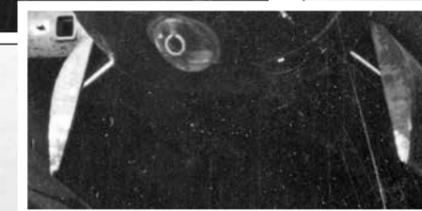
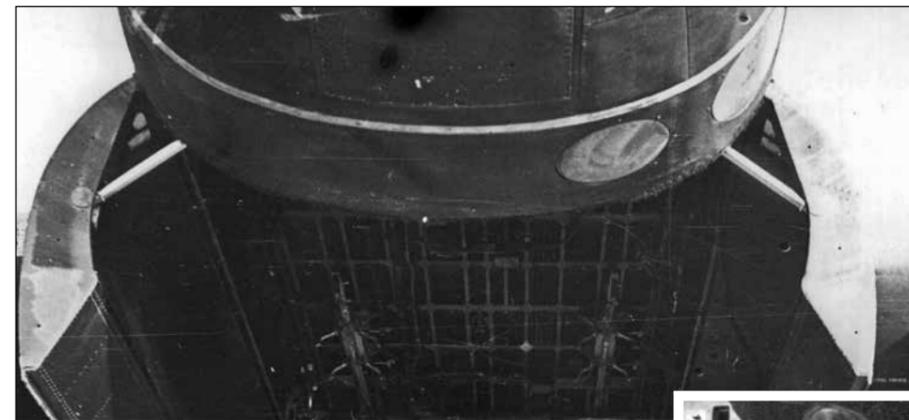
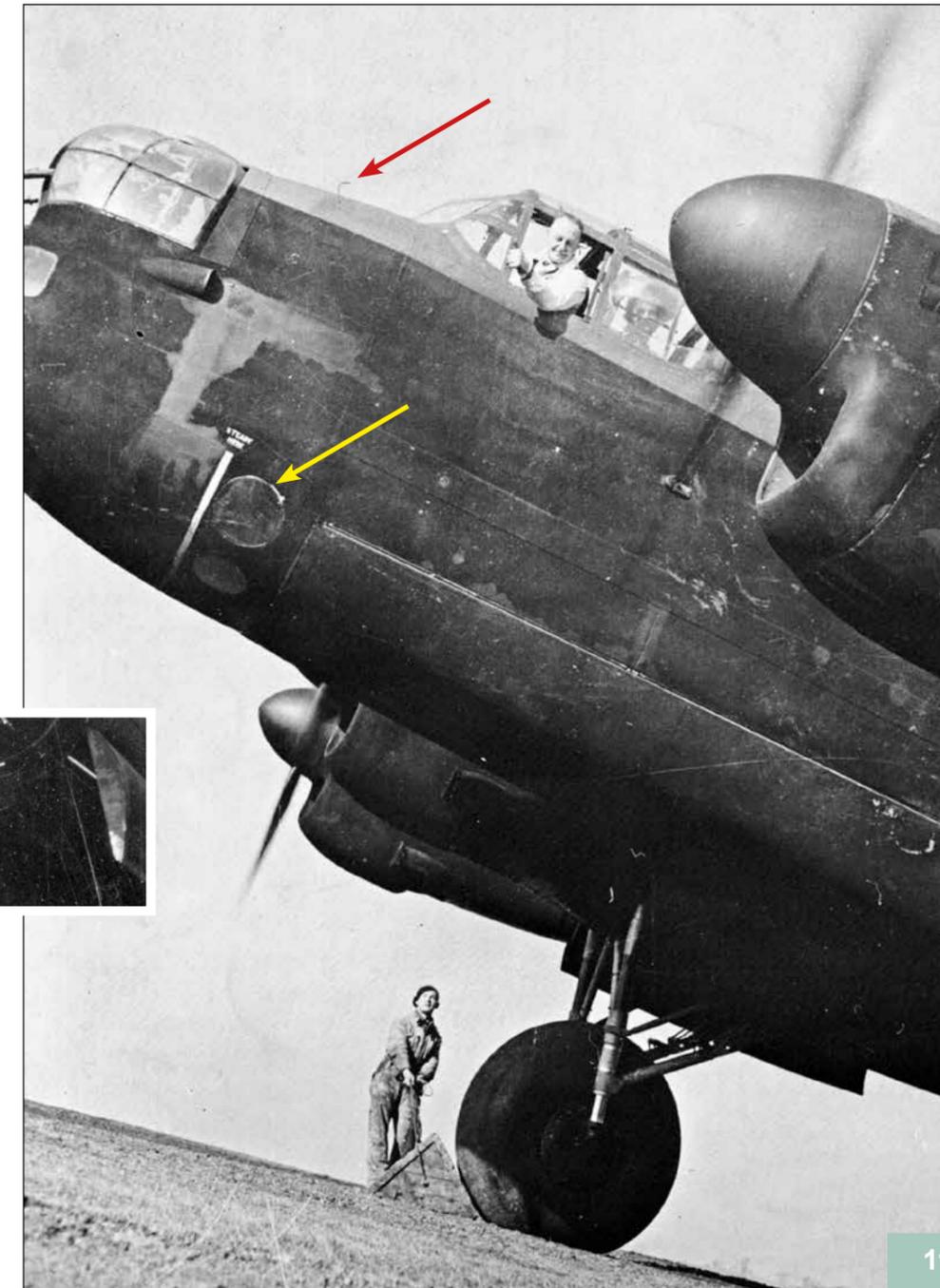


