

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

CONSOLIDATED B24 L -20-FO LIBERATOR KN751/HE807
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 74/AF/790

- Jan 44 Ordered to contract No.W535 AC-21216 -24 from the Ford Motor Company at its Willow Run factory in Detroit, Michigan. The order was for 4,100 aircraft of which 3,183 were completed (1,250 of them as the 'L' model) before production ceased in August 1945 following the Japanese surrender. Constructor's number 6907L. One of 18,482 Liberators built 1939 - 45 of which a total of 1,667 were the 'L' model. Allocated USAAF serial 44 - 50206.
- 5 Dec 44 Completed at Willow Run at a cost of around \$10,900 as one of 296 Liberators produced at the plant that month.
- 6 Dec 44 Accepted by USAAF and delivered to Fairfield, Ohio for flight-testing which was completed on Dec 9 1944.
- 9 Dec 44 Placed in operational reserve at Fairfield - Liberator production was outstripping demand.
- 27 Apr 45 Flown from Fairfield to the Consolidated Modification Centre, Louisville, Kentucky where the Motor Products tail turret, radar, and radio equipment were installed.
- Allocated to RAF under the Mutual Defence Act as Lend - Lease material under Requisition No. BSC 43200, LLP – 107.
- 31 May 45 Modifications completed.
- 2 Jun 45 Ferried to Dorval Field, Montreal via Romulus Field, Michigan and given RAF serial KN751 (batch of 135 Mk VI and MK VIII aircraft from the serial range KN702 - KN836, as a Liberator B.Mk.VIII which had more radar and rescue equipment than the Mk.VI bomber version (although KN744-752 are recorded elsewhere as B.VI aircraft)
- 4 Jun 45 Collected by a crew from No.45 Ferry Group RAF and flown across the South Atlantic via the usual route from Dorval, via Gander in Newfoundland, Lagens in the Azores, Rabat Sale in French Morocco, Castel Benito in Libya, Lydda in Palestine, Shaibah in Iraq, and Drigh Road in Karachi to Air Command South-East Asia (ACSEA) at Bamrauli (Allahabad), India, usually involving some 53 flying hours.
- 23 Jun 45 Received at ACSEA - Allahabad and allocated to the Liberator equipped No.231 Group RAF at Dhubalia, Bengal.

26 Jun 45 Delivered to No. 99 (Madras Presidency) Squadron at Dhubalia, (Bengal) code letter 'F'. This was one of six RAF Squadrons plus a Heavy Conversion Unit using the Liberator in the bomber role in South East Asia, principally for night attacks.

KN751 initially served as a spare aircraft, and for crew training but later flown by the Squadron's CO Wing Cdr Webster, DSO, DFC when used on detachment in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands from 17 July 1945, where it was also flown by the Station Commander Major General Durant (who was a SAAF officer with the honorary RAF rank of Air Vice Marshal) and for air - sea rescue cover on bombing raids on Japanese Forces in Burma (including Rangoon) until the Japanese surrender in mid August 1945. It flew in natural metal finish as with the squadron packing to move from Calcutta to the Cocos Islands there was no time to paint it in the normal camouflage colours (see file letter from Derrick W. Clewley, ex 99 Squadron Navigator, 1945, June 2009; he suggests KN751 was coded '9' on the fin).

On file with the aircraft department are extracts from the log book of F/Sgt. E.J. Pask, W/Op and Air Gunner, who flew several sorties in KN751 whilst serving with No.99 Squadron; (The complete logbook is at RAFM Cosford).

- 1 Jul 45 Flown by W/O Wingate on 3.10 hour calibration flight.
- 15 Jul 45 Flown by Wing Commander 'Sandy' Webster from Dhubalia to Ratmalana (Ceylon). Flight time 8.25 hours.
- 17 Jul 45 Flown by Wing Commander Webster Ratmalana - Kankesanturai - 1.15 hours flying time.
- 19 Jul 45 Flown by Wing Commander Webster Kankesanturai - Cocos Islands - flight time 11.25 hours, counting as an operational flight according to a note in the logbook - this was an operational area.
- 26 Jul 45 1.20-hour air test - fuel system check. Pilot Wing Commander Webster.
- 1 Aug 45 'War Ops' - shipping strike at Tjilatjap (Java)- bombs failed to explode. Pilot Wing Commander Webster. Flying time 10.15 hours.
- 7 Aug 45 No.99 Squadron flew its last bombing mission, attacking two airfields at Benkoelen on Sumatra with bombs and strafing runs.
- 12 Aug 45 No.99 Squadrons' last wartime operational mission, three aircraft dropping supplies to Malayan Guerrillas.
- 17 Aug 45 30 minute air test - pilot Wing Commander Webster.
- 22 Aug 45 With spasmodic fighting continuing in Malaya, the squadron dropped supplies to guerrilla forces north of Singapore.

