

Belcher Bits BB-47: RAF Type D Bomb Trolley 1/48

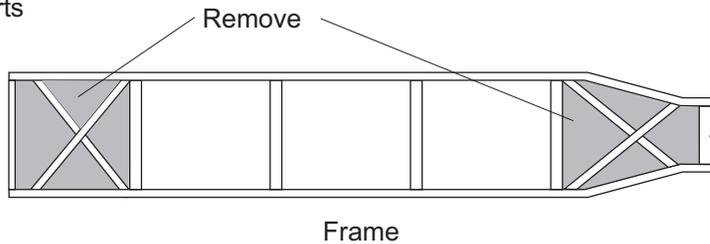
Background

Starting in the late 30s, the RAF developed a series of bomb trolleys to carry ordnance from the bomb dumps out to the dispersal areas where armourers would load them on aircraft. The first two types were lightweight, used sprung suspension and had a capacity of 1000 lb. However, as bombers got larger, so did bomb loads and the Type D trolley with a capacity of 4000 lb was introduced. This kit represents the Type D Mk II and was often seen at dispersals loaded with a 4000lb HC bomb (cookie).

Frame assembly

The frame is provided on a thin flash of resin which should be trimmed away and cleaned up. The centre three panels should be left in place. At the first and fifth panel, place the frame on a sheet of glass and carefully trim around the diagonal cross members. If you break one or cut through, you can replace it with 0.015" x 0.040" strip. Use a 0.047" drill and drill through the side frame at the rear where holes are indicated. Cut a length of the 0.047" plastic rod to 0.8" long, feed this through the holes, centering it and glue in place. This will be the rear axle.

BB47 Parts

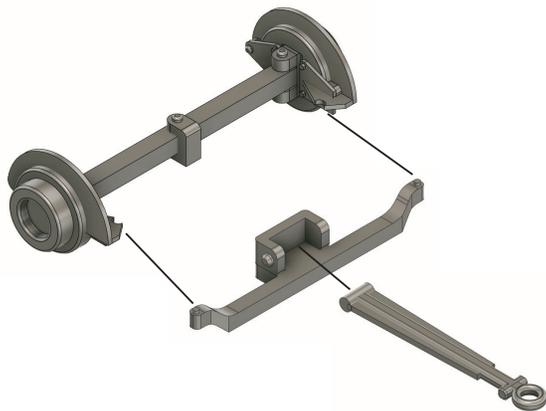


See diagram below for
Front axle, Tiebar and Towbar

Also included: 0.047" plastic rod



Wheel (x4)



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Front axle assembly

This will be a bit fiddly but will look great when completed. The front axle has a riser moulded under the main cross bar; carefully remove this. Glue the front axle in place under the front arms of the frame. The larger lobe of the brake assembly faces forward. Next, the tie bar needs to be carefully removed from its backing, and it is glued to the front axle. Small (very small!) protrusions pointing up on the tie bar ends fit into the horizontal tabs on the brake assembly. The tie bar glues in from below, not above. See the diagram below. Do not install the tow bar at this stage. The tow bar not only steered the trolley, but also applied the brakes depending on the position of the towbar. A cam on the bottom of the towbar pushed down on the tie bar when the towbar was raised. When the towbar was hooked to the towing tractor, the brakes were released, but once in position, the towbar was raised and the brakes on the trolley were set to hold it in position.

Time to get the trolley up on its wheels. Saw them off their sprues and clean up the bottom leaving a small flat. These were low pressure tires so they should show a bit of a bulge on the bottom. It helps to shim up the frame (about 0.13" or so) so the flats on the tires all end up aligned. The towbar is cleaned up and the cross bar just below the ring can have a couple small extensions added (see the illustration next page). The tow bar can then be glued in position in the steering yoke on the tie bar. The tow ring should rest on the ground (which is why the wheels go on first).



Final steps

Up until 1940 (and after the war) trolleys were painted RAF Blue but during the war, they were generally overall Dark Earth. Most photos of Type D trolleys show no markings at all. The trolley illustrated below is a later mark than that depicted in this kit, but similar.

Towing the trolley

There are a couple tractors available. Accurate Armour makes both a Fordson and a David Brown tractor in 1/48. Both are very nice.

