



P7056 Club

Home of the Westland Whirlwind Fighter

Spring Newsletter 2021

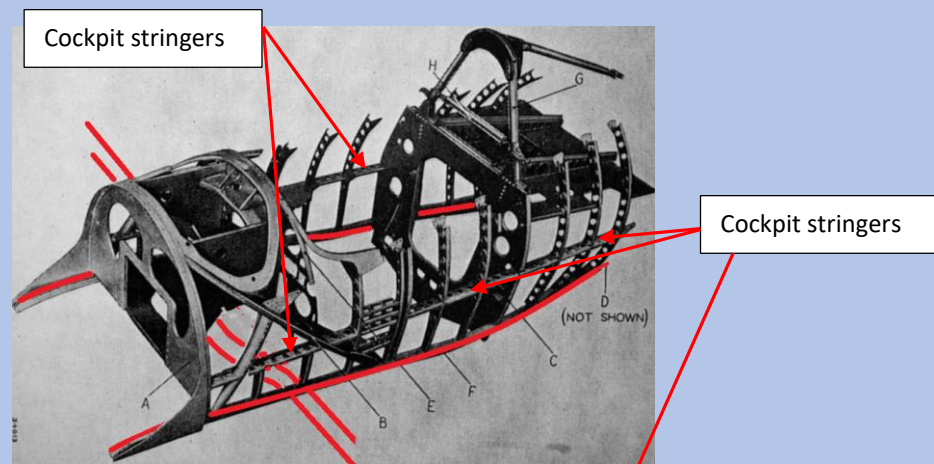
Latest Engineering Report

The Project continues to push ahead with the construction of the cockpit and the rear fuselage with the target of getting both in-situ at the Battle of Britain Museum Trust at Hawkinge, Kent by the middle of March next year in time for the 2022 season.

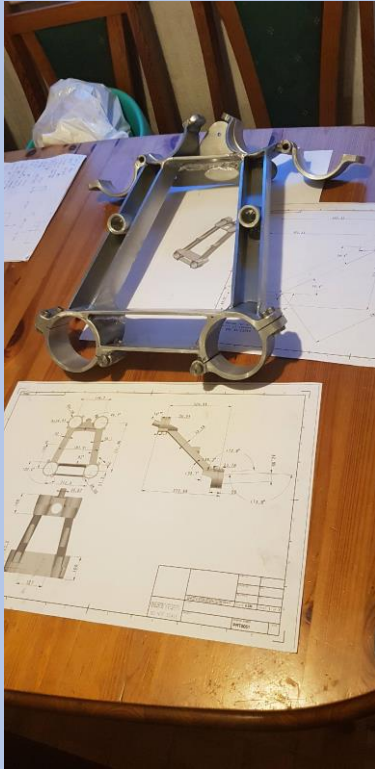
The cockpit section will be finished by the end of this year along with 4 replica cannons. It will be fully fitted out with instruments and a seat so that people can sit in it and say they have sat in a Whirlwind.

Most engineering activity at the moment is in Pete Smith's workshop – as he can work alone with no hindrance! He has many detailed design drawings to work from and we all communicate via Zoom these days, so as not to delay the project unnecessarily. His engineering plan is steadily being updated with more items completed.

Pete has worked on manufacturing the most difficult parts of the cockpit frame: upper and lower longerons, front spar, wing booms and cockpit stringers. All are collected together with the front armoured bulkhead. The stringers are the most recent element of the cockpit structure manufactured.



The flat-pack Whirlwind – stage 1!



Pete has not been sitting on his laurels – in downtime waiting for parts for his CNC machine he turned his attention to the gun bay in the nose and has made some of the parts needed to hold the replica cannon.

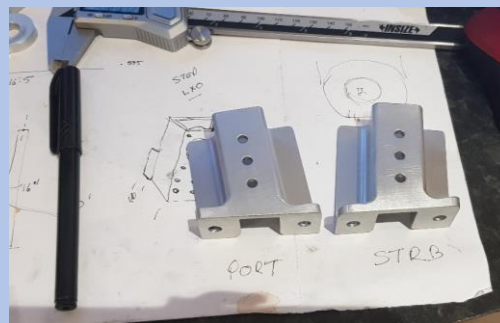
He has built up his CNC to allow for construction of larger cockpit parts – in his words “a huge step forwards to have the facility to produce very accurate large aircraft components, bulkheads, formers ribs etc.”

