

The Westland Whirlwind

By Philip L Scowcroft



Westland Whirlwind in a rare Second World War colour photograph
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8b/Westland_whirlwind.jpg

This type gives rise to a certain amount of confusion among aviation enthusiasts. The very name suggests a helicopter and there was indeed a helicopter, so called, in the post 1945 era 480 were built, from 1952 onwards by Westland. But there was also a twin piston engined fighter bomber which was operational relatively briefly in the mid period of the Second War and it is this almost forgotten type I would like to recall briefly.

The "first" Westland Whirlwind first flew in October 1938 and entered service in June 1940. It was intended as a long range fighter escort and, slightly modified, as a fighter bomber. Its power plant – the plane was twin engined – the Rolls Royce Peregrine was less popular than the same company's Merlin and suffered teething troubles into the bargain. Only 116 Whirlwind fighter bombers were delivered; it played no part, to my knowledge, in the Battle of Britain but it was useful in Fighter Command's "sweeps" over Northern France in 1941-2, but by 1943 it had been superseded by other aircraft notably the Typhoon and perhaps the Beaufighter and certain marks of Mosquito, and was retired. It was a

single seater and had a maximum speed of 360mph but only at low and medium level.

June 2016.

