

# Whirlwind Fighter Project



## P7056 Club - Newsletter Winter 2024

Happy new year to one and all, I hope you had a great Christmas without too much overindulgence or hangovers.

With the Kent Battle of Britain Museum closed till Good Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024 it gives Dave a chance to start cleaning up some of the wreckage from the first production Westland Whirlwind Fighter, Serial No. P6966 (coded HE-Z) of No. 263 Squadron which was lost on 7th August 1940. The wreckage was excavated from the crash-site at Lanton Farm, Stenhousemuir, by a team led by Steve Vizard back in 1979 and recently acquired from Steve on long-term loan. With the aid of an air lance, Dave was able to remove a lot of the Scottish soil that remained impacted in difficult to reach areas and the start of the cleaning and conservation of the wreckage. Once completed this will be added to the display around the beautifully re-engineered cockpit and nose section of a Westland Whirlwind Fighter, the first phase of the production of a complete Whirlwind Fighter by the Westland Whirlwind Fighter Project.



P6966



Part of one of the engine nacelles from P6966. prior to being cleaned up and added to the Whirlwind display in the Stuart-Buttle Memorial hanger.

This Whirlwind was delivered to 25 Squadron\* at R.A.F. North Weald. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1940. After spending a short time there, it was attached to 263 Squadron at Grangemouth and flown up there by S/L Henry Eeles and given the Squadron code of HE-Z. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July she suffered a tail wheel collapse at Grangemouth. Once repaired she rejoined 263 Squadron. On the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1940 now coded HE-X, P6966 blew a tyre during take-off jamming the undercarriage, P/o Irving McDermott who was flying the Whirlwind had to take to his parachute. This was the first Whirlwind loss.

*(Rob Bowater, 263 and 137 Squadrons "The Whirlwind Years").*

*(\*The Kent Battle of Britain trusts tearoom was 25 Squadron's, so full circle for this aircraft).*



Dave our chairman



cleaning the undercarriage doors



close up of Chobert rivets



The above photograph is from a photoshoot of No. 137 Squadron taken on the 5th of March 1943 at RAF Manston, during the Squadrons stay there from 17/09/1942 to 12/06/1943.

Those in attendance at this particular session were (not in any order)

P/O Robert Leslie Smith, DFC/DFM; F/O Edward Lancelot Musgrave RAAF (KIA 18/5/43); P/O Desmond Roberts RNZAF; F/S John McGowan Barclay (KIA 31/7/43); W/O Arthur Gaston Brunet RCAF; F/L John Michael Bryan (KIA 10/6/44); F/O Joseph Laurier DeHoux RCAF (KIA 2/9/43); Sgt. Aubrey Cartwright Smith; F/O John Edward McClure RCAF; Sgt. Norbury Dugdale; Sgt. Thomas Arthur Sutherland; Sgt. Ernest Alfred Bolster; F/O John Maude Hadow; S/L Humphrey St John Coghlan, DFC; and Sgt. Robert Woodhouse. Lynn was said to have belonged to Mike Bryan.

*(RAF Manston, history museum).*

*Colourisation by HOWDI.*

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*Our membership secretary Peter Lancaster received an email from a new member which I thought would be nice to share with you. It always surprises me the reach across the world that this project has from North America to New Zealand.*

*Hello Peter.*

*Thanks for the warm welcome to the P7056 Club, much appreciated!*

*The Whirlwind has always been a favourite of mine because of her fine lines and intriguing design!*

*I used to live in Amsterdam where I was born and volunteered with The Dutch Spitfire Flight and Duxford-based Plane Sailing Air Displays/Catalina Society as aircrew. After moving to Washington State, I volunteered with Historic Flight Foundation and Flying Heritage Collection at Paine Field.*

*Being subscribed to Flypast and Aeroplane is keeping me up to date and the latest issue triggered me to become a member after reading the WORKSHOP article. Fantastic job you all are doing!*

*Greetings, Heijo.*

Pete Smith is still busy working his magic on the rear fuselage. He is concentrating on the top section first, once that is finished, he will start on the bottom section I have included a few photographs to illustrate where he is now at.  
*Stop Press - the upper section rear fuselage is now complete.*



The new formers and bolsters..





*The AHUK Trophy being handed over to our Chairman Dave Brocklehurst MBE by Chris Hayward for placement in the Whirlwind Display cabinet at Hawkinge.*

*Next P7056 club meeting will be held on Sunday 3rd March 2024 at 20:00hrs*

*Please join us online if you can for the latest updates from Pete Smith and any other news that may be of interest.*



*The IFF instrument tray in place to check dimensions.*

Honorary President Tom Eeles  
Honorary Vice President Jim Munro

Member of the Aviation Heritage U.K.  
Charity number EW37349

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*Robert Plemming Award for Innovation Aviation Heritage 2023.*