From late August and into September the Squadron was engaged in leaflet dropping to Allied Internees and Prisoners of War, including those held in the notorious Changi jail in Singapore, and to Japanese troops.

- 30 Aug 45 Medical Supply drop on Changi Airfield, Singapore; pilot Wing Commander Webster; flying time 11.45 hours, taking off at 05.45. Flight Engineer F/L Percy Miller DFC.

- 17 Sep 45 20-minute air test- pilot Wing Commander Webster.

- 18 Sep 45 5.55-hour flight - Pilot Wing Commander Webster, Major-General Durant as Co-pilot. Supplies and military personnel landed at Kallang Aerodrome, Singapore. 5.55 hour flight. Later that day flew from Kallang to Cocos Islands - flight time 5.50 hours.

- 4 Oct 45 Listed in the No 99 Squadron Flying Detail with the following crew; Captain W/O W.Shrive; 2nd Pilot F/S D Neeves; Flt Eng. F/S Lyon; Bomb Aimer P/O A Kermod; Navigator F/O H Williams; Wireless Operator F/S C Morris; Front Gunner F/S E Poyntz; Rear Gunner F/S J Queenan.
Under lend -lease requirements all Liberators had their guns removed during the month. By this date duties were mainly the ferrying of supplies to the recently liberated Singapore for redistribution.

- Nov 45 Most Liberator units, including No.99 Squadron disbanded leaving two squadrons engaged on photo survey work in Bengal until April/May 1946.

- 15 Nov 45 No.99 squadron disbanded on the Cocos Islands.

- 12 Dec 45 (Rear Gunner's) logbook of Harry Norton Hall; pilot FO Genner; Base – K.K.S Ceylon, ferrying postings; 11-hour flight – 5.38 of which was daylight. See e-mail from Richard Holowka dated 23 January 2016 on Liberator correspondence file, and original LB copy held by archives.

- 13 Dec 45 Also in Horton Hall LB; pilot again F/O Genner; K.K.S- Yelahanka, India. Posted. DCO; flight two hours, taking off at 07.54; seemingly P/O Genner's crew was being posted elsewhere, so were used to ferry KN751 to India, from whence it later returned.

- 21 Jan 46 Aircraft flown from Cocos Islands back to India.

- 22Jan 46 Following its return to India, flown Karachi - Jodhpur - Bamrauli, Allahabad by F/Lt Ronald B. Garnham RAFVR of No 36 SP (Ferry Unit) which was based at Bamrauli. See his Logbook, donated to DoRIS 2007. Flying hours 2.15 to Jodhpur and a further 2.45 on to Bamrauli.