First Production
Batch
43 Lancaster MkIs
Serial Range
L7527 - L7584
Oct 41 - Mar 42



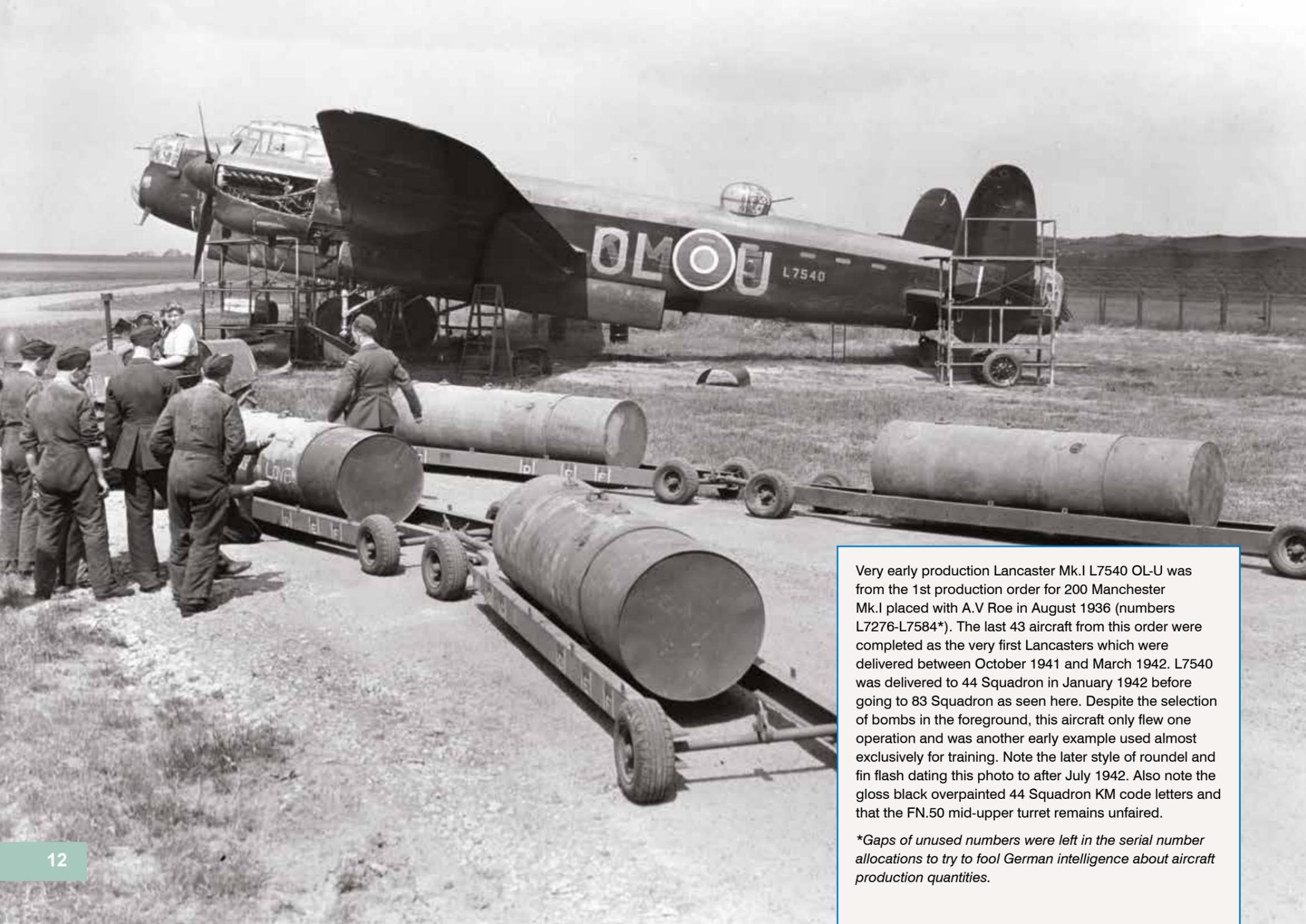
Right: One way to recognise a very early L series Lancaster is the second camera port (yellow arrow) immediately between the 'Steady Here' stencil and the bomb bay on the port side. This was carried over from the Manchester as can be seen below. The original camera port below the nose was retained on all Lancasters but the perspex cover was soon removed in service. Another feature of very early Lancasters was the lack of fairings for the windscreen de-icing spray pipes, (red arrow). These only started to appear on late W series aircraft in the second half of 1942 although some were retrofitted to earlier airframes if they were still flying.

