



# P7056 Club

## Home of the Westland Whirlwind Fighter

### Autumn Newsletter 2022

#### Headline News.

We had hoped to be able to give you all a date by now regarding the move of the cockpit section to the Battle of Britain Museum Trust at Hawkinge but as you can appreciate things have a habit of getting in the way.

Pete Smith has identified an engineering problem that will delay the move for a while but it's nothing that he can't overcome.

The design and build of the Whirlwind wasn't straight forward and - even for a manufacturer like Westland - Mr Petter's design had its fair share of quirks.

Once Pete is happy with the construction, we will let you all know of the move date.

In recognition that the site for the display of our build and other Whirlwind parts is the Kent Battle of Britain Museum at Hawkinge, the Trust that runs the Museum have extended to P7056 Club members the offer of half-price entry. For adults the current cost of entry is £10, for seniors it is £9.00.

These prices are cut in half for card-carrying Club members in receipt of this Newsletter.

Good news, eh?!? It is a great Museum with lots to see – including an on-going restoration of a WW2 Heinkel, a Blenheim rebuild, and the developing and impressive monument 'Spirit of the Few'. There is a lot more there. please go along and see.

<http://www.kbobm.org/>

***Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> November at the Kent Battle of Britain Museum, Hawkinge – starting at 1pm. We wish for and encourage as many members as possible to attend!***

## **The Build.**

Now that the flare chutes are in place and the brackets fitted it is time to build and fit the toggles.



**1** Exploded view of the toggles.

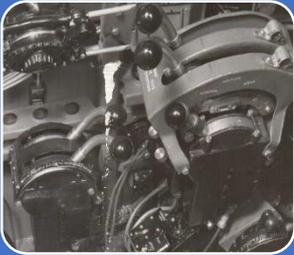


**2** Both toggles fitted to the bracket – right-hand side cockpit.



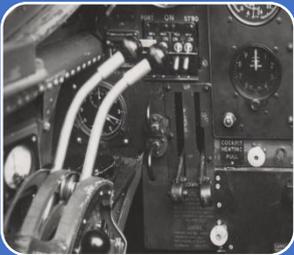
**3** Starboard side cockpit – seat removed.

Both Pete Smith and Matt Painter spent some time trying to locate throttle and mixture controls that match the style of the Whirlwind, this of course was impossible (thanks again Mr Petter) so Pete decided that we had no choice but to make our own.



### Original Cockpit Photograph

- Throttle and mixture controls
- left hand side of Cockpit



### Original Cockpit photograph

- Throttle controls "You would have thought that with the throttle and mixture controls so close together, they would colour code them, but this being a British cockpit, its going to be as confusing as possible." (Matt Painter)
- Facing forward



### Our throttle and mixture controls.

- Pete's finished control quadrant.

## More about the canopy.

Pete has passed on all details and dimensions of the Whirlwind Canopy to White Ellerton products of Hertfordshire who are known for making canopies etc. for the warbird industry and the BBMF. After being quiet for a while they have now been in touch with us and we should have news regarding the shaping of the canopy in a couple of weeks. Having a correctly made and shaped canopy is more important to the cockpit build than it might appear.

# Another Trip to the Moor

By our own Indiana Jones     Matt Bearman

In the continued search for traces of P6987 and P6989, I walked up from Hexworthy last month to investigate the 'cross on a map' given to Aviation Archaeologist Gareth Jones back in the 1980's by an elderly farmer.

The cross is in the eastern arm of the small but deadly mire known as 'Aune Head'. The location is peculiar in that on the presumed line of flight – over Brimpt's Farm (from another witness) - it sits behind higher ground, the Eastern continuation of Skir Hill. This is the rise which that same witness says they failed to clear and which is footed by the 'mine track' along which she stated that the bodies of Smith and Vine were recovered.

On the possibility that the point indicated to Gareth was just a few hundred yards South of the impact points. I also spent a long time investigating that slope.

An hour's hard uphill walking from the nearest road brought me to Aune Head Mire. Here I'd seen some interesting shapes on aerial photos but as always with Dartmoor it was just the broken, worked ground playing tricks. I looked into two pits on the Northern edge of the Mire, unusually completely dry due to the drought conditions – but there was nothing in them but black peat.

A third depression, larger (30 ft) and regular-edged on one side, was much more interesting. Heavily vegetated and very disturbed it was impossible to traverse – but it looked for all the world like the sort of disruption to the boggy surface that an aircraft would make. This needs a detector over it – but of course that would require special permission and some means to survey terrain that is broken into six-foot jagged chunks.