- 11 Apr 46 Struck off RAF charge at No.322 Maintenance Unit, Chakeri, Kanpur (Cawnpore) where nearly a hundred RAF Liberators were dumped following the termination of Lend Lease agreements from August 1945. Following Indian independence on 15 August 1947 the MU closed in November 1947 and the site and aircraft dump passed to the Indian Air Force.
- 48/49 Converted to the maritime patrol role by Hindustan Aircraft (Later Hindustan Aeronautics) Ltd at Bangalore. Spare parts were obtained from the former RAF Liberators left derelict at Chakeri and shipped to Bangalore and some 36 were stripped down and rebuilt for IAF service, aided by Liberator parts recovered from elsewhere in Asia, initially to provide the Indian Air Force with a heavy bomber element and later also as maritime patrol aircraft, with the first six reconstructions completed by November 1948, permitting the formation of the Liberator equipped No.5 (Bomber) Squadron the 2nd day of that month, its eventual strength being 16 aircraft by January 1951.
- 2 Mar 49 To Royal Indian Air Force Charge as HE807 (The Royal Prefix being dropped when India became a Republic in Jan 1950). The Emerson nose turret bears an inspection plate inscribed 'Hindustan Aircraft Ltd Bangalore Insp Date 2.3.49'
- Jan 51 No 6 (Maritime Reconnaissance) Squadron Indian Air Force formed, ('The Flying Dragons') and from 1959 at least HE807 served alongside this units' eventual 15 other Liberators at Poona on low - level maritime patrol duties over coastal waters in overall silver with roundels in the usual positions. Duties included watching for gold-smuggling dhows sailing down from the Persian Gulf, and helping vessels in distress in the Arabian Sea with no major accidents during the Liberators long service with this unit, whose aircraft carried radar, sonobuoys and depth charges. The Liberators also participated in the annual multi-national Monsoon naval exercise, based at Trincomalee in Ceylon.
Other IAF Liberators served in the training, freighting and passenger transport roles. Their 20 years service meant the Liberator served in India for longer than with any other air force.
- 25 May 55 IAF logbook of Wg Cdr SS Chawla records flight in HE807 captained by Flt Lt Sodhi, flown Poona – Ratnagiri – Jodhpur – Kotah – Poona. Time 0:30 hr by day, 8:30 by night. Two navigators carried – one under training. On No.6 Squadron strength at the time. See photocopy on file.
- 3 May 56 Captained by Flt Lt B. Singh 'Local Flying Duty' Time 1hr by day. Aircraft on strength of No.5 Squadron at the time, the Heavy-Bomber tasked unit. See photocopy on file.
- 57 English Electric Canberras replaced Liberators with Nos.5 (Bombing) and 16 (Training) Squadrons, leaving just No.6 Squadron operational on the type, carrying sonobuoys and depth charges in a typical offensive load.
- May 59 Flown by Sqn Ldr Douglas 'Dinky' Augier with No.6 Squadron.

- 61 In the weeks preceding 'Operation Vijay' marking the end of Portuguese colonies in India, No.6 Squadron Liberators operating from Poona and Jamnagar were intensively engaged in maritime reconnaissance and dropped flares at night to help identify coastal traffic at the approaches of Diu and Daman and helped with mopping up operations by the Indian Army near Marmagao and on 18 Dec 61 dropped call - to - surrender leaflets over Goa. HE807 was latterly coded 'K' with No.6 Squadron.
- 1965 No.6 Squadron involved in maritime patrols during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war; in the summer of the same year due to trouble in the Kutch region the squadron was tasked with maritime reconnaissance over the Arabian Sea.
- 31 Dec 68 Following a final sortie by one of No.6 Squadrons aircraft on 24 December, the Liberators were finally replaced by 8 ex Air India Lockheed L-1049G Super Constellation aircraft (introduced from 1967), and retired from service with the last Indian Air Force Liberators of which 15 were put up for disposal.
- Jan 69 Placed into open storage at Poona with a number of other Liberators of which 6 were auctioned (for scrap?) in 1972; 13 still remained intact in April 1973.
- Feb70 Allocated by the Indian Air Force to the RAF Museum following a request by the Museum. At this stage there were only two aircraft that the Indians believed could be made flyable.
- Apr 73 Surveyed at Poona by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd who confirmed that the aircraft could be made airworthy. Twelve other Liberators remained at Poona at this date.
- 1May 74 Overhaul commenced at Poona. Engines first ground run for 20 minutes 20thMay.
- 18Jun 74 25-minute test flight at Poona. Flight curtailed when the undercarriage failed to retract. Total recorded aircraft hours before this flight 292.30
- 19 Jun 74 Further 25 minute test flight, with the undercarriage again failing to retract.
- 20 Jun 74 Successfully flown from Poona 500 miles south to the Bangalore factory of Hindustan Aeronautics. Flying time 2.45 hours. Photo prior to departure; The Liberator In Royal Air Force and Commonwealth Service (Oughton) p.270
Further maintenance work by Hindustan Aeronautics at Bangalore.
- 27/28Jun 74 Further test flights, of 20 minutes and 1.10 hours respectively.
- 1Jul 74 Formally presented to the Royal Air Force Museum by the Indian Government in a small ceremony at the Bangalore factory of Hindustan Aeronautics. Photos - Flight International 1 Aug 74 p.109; Flypast Aug 98 p.31- 32.
Left Bangalore the same day bearing RAF roundels and serial number.