Pete will also look at constructing rudder pedals and a control column to allow movement of the flying surfaces – when they are added to the build.

Parts the pilot's seat have also been made:



These are part of the cockpit seat mounts.



Latest news from the engineering centre – above right are two small brackets (see pen for scale). They are critical to a Whirlwind.. they provide the structural connection between the cockpit frame and the lower longeron. If these are damaged it would lead to a major rebuild of the cockpit or a total replacement.

They can hardly even be seen in the cockpit, too.

In other news....

Dave Brocklehurst MBE has constructed and is actively populating a large display case at the Kent Battle of Britain Museum which will hold models and recovered parts of P6966 along with a real 20mm Hispano Cannon. Also, some of Gunnar Olsen's CAD drawings to show how he achieved the accuracy to which we are able to work and construct P7056 from virtually nothing.



Please check out The Kent Battle of Britain Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Kent-Battle-of-Britain-Museum-126834467471736>

Airframe Assemblies have also completed the forming of the last 5 fuselage panels! These are to be sent to Mike Eastman at Fishburn Airfield in Durham once restrictions allow, where they will be attached to a jig and the fuselage completely assembled. We definitely hope to bring more news of this activity in the next newsletter!

Whirlwind Fighter Project – Chairman's message

I am deeply honoured to have been asked to be Chairman of the Whirlwind Fighter Project, and also to have been voted in with such speed. My first experience of the Whirlwind was as a small child aged 6. My father was the Station Commander of RAF Thorney Island, a fighter airfield, and we lived in some splendour in the Station Commander's residence. One day I found a model of a small aeroplane in the sitting room and had a go at flying it, with the inevitable consequence that it broke. It was a model of a Whirlwind fighter, given to my father at some point during his wartime service. Suffice to say, he was not amused and I suffered the consequences. I am now in possession of that model, restored to its former glory. Like many of his generation my father rarely talked about his wartime service, despite me following in his footsteps into the RAF. I have his log books, recording the flying that he did in the Whirlwind in those early days of its front-line service in 1940. I also have a silver-plated tray with an engraving of a Whirlwind on the underneath, given to him when he left 263 Squadron in December 1940. The engraving is on the underneath because of the Whirlwind's top-secret status and public views of its outline were not permitted!

I first became aware of the project to build a Whirlwind replica a few years ago when I came across a small stand promoting the project at one of Duxford's air-shows, where I was working as a member of the Flying Control Committee. Since then, I have followed the project with great interest. I recognise that it will take a long time before we see a fully completed aircraft, but I sincerely hope I am still around to witness that day. In the meantime, I shall undertake to discharge whatever tasks the Committee ask me to do, and I will do what I can to bring the project's attention to anyone who may be able to help us. May I wish continued success and progress to you all.

Tom Eeles.

Some of you may have seen this article on a previous occasion. I have repeated it because we hope to share further news updates on this later in the year.

DARTMOOR SURVEY PROJECT

Caroline Belam was raised on the edge of Dartmoor, as was her mother Anne, and her family for generations before. All her life Caroline has been intimately involved with livestock farming and ponies in the area in which we believe the two aircraft came down in 1940. She grew up in Hexworthy, right under the path they would have taken according to the Brimpt's Farm witness.

When Matt Bearman contacted Caroline she was immediately fascinated by the story and the apparent mystery of the planes' disappearance. With the help of Professor Stone (see previous newsletters – Bob had conducted UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) work over the moor) Caroline unearthed the diaries of her mother Anne Belam, who was a teenager at the time.



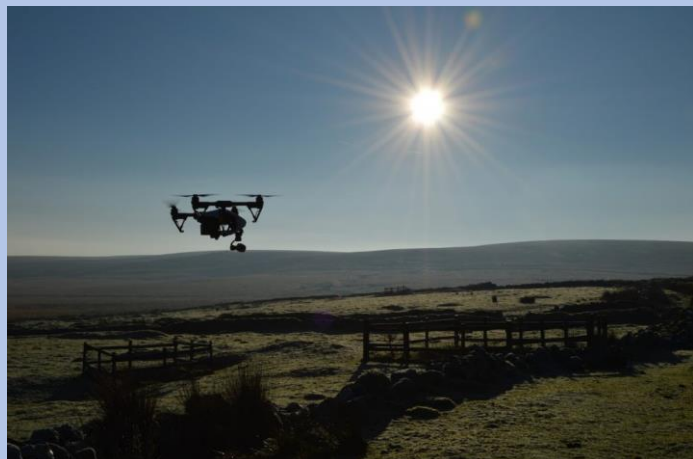
On March 16th 1941, there is an entry: "Rode up to crashed planes. Twin British fighters. John went up in a carrier" As Anne and her brother John were living in Hexworthy at the time, this certainly confirmed the area if not the precise location.

