

WHITLEY BOMBER



Characterized by its distinctive nose-down attitude in level flight, the Armstrong-Whitworth Whitley first flew in 1936 and entered service in 1937. It was the first British bomber to have retractable undercarriage and gun turrets and the first Bomber Command aircraft to operate over Germany.

The only twin-engined bomber designed from the outset for night operations, the Whitley played a key role in Bomber Command's early operations. They were in action over Germany from the first night of the war during which they participated in a so called "nickel" sortie, dropping leaflets over the Ruhr Valley. It was during these leaflet raids in the early weeks of the war that the Whitley aircrews first tackled the problems of night navigation and operations over enemy territory.

Soon the Whitley squadrons were actively involved in bombing operations and mine-laying. Whitleys participated in the first raids on Berlin (a nine hour flight) and Italy in 1940 and the following year were used in the first paratroop operation of the war in southern Italy.

The Whitley was a sturdy airplane with few vices although somewhat underpowered, extremely drafty, and cold. As one former pilot recalled, "When one flew through rain, one got wet." Whitleys were a strong, robust bomber and could take a lot of punishment. It was said to have been a pleasure to fly, although a little on the slow side.

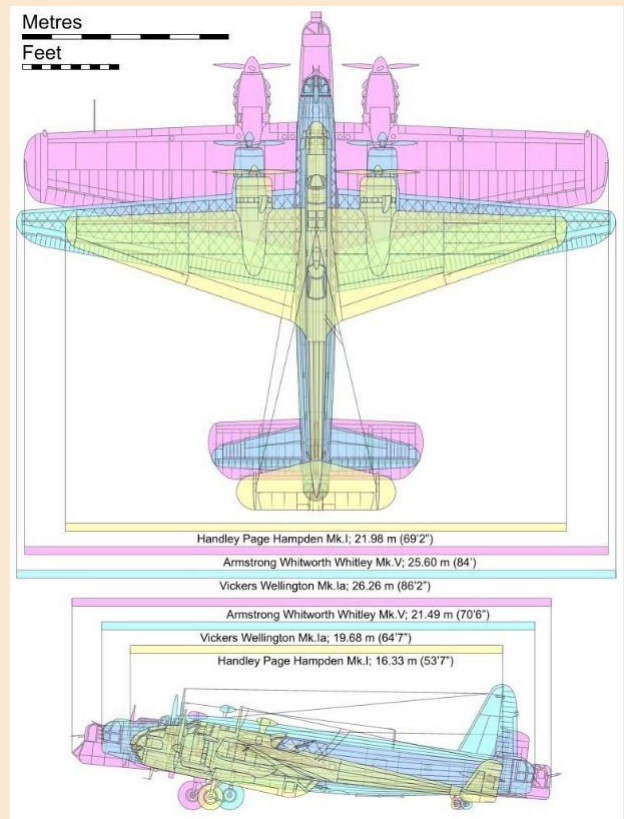
The Whitley was capable of carrying a very impressive bomb-load of 7000 lb, significantly more than the other twin-engined bombers.