Flown back to the UK via Santa Cruz Airport Bombay (departing 2 July) Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, (3rd July) Almaza, Cairo (4th July), Rome. (6th July) Crewed by Wing Cdr I M Chopra IAF retired, chief test pilot of Hindustan Aeronautics, former RCAF Wg Cdr Doug Connor DFC and Bar (who paid for the refurbishing of the aircraft) and Fg Off Pesi Daruwalla, retired IAF Flight Engineer. For account of the flight by Wg Cdr Chopra, see Flypast August 1998 p.30 - 32 and Sep 1998 p.67-69.

7 Jul 74 Arrived from Rome at RAF Lyneham, Wilts for customs clearance at 17.35 having overflowed the Embassy Air Tattoo at Greenham Common en route, making a low pass at the close of the display. Photo overflying Greenham Common – Aircraft Illustrated May 2009 p.25.

Photos arriving - The Lyneham Globe Aug 74 p.19; Aircraft Illustrated Sep 74 p.346; Air Britain Aviation World Spring 2003 p.13; The Flying M Spring 2006 rear cover; Royal Air Force News w/e 31 August 1974 p.15.

11 July 74 Following some minor repairs, flown to RAF Colerne, Wilts to join the aircraft collection there as the runway at Cosford, the original destination, was thought too short. This 15-minute delivery flight ended the 41 hours of flying back to the UK. Photo at Lyneham 'The Liberator in Royal Air Force and Commonwealth Service (Oughton) p.272. Photos on arrival (colour) Wrecks and Relics-The Album p.16; Lost Aviation Collections of Britain (Ellis). Photos at Colerne in 1975 - Air Pictorial Jun 76 p.231; RAF Museum Report 1972 - 1975 p.17; Flypast March 2004 p.91.

20 Jan 76 By this date the Aircraft Salvage and Transportation Flight from RAF Abingdon moved the Liberator by road to Aerospace Museum Cosford, Shropshire prior to the closure of Colerne and its collection in March 1976, the fuselage moving on this date. Photo – Ever Better The History of 71 Mu RAF (Wise) p.52. Photo newly assembled at Cosford - Royal Air Force News w/e 24 Apr 76 p.17; Aeroplane Monthly Museums Supplement Apr 94 p.3; Flypast August 1998 p.30. Also Flypast November 2014 p.86 (temporary external display in 1985) Form 700 (1974 only) with DoRIS ref. ARD1974/223, Box 251.

87 Painted in No.99 Squadron markings by volunteer Aerospace Museum Society members, and given the 'Flying Bee' motif originally worn by 99 Squadron's 'B', KH399.

The aircraft remained on display at Cosford until 2005. Photo - Flypast Sep 98 p.67; The Liberator in Royal Air Force and Commonwealth Service (Oughton et al) p.4.

Aug 05 Dismantling underway prior to moving by road to RAFM London (Hendon). Photos – Flypast October 2005 p.15; Aviation News October 2005 p.778; Aircraft Illustrated October 2005 p.20; The Flying M Yearbook 2005 p.11.

6 Sep 05 Outer wing panels and tailplane components arrived by road at RAFM Hendon; Fuselage and wing centre-section arrived for reassembly and display in the Bomber Command Hall 9 September, with reassembly from 12 September. Photos under reassembly; Flypast November 2005 p.4. Photo completed; The Flying M Spring 2006 p.5.

Several other Indian Liberators are preserved; in India - HE924 at the Indian Air Force Museum at Palam, New Delhi (delivered .67; SOC 2.8.68); Canada (KN820/HE773 at Rockcliffe, delivered by Air June 1968); and the United States. (HE771, ferried from India to Duxford, UK November 1973, and to USA from Duxford 27 August 1975, airworthy as N94459 with Kermit Weekes in Florida, and 'T -18', ex KH191, sold 3.81 and now airworthy as N224J with the Collings Foundation, plus KH304/HE877 static at Pima, Arizona, this aircraft leaving India for its flight to the USA on 28 March 1969)

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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