Below: Note the Manchester's different bomb-bay door end profile, the inset shows the Lancaster door shape.



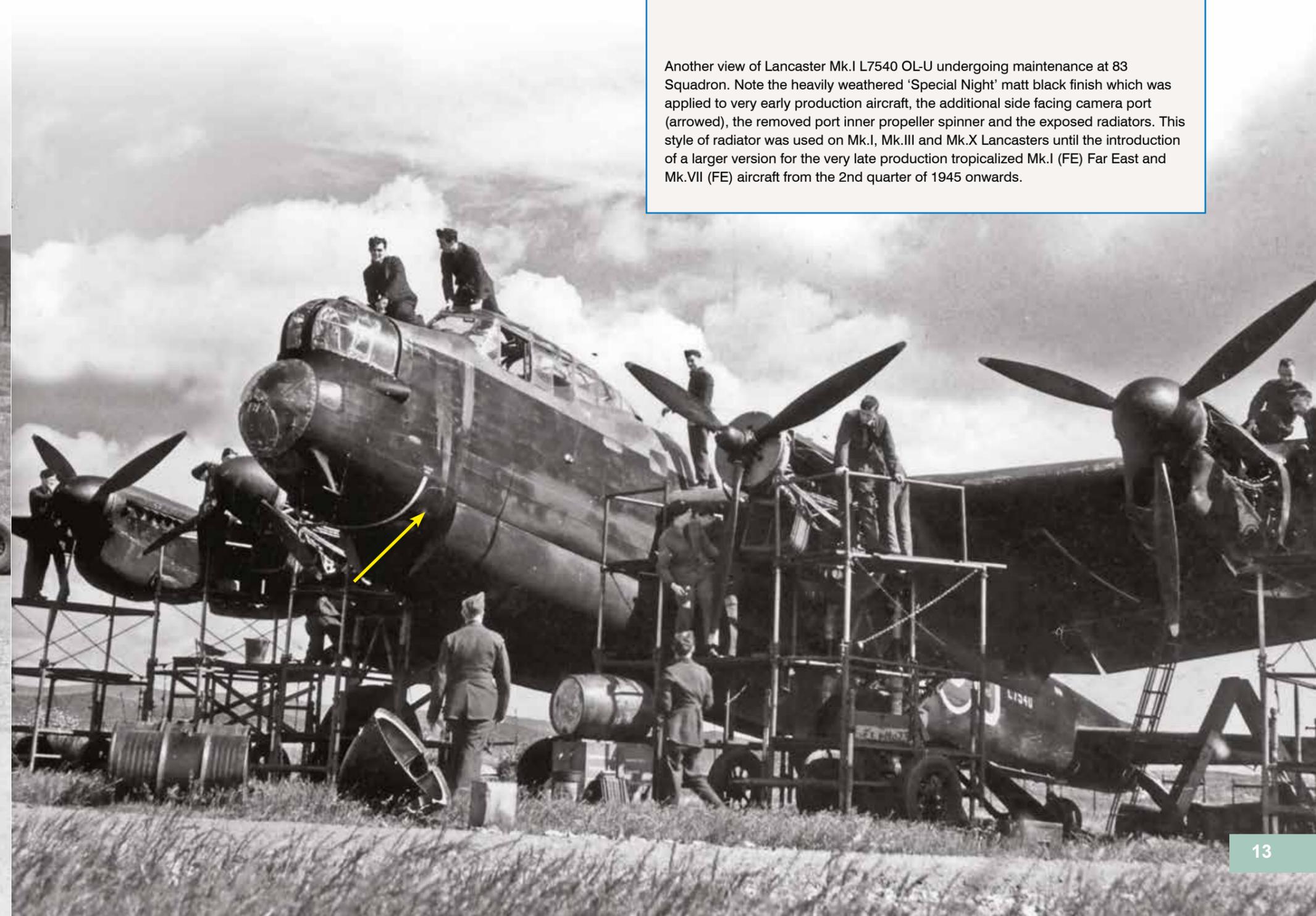
Top: Rear view of a very early production Lancaster Mk.I of 106 Squadron. Note the unfaired FN.50 mid-upper turret and extensive oil staining on the horizontal tail planes. The FN.50 mid-upper turret fairing was retrofitted to some aircraft as early as the second quarter of 1942 although photographic evidence shows Lancasters still coming off the production line without them in mid-1942.