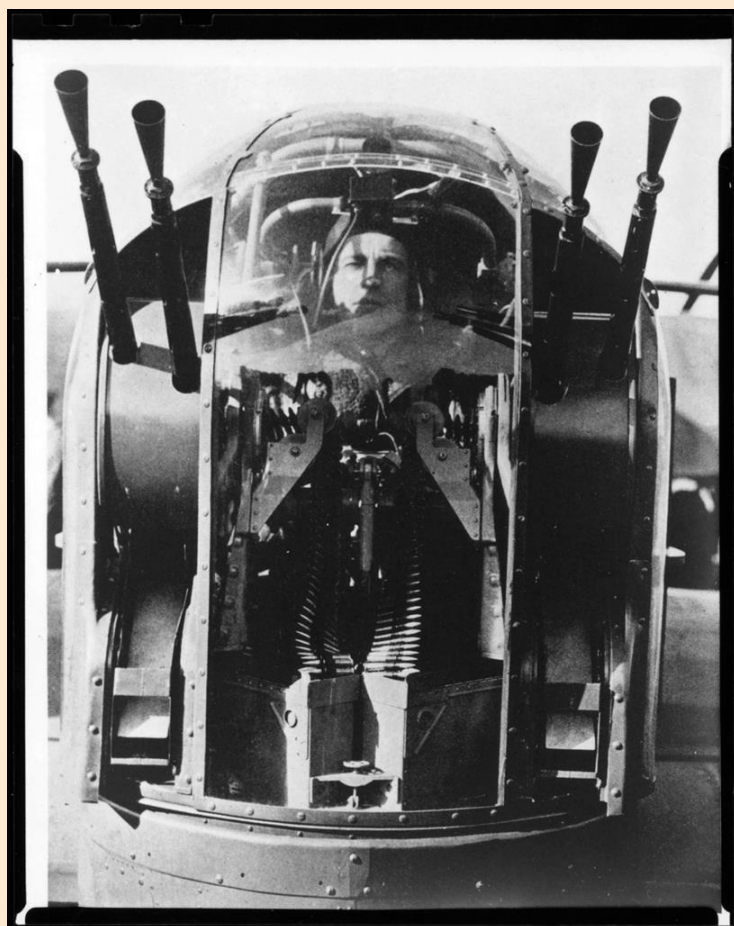
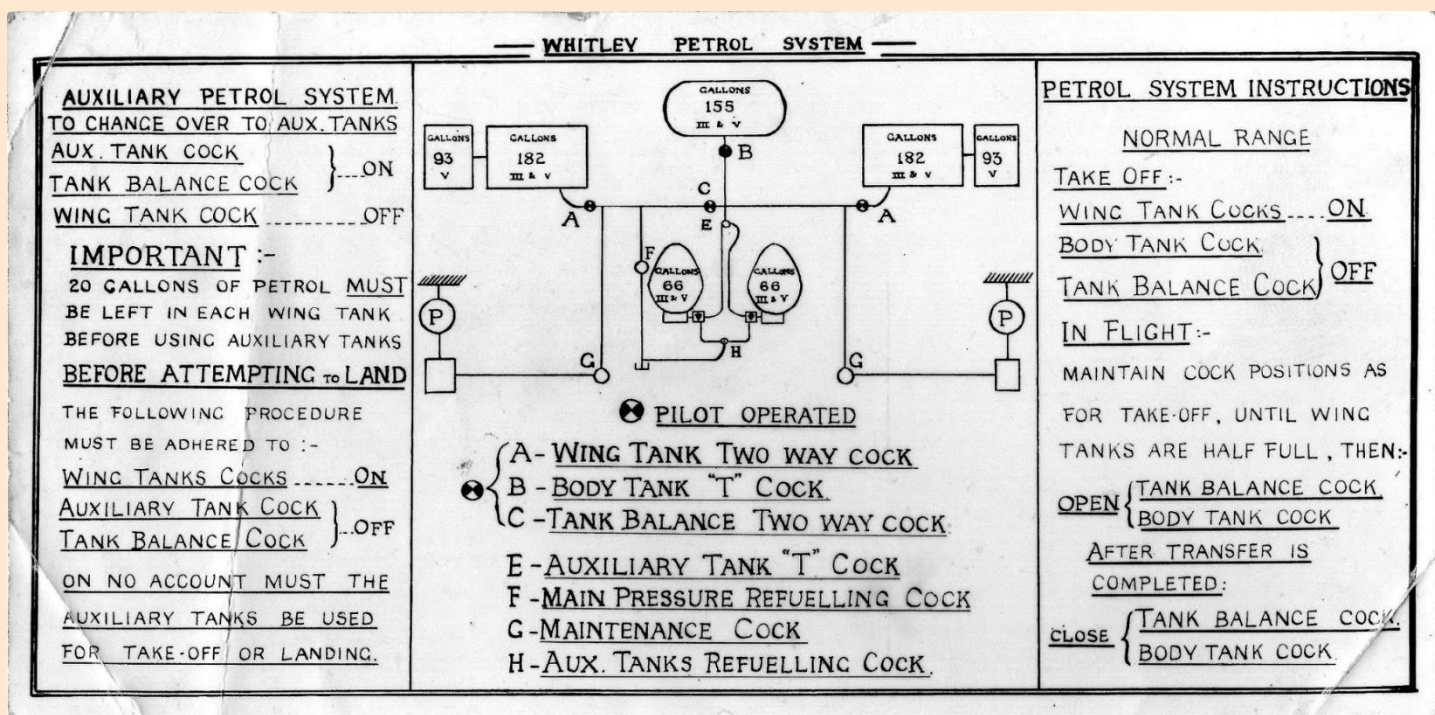
With the advent of the four-engined bombers, the Whitley bowed out of front line operations in April 1942. However, it continued to serve with training units, Coastal Command, and as a glider tug.