Caroline was not done yet. She immediately contacted people who used to ride with her mother over the moor – and two came back positive. Maintaining anonymity, witness A said Anne Belam had indicated a spot several times on trips over the moor. She described the route taken to reach it. Witness B said her future husband had identified wreckage that she could see from the track in the 1950's as being from two RAF aircraft that came down in the war. The location she gave agreed with A. Contacting Witness B's son, he was able to confirm on a map where this was said to be, though he had personally seen no wreckage.

On the morning of Sunday 19th February, 2011 a party of project members set off to look for traces in the indicated area. Matt Bearman, Jim Munro, Ian 'The Mole' McRae, Steve and Antonia Smith and Pete and Elspeth Chipping walked for two hours from the nearest road to find the spot, and spent another two hours searching it before the mist came down (navigation back was 'blind' with a compass – Steve got us back to the very spot we had left the cars). The ground was very difficult – uneven hummocks covered in very long grass and with sinking bog in between.

Sadly, we found nothing at all.

Anyone who has followed the Whirlwind story to any extent will be aware of the almost legendary pair of Whirlwinds that disappeared over Dartmoor in appalling weather on December 29th 1940, with tragically fatal consequences to F/Lt Wynford O.L. Smith and P/O Donald M. Vine.



Though the two pilot's bodies were found and given decent burial in Exeter, the location of the two aircraft was quickly forgotten, except to some local witnesses who remained clear and consistent in their claim that one or both were in Foxtor Mire – a

dangerous and remote stretch of semi-liquid bog that was the inspiration for Conan Doyle's horse-and-rider-swallowing 'Grimpen Mire' in the *Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Via Dutch WFP member Bas Coolen, himself a specialist in UXO detection and battlefield archaeology, Matt Bearman made contact with Robert Stone – then of Birmingham University. Bas had alerted Matt to the fact that a Birmingham Uni team had been testing remote-sensing drones over Dartmoor, and when Bas told Robert what might be there - at very short notice, they performed some extra passes on our behalf over the area 'most likely' to have been where the two aircraft ended up.

Having obtained records of eye-witness accounts from Gareth Jones, a well-known aviation archaeologist who had researched the Dartmoor Pair a decade ago, as well as Rob Jones (author of the definitive book on Dartmoor air crashes), Ian Macrae and others, along with met reports and the surviving 'official' documentation, Matt had already postulated on the (differing) approximate locations of the two at the WFP AGM. In August Bob and team returned to Dartmoor, this time specifically to take some high resolution (4k) video from a very low altitude at these locations.

There was one nasty moment – in an unintended bout of 'practical experimental archaeology' the drone did impact somewhere near the middle of the mire on the first day of the survey, thus replicating the fate of the aircraft that can't have been too far away. In an operation that read like the tracing of a space probe on an alien planet surface from the last gasps of battery power, the drone was located and an intrepid team of Bob and student set off into the Grimpen mire to recover it from its calculated position. To everyone's relief, they found it.



There have been some potentially interesting results, but to prevent anyone traipsing over the mire – which is a very dangerous pastime – or digging it up, which could result in some quite severe legal repercussions, we will not be detailing much here at this stage – especially as no-one wants to look daft when things turn out to be interestingly-shaped stones, or even sheep bones.

~~~~~  
Finally – it's not a newsletter if there isn't a call for funding!

The project is always in need of support.  
There is the donate button on the WFP site  
<https://www.whirlwindfighterproject.co.uk/elementor-2141/>  
or the current GoFundMe campaign..  
<https://gofund.me/a7d35a08>

We even have an Easyfundraising account - which does require those that shop on-line with retailers to go via that page to shop for your desired products. That does raise small donations each time.  
<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/whirlwindfighterproject/>

***All the best to all members from the Team and the Membership Sec – Peter Lancaster.***

Member of the Aviation Heritage UK.  
Charity number EW37349  
Secretary. C J M Hayward, 57 Bramblefield Lane, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 2SX  
[whirlwindfighterproject@outlook.com](mailto:whirlwindfighterproject@outlook.com)  
Website- [whirlwindfighterproject.co.uk](http://whirlwindfighterproject.co.uk)