Above: L7532 was the sixth production example and was delivered to 44 Squadron in December 1941. It appears to have flown no operations, simply being used as a training aircraft by eight different units before ending its days with 1656 HCU as seen here. Note the retrofitted mid-upper turret fairing, DF correction strip (see page 78), windscreen de-icer fairings, later IFF aerial and FN.120 rear turret.



Very early production Lancaster Mk.I L7540 OL-U was from the 1st production order for 200 Manchester Mk.I placed with A.V Roe in August 1936 (numbers L7276-L7584*). The last 43 aircraft from this order were completed as the very first Lancasters which were delivered between October 1941 and March 1942. L7540 was delivered to 44 Squadron in January 1942 before going to 83 Squadron as seen here. Despite the selection of bombs in the foreground, this aircraft only flew one operation and was another early example used almost exclusively for training. Note the later style of roundel and fin flash dating this photo to after July 1942. Also note the gloss black overpainted 44 Squadron KM code letters and that the FN.50 mid-upper turret remains unfaired.

**Gaps of unused numbers were left in the serial number allocations to try to fool German intelligence about aircraft production quantities.*



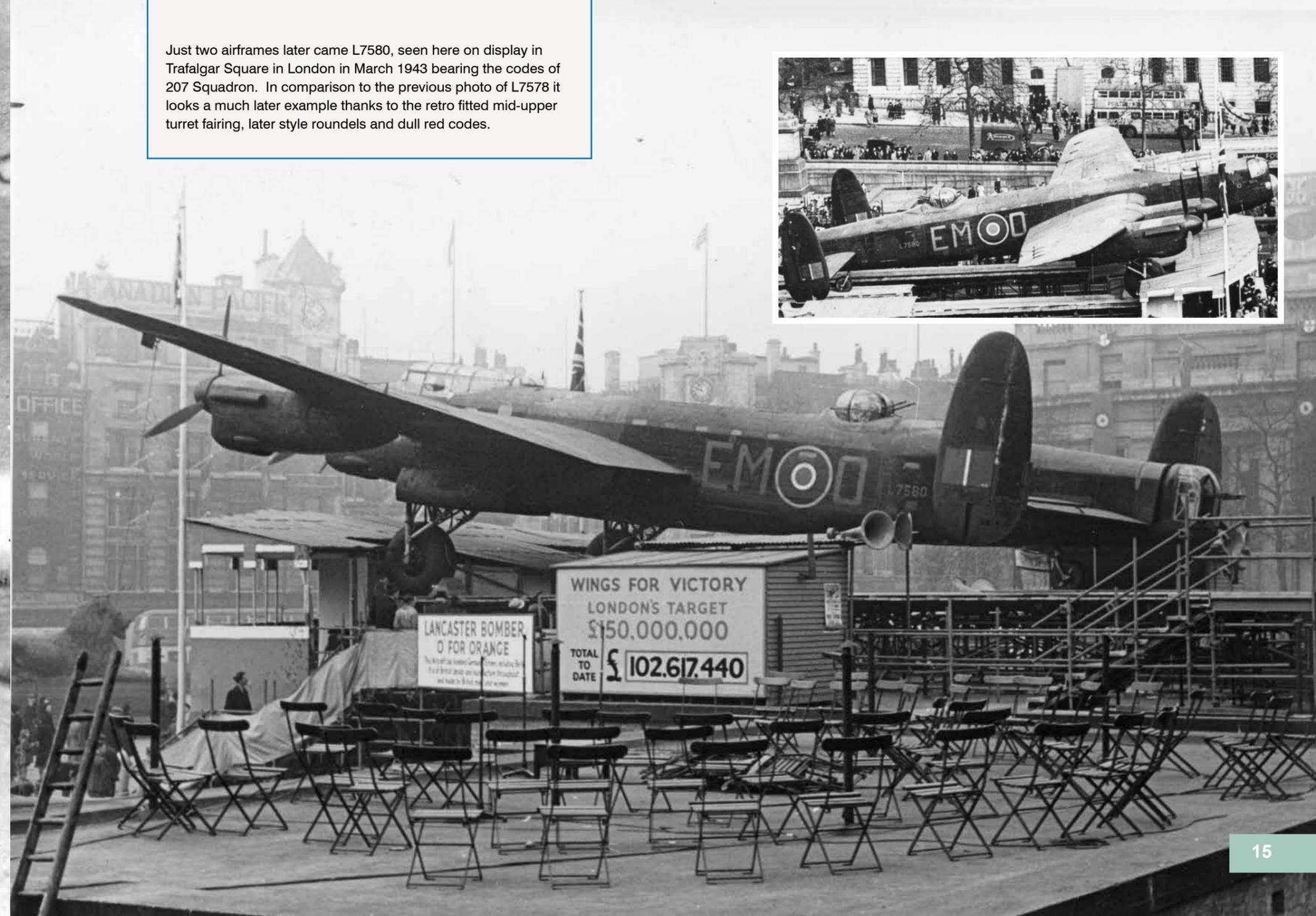
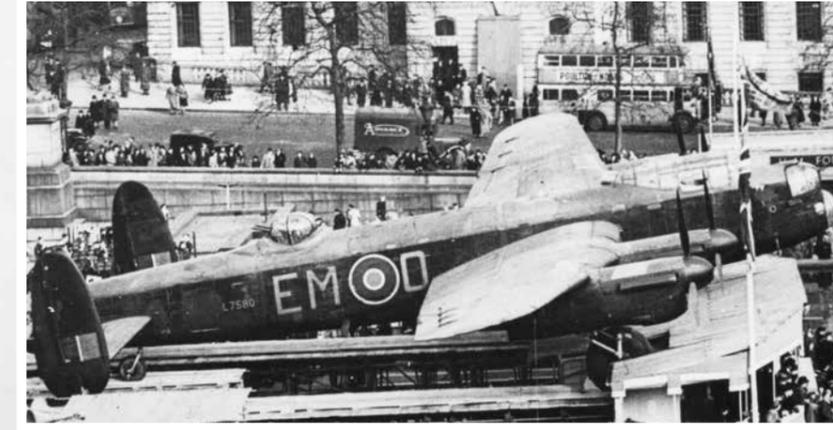
Another view of Lancaster Mk.I L7540 OL-U undergoing maintenance at 83 Squadron. Note the heavily weathered 'Special Night' matt black finish which was applied to very early production aircraft, the additional side facing camera port (arrowed), the removed port inner propeller spinner and the exposed radiators. This style of radiator was used on Mk.I, Mk.III and Mk.X Lancasters until the introduction of a larger version for the very late production tropicalized Mk.I (FE) Far East and Mk.VII (FE) aircraft from the 2nd quarter of 1945 onwards.