CAPTIONS PROVIDED UNDER PHOTOS WHERE AVAILABLE



WHITLEY FACTORY





REAR TURRET





WHITLEYS AT RINGWAY

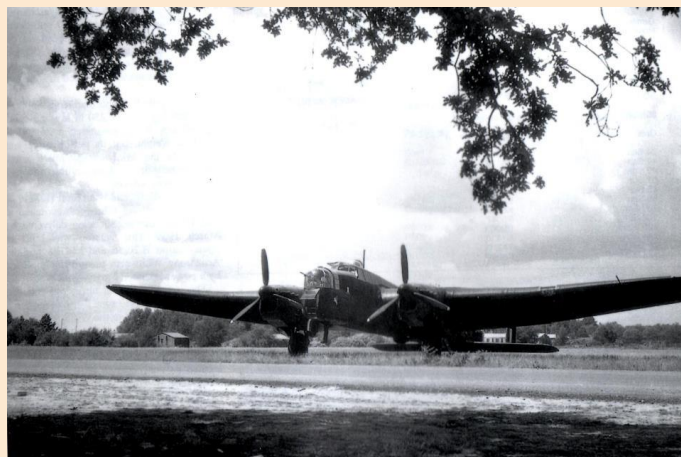


10 OTU



RAF SLEAP – ROBERTSON'S WHITLEYS





58 SQN LINTON-ON-OUSE, YORKSHIRE, JUNE 1940



1940



1940'S WHITLEY AND CREW



102 SQN DRIFFILED



78 SQN Z6743 MIDDLETON ST. GEORGE, JULY 1941



77 SQN WHITLEY KN-H



78 SQN WHITLEY Z6743 MIDDLETON ST. GEORGE



502 SQN WHITLEY INTERIOR



JUNE 1940





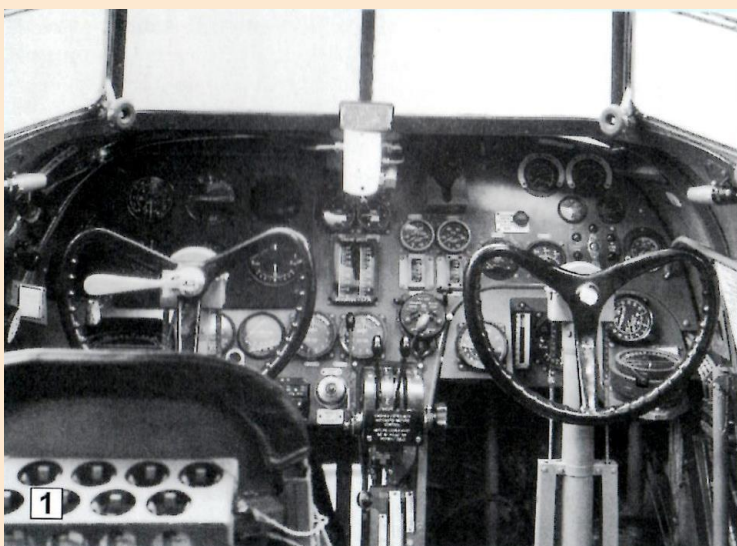
102 SQN

8 March 1940
Ground staff load propaganda leaflets into Whitley N1386/"DY-P" of RAF No 102 Squadron, 8 March 1940, in preparation for another raid over Germany. Though leaflet dropping was viewed of dubious value as a propaganda weapon, it provided useful experience of night flying over enemy territory.





