutes. The thirteenth and final operational flight (on August 27th, 1945) was cancelled earlier than intended when the aircraft had to return due to bad weather and failure of the auto-pilot after twelve hours and 54 minutes. F/Lt Muir left No. 160 Squadron on September 1st, 1945.

After WWII John Muir worked for Trans Canada Airlines (TCA) in Montreal and moved to the town of Hudson in Quebec. Over his thirty-year pilot career he piloted (as a captain) all types of aircraft in the Canadian airline fleet. In 1978 he left Air Canada (this airline was established in 1965, formerly TCA) to enjoy his retirement. In total, he flew more than 25,000 flight hours. He returned home to British Columbia with his family. He died on April 19th, 2004.

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Top: RCAF Liberator 'N' at the end of the runway with engines No. 2 and 3 running. The s/n 600, painted in light grey on the nose of the aircraft, is well visible. The same applies to A.L. 'N'. The tail turret is a Consolidated A-6A type. Note the auxiliary fuel tank mounted in the front bomb bay. The picture was probably taken soon after the plane had been delivered to the squadron. The aircraft is clean, the camouflage paint is not heavily weathered and the centimetric radar antenna is installed in the retractable dome at the bottom turret location. Note the red vertical stripe on the side of the fuselage marking the location of the propeller.

Bottom: RCAF Liberator 'N' photographed much later than in the photo above. By this time the aircraft had already been modified. The parabolic antenna of the centimetric radar was moved to the aerodynamic cover under the nose of the aircraft. The upper side camouflage paint had been touched up. The Temperate Sea Scheme was retained, but the irregular fields of Dark Slate Grey and Extra Dark Sea Grey follow a different pattern. The nose is adorned with a large painting of a girl wearing a red bikini with the name 'NANNETTE' written next to her. The A.L. 'N' repeats on the nose of the aircraft with a smaller version on the tail. Both letters on the fuselage were painted in Dull Red and the tail letter was painted in light grey. The serial number '600' on the nose of the aircraft was reduced in size and repeated on the rear fuselage in front of the tail surfaces. Both of the numbers were probably painted in black. The camouflage paint is visibly worn out.

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RCAF Liberator 600 (ex-USAAF B-24D-70-CO s/n 42-40557; **ex-RAF BZ755**) was delivered to No. 10 (BR) Squadron stationed in Gander (East Air Command) on June 4th, 1943. The aircraft was assigned the A.L. 'N'. At the end of its service career the nose of the plane was decorated with a large Nose Art of a girl wearing a red bikini and the name 'NANNETTE' written next to her. The only operational flight of Liberator 600 during which a submarine was encountered was on September 22nd, 1943. On that day, shortly after dark, the crew of the aircraft (piloted by F/O A. Cirko) spotted a submarine tailing a convoy. The Liberator gunners immediately opened fire and the submarine fired back. Captain F/O A. Cirko requested naval command for permission to use flares to facilitate an attack using depth charges in the dark. Permission was denied because of the fear that the submarine would have been able to make out the silhouettes of the convoy vessels. The result of the

clash was undetermined. On August 15th, 1945, No. 10 (BR) Squadron was disbanded and its Liberators were flown to Comox Base in British Columbia. On January 10th, 1946, Liberator 600 was handed over to North West Air Command. On August 14th, 1946, with a total count of 1,908 flight hours, the aircraft was retired. Its next owner was a farmer from Alberta, who bought the aircraft and sold off various components, selling what was left of the Liberator to Yesterday's Air Force in Chino, California in 1972. The plane was further damaged during transport by rail. The only preserved part of that plane is the nose. It was restored and represents B-24 'Fightin' Sam' and is in the inventory of the British Imperial War Museum. Currently it is on loan to, and exhibited by, the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Savannah, Georgia, USA.

Profile: Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ755, F/O A. Cirko, No. 10 (BR) Squadron RCAF, Gander, Autumn, 1943

Bottom: A photograph showing the starboard side of RCAF's Liberator 'N'. The propeller hubs are in natural metal. The machine gun located in the glass nose was moved to the upper part of the triangular panel. Above that is the ASVBA Yagi antenna (ASV Beam Approach - an Instrument Landing System used for approach in conjunction with the metric radar).

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This photograph shows the aircraft after modifications. The centimetric radar parabolic antenna was moved to the aerodynamic cover underneath the nose of the aircraft. The upper side camouflage has been touched up. The Temperate Sea Scheme remained, but the irregular fields of Dark Slate Grey and Extra Dark Sea Grey are differently proportioned. The nose had a large Nose Art of a girl wearing a red bikini and the name 'NANNETTE' inscribed next to her. The A.L. 'N' repeats on the nose and on the tail of the aircraft (smaller in size). Both letters on the fuselage were painted in Dull Red and the tail letter was painted in light grey. The serial number '600' on the nose of the aircraft was reduced in size and repeated at the rear of the fuselage ahead of the tail. Both of the numbers were probably painted in black. The camouflage paint is visibly weathered.

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Liberator GR Mk.V, BZ755, Summer, 1946

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Abbreviations Used:

A&AEE	Aircraft & Armament Experimental Establishment
ACSEA	Air Command South East Asia
AL	Aircraft Letter
AM	Air Marshal
AM	Air Ministry
ASG	American radar type
ASV	Air to surface vessel
ASVBA	Air to surface vessel Beam Approach
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
BG	Bombardment Group
BR	Bomber Reconnaissance
CB	Companion of the Order of the Bath
COTF	Czech Operational Training Flight
ČKD	Czech-Moravian-Kolben-Daněk

DC	Depth Charge
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
DVW	Direct Vision Window
F/Lt	Flight Lieutenant
F/O	Flying Officer
F/Sgt	Flight Sergeant
FAA	Fleet Air Arm
FTS	Flying Training School
GEE	British navigation equipment marking
GP	General Purpose
GR	General Reconnaissance
HCU	Heavy Conversion Unit
HMS	His/Her Majesty's Ship
HMCS	His/Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
IFF	Identification Friend or Foe
KG	Kampfgeschwader
LRASV	Long Range Air to surface Vessel
Lt.	Lieutenant (Royal Navy)
MC	Military Cross
MC	Medium Capacity
MBE	Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Mk.	Mark
MU	Maintenance Unit
ORB	Operations Record Book
OTU	Operational Training Unit
(C) OTU	Operational Training Unit Coastal Command
(T) OTU	Operational Training Unit Transport Command
P/O	Pilot Officer
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAF VR	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RP	Rocket Projectile
S/Ldr	Squadron Leader
S/Lt	Sub-Lieutenant (Royal Navy)
SAL	Scottish Aviation Limited
SBA	Standard Beam Approach
SCL	Squadron Code Letter
Sgt	Sergeant
TAP	Transportes Aéreos Portugueses
W/Cdr	Wing Commander
W/O	Warrant Officer
USAAC	United States Army Air Corps
USAAF	United States Army Air Forces
ZG	Zerstörergeschwader

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