Lancaster Mk.I L7578 of 97 Squadron, temporarily wearing the code letters KM-B of 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron whilst on loan to 44 in the run up to the Augsburg Raid. The pilot is believed to be the 44 Squadron C/O S/L John Nettleton who would go on to fly a different KM-B (R5508) on the raid. Note the original style of national markings used until July 1942, the unfaired FN.50 mid-upper turret and the position of the trailing aerial fairing under the letter M. This is another very early aircraft built before the FN.64 ventral turret was introduced into production.

Being taken before mid-April 1942, this is one of the earliest operational Lancaster photos known to exist, note how even the Special Night finish looks in top condition!

Just two airframes later came L7580, seen here on display in Trafalgar Square in London in March 1943 bearing the codes of 207 Squadron. In comparison to the previous photo of L7578 it looks a much later example thanks to the retro fitted mid-upper turret fairing, later style roundels and dull red codes.

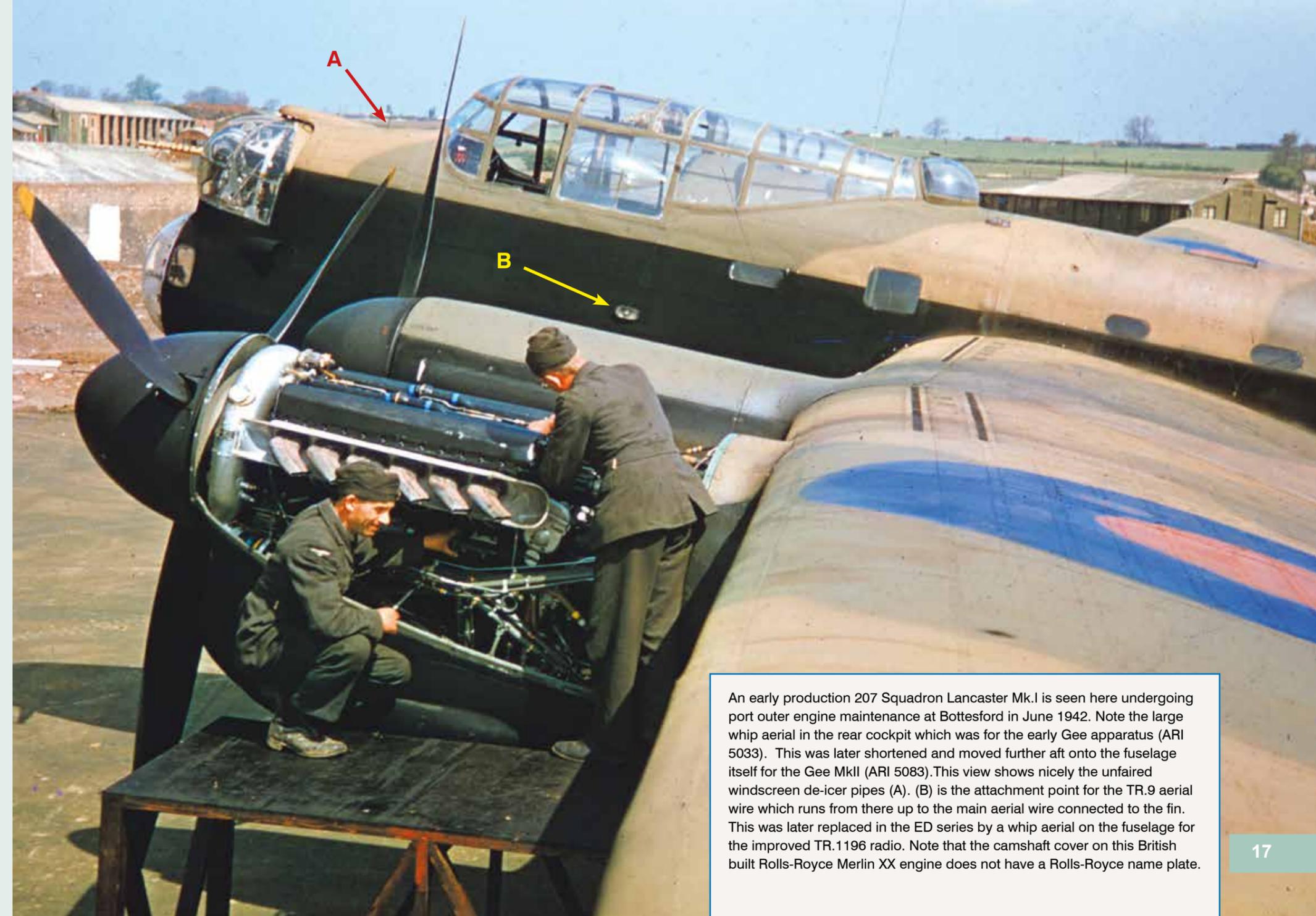


MID-UPPER TURRET

Below left: Early examples of Lancaster Nash & Thompson FN.50 mid-upper turrets were installed without a streamlined fairing. Note how the turret base was wider than the fuselage opening. It's a common misconception that the fairing was installed to stop the gunners shooting off parts of the aircraft. However, that eventuality had already been covered by the inclusion of the interrupter arms as can be seen on L7540 (right). The fairing solved another problem, which was the possibility of the guns actually colliding with the fuselage when depressed (maximum 45 degrees) below horizontal.

The fairing needed to still allow the interrupter arms to function, so a taboo track was incorporated into it.

Below: Close up detail from 44 Squadron Lancaster Mk.I R5540 KM-O photographed in October 1942. Note the aluminium painted Arch Frame and Gun Slot Seals along with the peeling tape around the retrofitted turret fairing and the roughly mismatched camouflage finish. The missing tape has left areas of unpainted metal around the edges of the fairing. Note also the extra 'raising' plate fitted to the taboo track behind the turret as we look at it. This mod can be seen on random Lancasters, both early and late production, without any apparent connection. R5700 (right) doesn't have it but LL842 (below right) does.