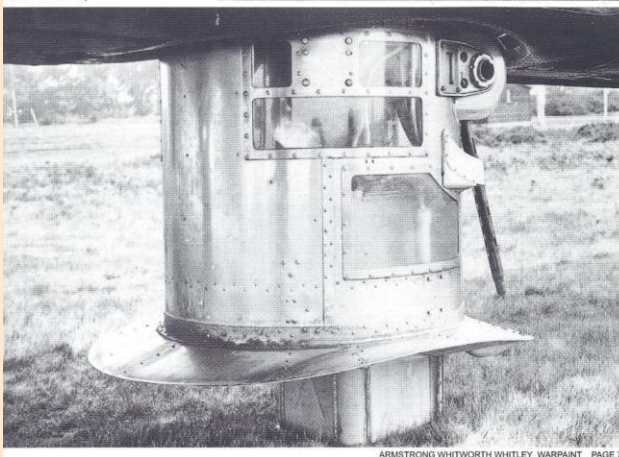
78 SQN



WHITLEY COCKPIT



Right and below: The only known pictures showing the Fraser Nash FN 17 ventral turret first fitted to the Whitley Mk.II. This had two .303 Browning machine guns with 1,000 rounds per gun. It was retracted in flight as shown. As might be supposed this large external structure caused the Whitley's top speed to drop by some five per cent and it was soon abandoned. The hole remaining was used as an exit for parachute troops when the earlier versions of the Whitley were used for this purpose. (Ray Williams archives)