Then there is the Mire itself. Much diminished by the lack of rain, nevertheless it was impossible to venture to the centre. One step one is on dry land, the next your leg just drops into thick soup. No change in vegetation gives any clue this is about to happen. The area is littered with both sheep and cattle bones. One local tells me they lost a horse in there once.

However, there ARE objects in the mire that don't seem to belong. Just out of range of my blurred camera phone but begging for a visit by drone.

It is worth bearing in mind that in young Anne Belam's diary ("rode up to see crashed planes") she noted they were twin fighters. These were not holes in the bog with a scatter of debris, these were intact aircraft. One was taken by 43 Group but the other has no record of salvage – only impassable ground could account for that on 'dry' land. And then there are the local accounts – 'in the mire'. It was just that the shepherd had apparently said 'Fox Tor' and maybe a further assumption was made about Fox Tor Mire, being the more famous one?

Anyway, I was running out of time so I embarked on part two of my exploration, the 'logical' slope. This was hellish terrain. This slope is not a route for anyone, not even sheep. Four-foot-high flexible pillars of clumped mud and grass, separated by two- or three-inch-wide mini-crevasses. All hidden by knee (and frequently chest) - high grass so that there are no clues as to

where the next step should safely go. Utterly soul-destroying and exhausting, the half mile down to the mine track with a few diversions to look at apparent depressions took nearly an hour.

It is easy to imagine, despite the popularity of the moor as a place for a leisurely hike, that anything wedged into the peaty soil here under the deep grass might sit undiscovered for eighty years in a place no sane person would go when there are perfectly good paths around.

Unfortunately, I found nothing – or rather, found several ‘divots’ that might be a shallow impact, 62MU’s shallow excavations, or – far more likely in each individual case – an open tin pit. Normally I would say I would like to return and keep looking but it will take a while before the urge to explore that particular patch of the South-West returns!

However, a poke around the large disturbance and a drone trip into Aune Head Mire are definitely worth it.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> and final part of this special feature.

**Thanks again to the Royal Observer Corps Association, No. 1 Group Maidstone, for the information below.**

**THIRD PHASE - 6th September, onwards:**

#### Enemy Strategy:

25. On Saturday, September 7th, the enemy first turned to the heavy attack of London by day - perhaps because his timetable called for it, or because his intelligence staff was persuaded (on the example of Poland) that our fighter defence was sufficiently weakened by the previous month's attacks This change of plan saved 11 Group Sector Stations and enabled them to carry on operations, though at a much lower standard of efficiency

#### Enemy Tactics:

26. Dive bombers reappeared in attacks on coastal objectives and shipping off Essex and Kent. These attacks were made under cover of massed attacks by long range bombers against inland objectives. Enemy attacks on inland objectives were made in two or three distinct waves, following one another at about twenty-minute intervals, the whole attack lasting up to one hour. Each wave has consisted of a number of raids of from twenty to forty bombers having an equal number of fighters in close escort, and covered at a much higher altitude by large formations of other fighters. The majority of the raids were at higher altitude, above 15,000 feet, in bright skies that made it practically impossible for the Observer Corps to give accurate information as to the strength or type of the enemy formations flying overhead.

### Method of Attack:

27. The attack of September 7th was pressed home by the weight and numbers of successive waves of bombers at short intervals, mainly with fighter escort, all directed at the London area, and in particular at the Docks.

28. Heavy concentrations of attacks by large numbers of single aircraft, followed the day attacks, these methods of attack have been followed on September 9th and 11th, when the sky was sufficiently clear of clouds. Up to the present, the subsequent attacks have not penetrated so well or done so much damage as on September 7th, and enemy losses have been consistently heavy. On 9th September, the enemy carried out a simultaneous attack on Southampton with fifty or sixty aircraft. The greater damage has probably been done by night raids, in which all pretence of attacking military objectives has been abandoned and consists mainly in "browning" the huge London target.

### Tactics of Enemy Fighter Cover:

29. Some formations of fighter have been used to make very high diversionary raids in advance of bombers having close escort.

### Employment of Our Fighters:

30. We have developed during this phase an arrangement to engage the first wave of a large raid with six Readiness squadrons (Spitfires high, and Hurricanes for bombers) in pairs; to hold about eight Squadrons to meet the second wave half way to the coast; for the remaining squadrons to cover aircraft factories and aerodromes, or if necessary to be thrown in to meet a third wave; leaving Nos. 10 and 12 Group squadrons to cover Sector aerodromes North and West and aircraft factories. On the 9th and of 11th of September, these new dispositions were very successful, out of twenty-one squadrons of No.11 Group despatched, nineteen engaged, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. In spite of this, however, one heavy raid of about forty to fifty bombers broke through and reached Eastern London before effectively being attacked by our fighters.

