

Westland Whirlwind Srs.3 (XG588/VR-BEP)



Originally designed in the late 1940's, the Sikorsky S-55 was the first helicopter to achieve significant results as a combat/rescue transport. The S-55 was produced by Sikorsky in America and Westland in Great Britain. Known as the Whirlwind in the UK and the Chickasaw in the US, the original S-55 helicopter could handle up to 10 passengers/troops or 2,260kg (5,000 lbs) of freight.

Both Sikorsky and Westland produced civilian versions of the S-55 which were adopted by commuter airlines, offshore oil companies, crop sprayers, survey operations, and logging contractors.

The Whirlwind entered RAF service in 1954, being deployed to Seletar and Kuala Lumpur in the jungle rescue and transport role. The Mk2 became operational with No 22 squadron, Coastal Command, based at Thorney Island.

The series Mk2 Whirlwind was the pioneer rotary wing, anti submarine warfare (ASW) helicopter in British service. This Whirlwind was produced in two variants: the 'Hunter', equipped with a dipping sonar and the 'Killer' which could carry a lightweight homing torpedo.

The final variant, the Mk10 entered service with No.225 Squadron at RAF Odiham in November 1961. The bright yellow search and rescue paint scheme became a familiar sight around British coastal waters and in mountainous regions saving numerous lives, the aircraft and crews often flying missions in treacherous weather conditions.



Specifications

Dimensions:

Length: 13.50m (44ft. 2in.)

Main Rotor diameter: 16.15m (53ft.)

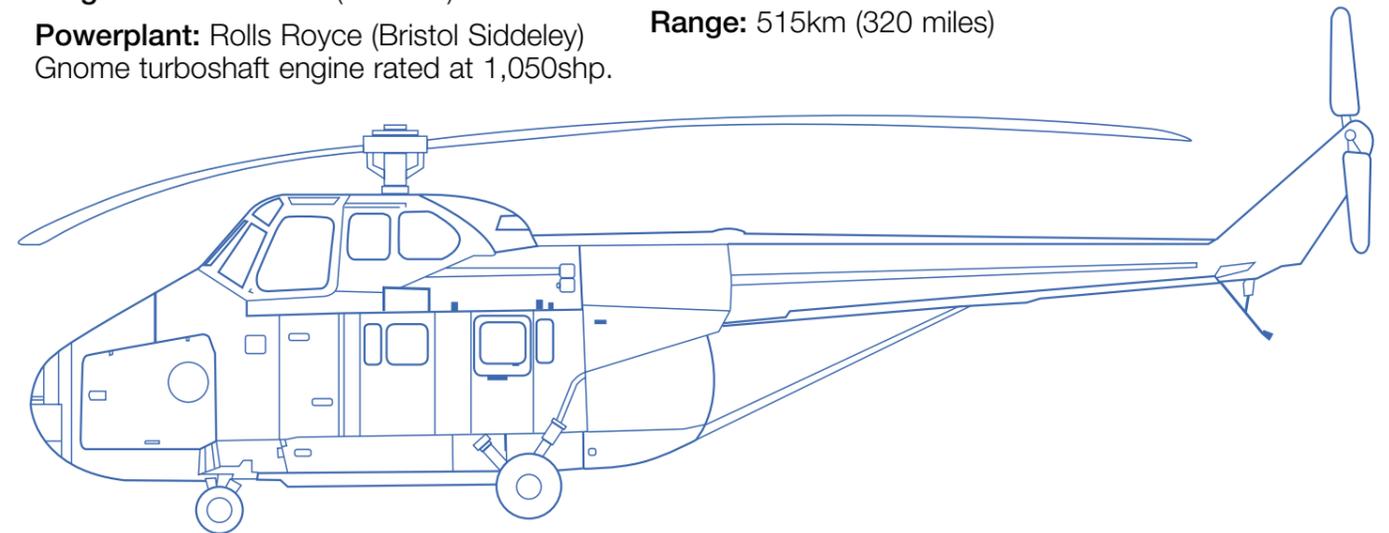
Height overall: 4.76m (15ft.7in.)

Powerplant: Rolls Royce (Bristol Siddeley) Gnome turboshaft engine rated at 1,050shp.

Maximum Speed: 99 mph (level speed)
85 mph (cruising speed)

Service Ceiling: 2621m (8,600ft)

Range: 515km (320 miles)



The Aeropark Whirlwind

The Aeropark Whirlwind first flew on 30th September 1955 as a piston engine powered aircraft. XG588 was operated by the Royal Navy, attached to HMS Albion. During 1957 the aircraft was seconded to HMS Warrior for the Christmas Island Hydrogen Bomb tests and during the tests, code named 'Operation Grapple' the aircraft flew as a plane guard and in the transport role.

On return the Whirlwind was overhauled at RNAS Donibristle before joining 701 Squadron at Lee on Solent. Following this the aircraft took part in the unusual trials with the Amphibious Warfare Unit lifting a 2CV pickup vehicle. After a long a varied military career the helicopter was sold to the civilian operator Bristows, converted to RR Gnome power and registered G-BAMH.

After aerial exploration and survey work in Nigeria and the Middle East the aircraft operated in Bermuda under the registration of VH-BEP. On its return to the UK the helicopter was used as an instructional airframe at Warden Park College, Cuckfield, Essex, finally arriving at the Aeropark on the 13th May 1986. It has been repainted to represent a Royal Air Force Air Sea Rescue version.