An early production 207 Squadron Lancaster Mk.I is seen here undergoing port outer engine maintenance at Bottesford in June 1942. Note the large whip aerial in the rear cockpit which was for the early Gee apparatus (ARI 5033). This was later shortened and moved further aft onto the fuselage itself for the Gee MkII (ARI 5083). This view shows nicely the unfaired windscreen de-icer pipes (A). (B) is the attachment point for the TR.9 aerial wire which runs from there up to the main aerial wire connected to the fin. This was later replaced in the ED series by a whip aerial on the fuselage for the improved TR.1196 radio. Note that the camshaft cover on this British built Rolls-Royce Merlin XX engine does not have a Rolls-Royce name plate.

2nd Production
Batch
200 Lancaster MkIs
Serial Range
R5482-R5763
Feb 42 - Jul 42



Lancaster Mk.1 R5540 KM-O was initially delivered to 61 Squadron before being transferred to 44 Squadron where it was photographed here in October 1942. Note the heavily weathered and patched finish after only a few months' service. The thin aerial wire (arrowed) is part of the early IFF system (ARI 5000) and stretched from both fins to the fuselage.

The bar over the individual code letter usually signified the second aircraft on the squadron with that letter. However, in this case it's believed to signify an aircraft of 44 Squadron's conversion flight.



Lancaster Mk.I R5507 was from the 2nd production order for 200 Manchester Mk.Is placed with A.V Roe in September 1939 (numbers R5482-R5763) which were all finished as Lancaster Mk.Is and delivered between February 1942 and July 1942. R5507 EM-Z was delivered to 207 Squadron in April 1942, where it served until November 1942 before being transferred to 101 Squadron. Note the unusual step under the fuselage below the letter M which is caused by the bomb doors being only partially open. The bar painted above the code letter Z indicates that R5507 is the 2nd EM-Z on 207 Squadron strength. The fin flash has been repainted to the later version whilst the fuselage roundel is still awaiting modification.