

Belcher Bits BB-41: 30 lb Incendiary Bomb / SBC 1/48

Background

The Royal Air Force made devastating use of incendiary bombing during WWII, including the Dresden firestorm that killed more people than the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima. The use of incendiaries was a key part of the RAF night bombing campaign, aimed at the industrial heartland of Germany and specifically at the homes and towns of its workers. Night bombing was notoriously inaccurate, but delivered in large waves combining blast to knock down walls and open windows with incendiaries to set the results ablaze resulted in tremendous damage.

The development of incendiary bombs was undertaken in the years immediately prior to the war, and initial bombs like the 30 lb were more traditional shapes. Others looked like 5 gal rectangular POL containers fitted with fuzes; apparently aerodynamics was not an issue. Later trials indicated that many small sources of fire were more effective than several larger ones, and the result was the 4 lb incendiary (available as Belcher Bits BB-17). The 30 lb Incendiary Bomb was a cylindrical design of 5" diameter, with a spherical nose, tapered afterbody and typical ring tail. Overall length was 32.7".

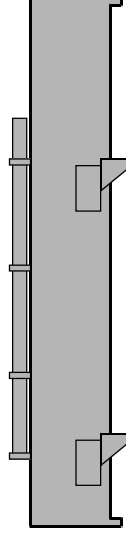
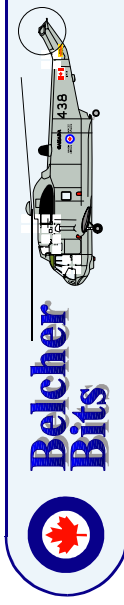
They could be fitted with a suspension lug on a band, but more typically were carried in a hollow aluminum box called the Small Bomb Container (SBC). Originally developed to carry small bombs (how obvious!) of the 30 or 40 lb class, the SBC retained its load with simple bars across the bottom of the stack, one end hinged and the other retainer by an electrically released latch. When triggered, the bar fell open and the incendiaries dropped



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Front

The empty SBCs remained in the bomb bay and returned with the bomber where they were unloaded, re-filled and ready for another trip. SBCs came in several sizes but the most common was the 250 lb which carried 8 30 lb incendiaries.

Photographic evidence shows that incendiary filled SBCs were used by many RAF bombers, including Hampdens, Blenheims, Stirlings and Halifaxes but the primary carrier was the Lancaster with its large open bomb bay. Typical load would have been one 4,000 lb 'cookie' (available in Belcher Bits BB-09) and 12 SBCs as shown below.

SBC	SBC	SBC	SBC	SBC
SBC	SBC	4,000 lb HC	SBC	SBC
SBC	SBC	SBC	SBC	SBC

Lancaster: Typical Blast / Incendiary Load

Painting

SBCs were either painted black (based on evidence of a recovered example) or more commonly were natural metal (aluminium). The electrical latches were dark, probably black or dark brown Bakelite. The 30 lb incendiaries were overall Dull Red (that brownish red used for fuselage codes) with a thin bright red stripe around the nose.

References

Surprisingly, not many clear photos exist of these SBC containers, and apparently none exist in original form in museums. However, the best reference on RAF bombs including incendiaries is the first one listed below.

1. **Bombs Gone** by J. MacBean and A. Hogben, 1990 (excellent reference on RAF bombs of all sorts)
2. **Wellington Mk 1**, 4+ Publications (good photo and drawing of SBC)
3. **Beschreibung der English Bomben**, Dec 1940 (German publication describing British bombs)
4. **British Bombs and Fuzes**, USNBD Pub'n, Nov 1944 (thanks, internet!)