ARMSTRONG WHITWORTH WHITLEY WARPINT PAGE 7

EARLY TURRET



STEWART ROBERTSON 78 SQN



STEWART ROBERTSON GOING PARACHUTING



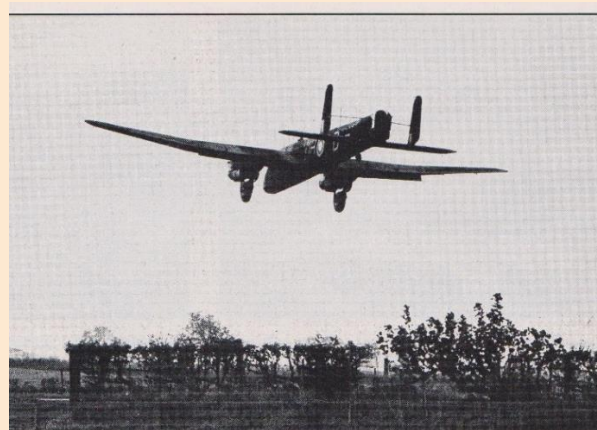
78 SQN



78 SQN



105 SQN

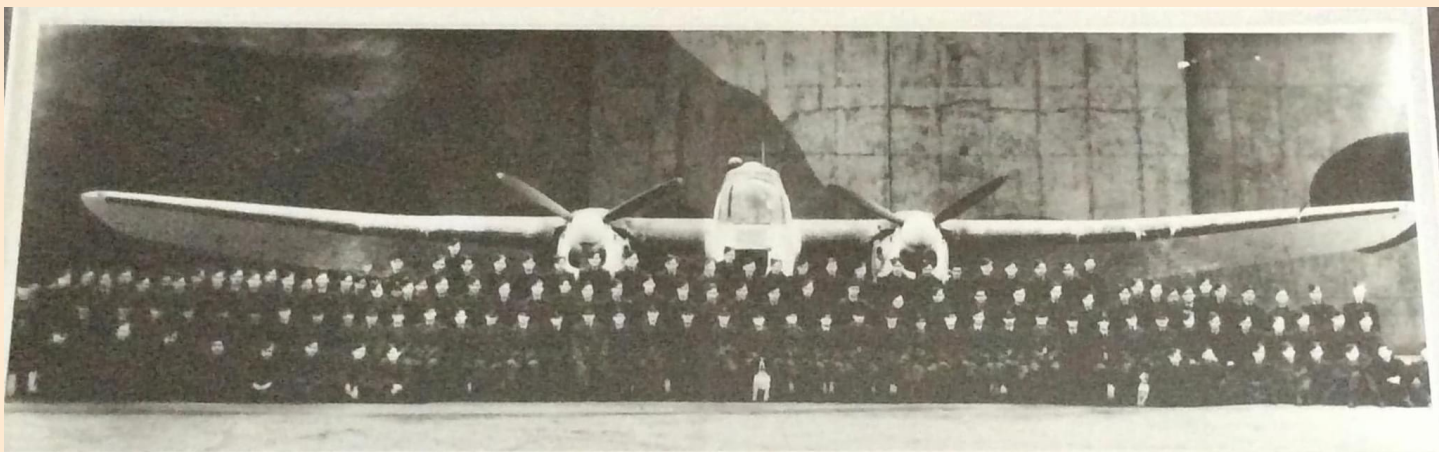


102 SQN AT DRIFFIELD



78 SQN





612 SQN



78 SQN



77 SQN



PARACHUTING





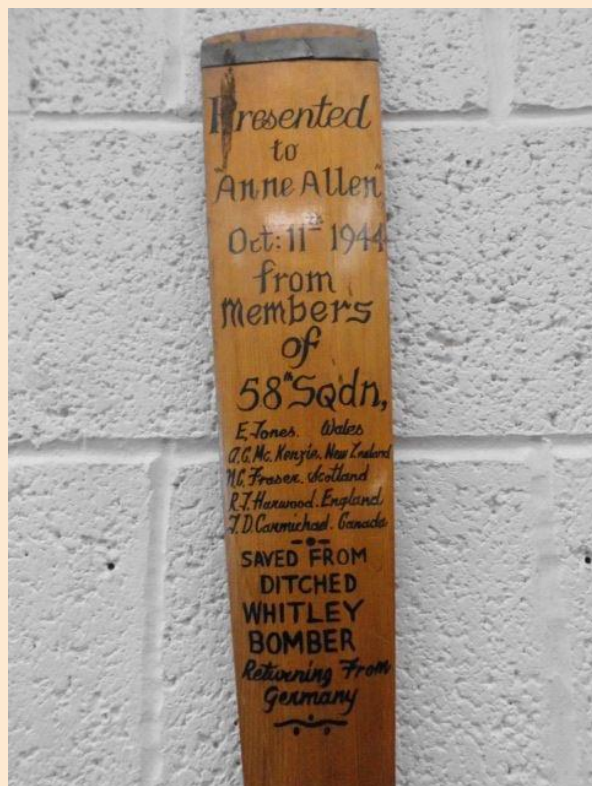
102 SQN



77 SQN



10 SQN





77 SQN

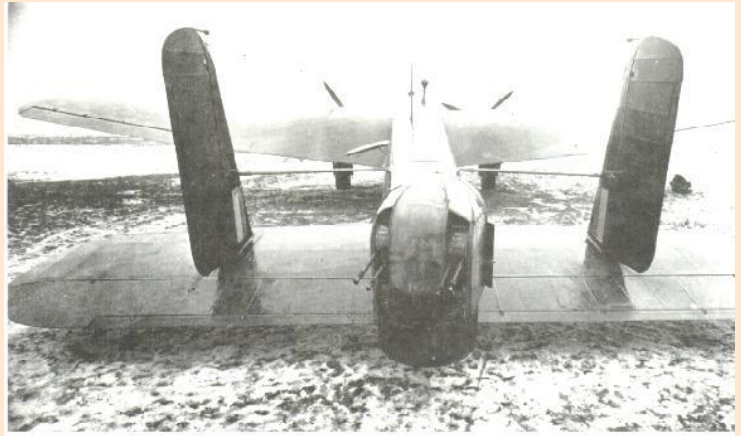


58 SQN



ARMSTRONG WHITWORTH WHITLEY

51 SQN



GERMANS RECOVERING A WHITLEY



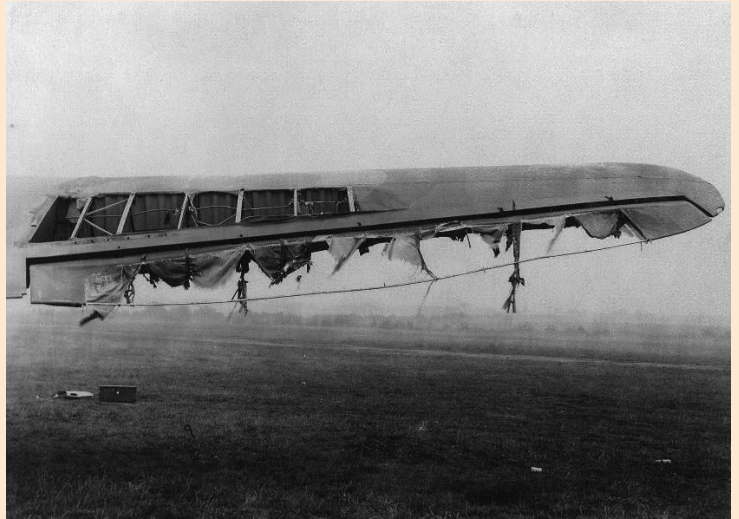
WHITLEY WITH ANSON ON TOP



51 SQN



ROBERTSON'S WHITLEY CRASH-LANDED



DAMAGE CAUSED BY ICING