References

1. Various photos on the internet
2. RAF publication A.P.1664D, Vol 1, Sect 1, Chapter 3

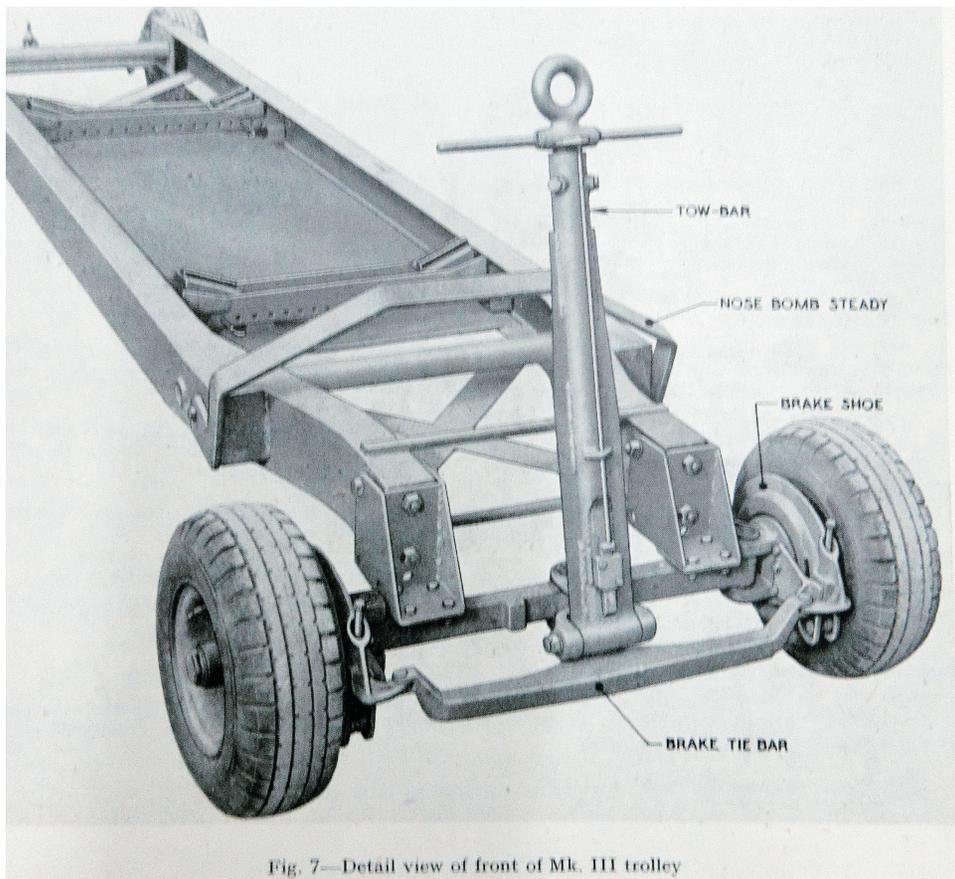
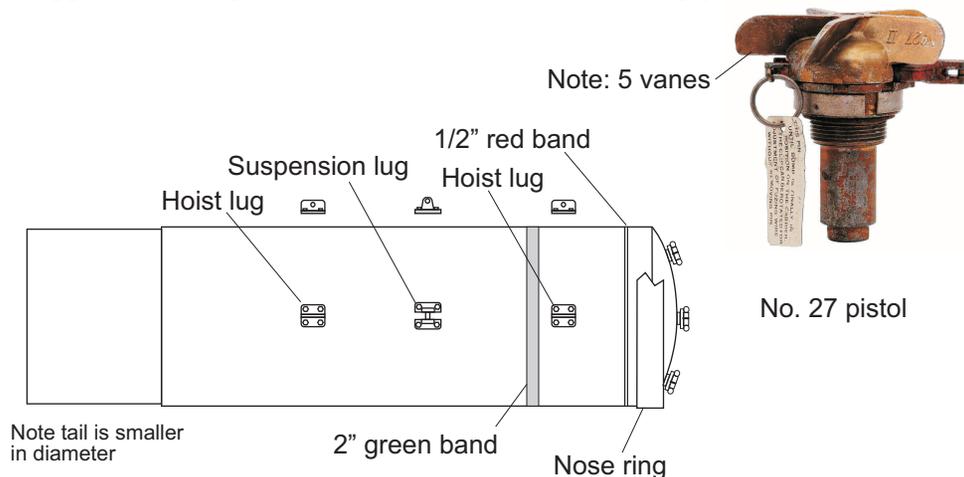


Fig. 7—Detail view of front of Mk. III trolley

Improving the bombs

The bombs provided in the HK Lancaster kit are nominally 500 lb MC types, and a 4000 lb HC cookie. The dimensions are not too bad, but detail is lacking in the extreme. They are designed to look OK in the bomb bay of the kit, but out in the open on a bomb trolley, they need help.

The large cookie has no suspension lug, so something will need to be added there. While being loaded, the bomb also had two hoist lugs bolted on which were used to lift it into position, then disconnected. The three bomb pistols at the front are in the right position, but need arming vanes (see below). The drum tail was slightly smaller in diameter than the bomb (29.3" vs. 30") but this could be overlooked. Usually, these later cookies also had a thin metal ring fitted around the nose to improve aerodynamics when dropped. The diagram below is scaled to 1/32 (multiply by 0.66 for 1/48).



Bomb HC 4,000 lb Mk III

The 500 lb MC bombs also need detailing of the suspension lug (RAF used single suspension points, so removes the double ones on the other side) and the nose of the bomb seems to be fitted with a large circular push-button rather than a normal pistol and arming vanes. Many of these bombs also used tail pistols so arming vanes could be added using thin brass strip.

Bombs were stored in the open in bomb dumps and rolled in the dirt to load them. Typically, they were dark green in colour but need weathering, especially the body of the bomb. The tails were often added later and they are generally much cleaner looking. Both MC and HC bombs had a narrow red band around the nose to indicate they were filled and a wider light green band further back to indicate high explosive fill.

Belcher Bits makes a set of 1/48 HC bombs (BB9) and two different SBC incendiary sets: BB17 for the common 4lb incendiary, and BB41 for the 30lb incendiaries.