31. To increase the proportion of engagement, despite the handicaps of R.D.F., inaccuracy on aircraft at great height, various observer corps failures, damage to G.P.O. lines and temporary partial dislocation by the movement of Sector Operations Rooms, it was decided to employ a single V.H.F. Spitfire to shadow enemy raids, and report to Sectors, who repost to Group. The results so far have not shown what value this will prove to the air defences.

32. A further temporary handicap on the employment of our fighters, has been the measures taken against bombing attacks to disperse non-essential administrative, etc., personnel and away from Sector Stations. This is a matter which is clearing itself rapidly now, and will eventually lead to decreased vulnerability to enemy air attack.

Volume of Flying by Fighter Squadrons:

33. No increase in this phase as yet.

### Casualties:

34. It has been decided, for the present, not to replace squadrons which have been hammered, but to keep them filled up to a maximum of sixteen operationally trained pilots by transfers from Northern Groups which, being less heavily engaged and being more remote from the areas of combat, are able to train new pilots from O.T.U.s up to operational standard. The wastage in Hurricanes has been unduly heavy owing to the many instances of gravity tanks being set on fire in combat, attention was drawn to this and recommendations made to Command Headquarters some weeks ago.

### Results of Air Combat:

35. Despite the heavy armouring of enemy bombers, our more highly developed tactics of concentration and interception, the adoption of head on also beam attacks, has enabled us to inflict a heavier proportion of losses during this period than during the second phase under report.

Effect of Bombing Attacks on Fighter Aerodromes:

36. Contrary to general belief and official reports, the enemy's bombing attacks by day did extensive damage to five of our [sic] forward aerodromes and also to six of our seven sector Stations, the damage to forward aerodromes was so severe that Manston and Lympne were on several occasions for days quite unfit for operating Fighters.

37. Biggin Hill was so severely damaged that only one squadron could operate from there and the remaining two Squadrons had to be placed under the control of adjacent Sectors for over a week. Had the enemy continued his heavy attacks against the adjacent Sectors and knocked out their Operations Rooms or telephone communications, the fighter defences of London would have been in a parlous state during the last phase when heavy attacks have been directed against the capital.

38. Sector Operations Rooms have on three occasions been put out of action, either by direct hits or by damage to G.P.O. cables, and all sectors took into use their Emergency Operations Rooms, which were not only too small to house the essential personnel, but had never been provided with the proper scale of G.P.O. landlines to enable normal operation of three squadrons per Sector. In view of this grave deficiency, arrangements were made to establish alternative Sector Operations Rooms within five miles of each sector aerodrome, and this work is now proceeding on the highest priority.

39. At several important aerodromes and Sectors, enemy bombing put out of action the Stations organization by destroying telephone communications, buildings, etc. Fortunately, the enemy switched his raids from aerodromes on to industrial and other objectives, and gave a short respite during which the Station organization at bombed aerodromes was completely reorganized,

40. The attacks on our fighter aerodromes soon proved that the Air Ministry's arrangements for labour and equipment quickly to repair aerodrome surfaces were absolutely inadequate, and this has been made the subject of numerous signals and letters during the past four weeks.

41. There was a critical period between 26th August and 5th September when the damage to Sector Stations and our ground organisations was having a serious effect on the fighting efficiency of the fighter squadrons, who could not be given the same good technical and administrative service as previously. As a result of an immense amount of hard work day and night on the part of Group Staff and personnel at Sector Stations and satellite aerodromes, the critical period was tided over, without any interruption in the operations of our fighter squadrons. The absence of many essential telephone lines, the use of scratch equipment in emergency Operations Rooms, and the general dislocation of ground organization, was seriously felt for about a week in the handling of squadrons by day to meet the enemy's massed attacks, which were continued without the former occasional break of a day.

## Conclusion.

42. At the time of writing, confidence is felt in our ability to hold the enemy by day and to prevent his obtaining superiority in the air over our territory, unless he greatly increases the scale or intensity of his attacks. Every endeavour is now being made to improve our fighter defences by night. To achieve this aim will require not only better equipment, but greater specialisation of pilots on night flying and fighting.

K.R. Park

Air Vice-Marshal, Commanding, No.11 Group, Royal Air Force.

AIR/16/737

## Club News

The next meeting will be held on Sunday October the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022.  
Please add this date to your diary.

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)