

Whitleys on the Stockholm run

B.O.A.C.'s wartime route between Leuchars and Stockholm played an important role in linking Britain with neutral Sweden for exchanging diplomatic mail, passengers as well as carrying vital war materials like ball bearings and even propaganda material. When B.O.A.C. first conducted wartime flights between the UK and Sweden, they were operating a fleet of Lockheed 14s, Hudsons and Lodestars. During the summer of 1942, the service frequency was low due to a number of factors. Diplomatic mail was piling up at both sides of the North Sea while the supply of ball bearings to Britain slowed to a trickle. This could not go on for much longer, so an alternative had to be found.

Fifteen Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Mk.V bombers had previously been converted to civilian freighters by Armstrong Whitworth. The aircraft had their gun turrets removed and faired over, and the bomb bay was altered to carry auxiliary fuel tanks, which increased the range to 2500 miles. These aircraft had been used on routes to Malta and West Africa without great success. However, beggars can't be choosers, and four of these Whitley aircraft; G-AGEB, G-AGEC, G-AGCG and G-AGCK, were transferred to the Stockholm route.

The performance of the ageing Whitley was rather poor. They were slow, did not possess the minimum altitude performance necessary to fly over the weather and were not able to out-climb the German anti-aircraft guns in the Skagerrak. In addition to its vulnerability, the aircraft also suffered frequent engine trouble, which meant the crews often had to return after take-off with a dead engine. Not surprisingly, the aircraft were unpopular with the crews and the Whitleys were more of a liability than an asset. They were withdrawn from service after only two months and returned to the RAF. Between 10 August and 21 October they flew 24 flights to Stockholm, although they suffered no losses. By now, larger numbers of Lockheed aircraft were back in service, and in December 1942, B.O.A.C. took delivery of their first Mosquito.

The Whitleys were painted in the standard Civil Land Scheme of Dark Green and Dark Earth upper surfaces with Aluminium lower surfaces. Registration letters on the fuselage and wing upper surfaces were Night (black). The letters for the fuselage and wing upper surfaces had a thin Aluminium outline. The wing undersides, fuselage and fins had Red, White and Blue identification stripes, while the wing upper sides had the stripes in Red and Blue only. BRITISH AIRWAYS titles and the Speedbird logo were painted on the nose in Night with an Aluminium outline.

Modelling notes

Frog released a 1/72 kit of the Whitley Mk.V in the late 1960s and the kit has been reissued several times by Novo. It should still be available on the second-hand market, but with the release of a newly tooled kit from Fly, the old Frog/Novo kit is likely to appeal more to the collectors. These decals are intended to fit both kits without modifications.

The artwork for these decals has benefitted from extensive research in the National Archives and the British Airways Heritage Collection, as part of research for a forthcoming book on the Stockholm run. Registration letters for any of the four aircraft used on the route are included. Decals for B.O.A.C.'s Mosquito aircraft are also available from Vingtor Decals in both 1/72 and 1/48 scale.

Decal application

The decals have a very thin carrier film and need to be handled with care. Individual decals should be cut out and soaked for a few seconds in lukewarm water. Slide the decal from the paper over to the model's surface without wrinkling. Avoid moving the decal excessively to avoid tearing the film and washing off the adhesive. The carrier film might at first seem rigid and difficult to lay down over complex surfaces, but using decal solutions like Micro Set and Micro Sol will make them snuggle down over detail and make them look painted on when completely dry. For best results, decals should always be applied to a gloss surface.

It is recommended to first apply the identification stripes to the wings and fuselage and let these dry completely before applying the registration letters. The stripes will help you in aligning the letters.

Thanks

Thanks to Jens Håkon Brandal for help with the instructions.

Decals for Norwegian military aircraft
are available from

Vingtor
DECALS

www.vingtor.net

Decals for Norwegian airliners,
are available from

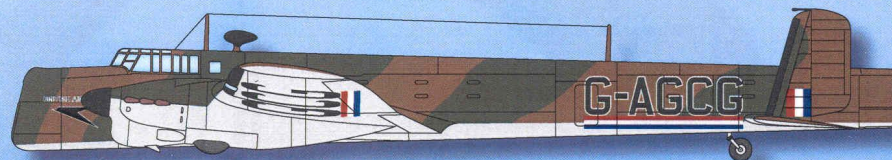
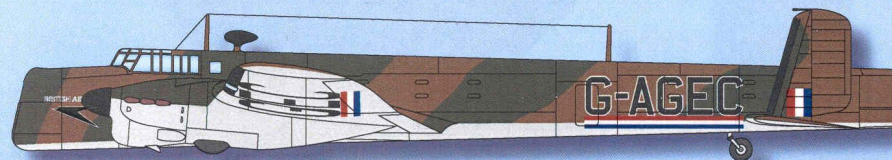
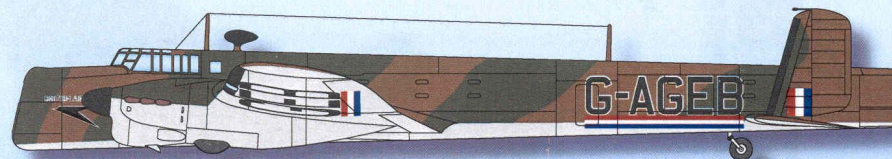
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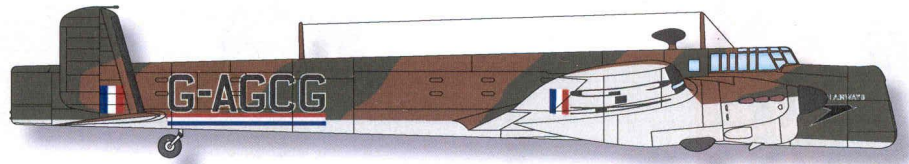
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Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Mk.V British Overseas Airways Corporation



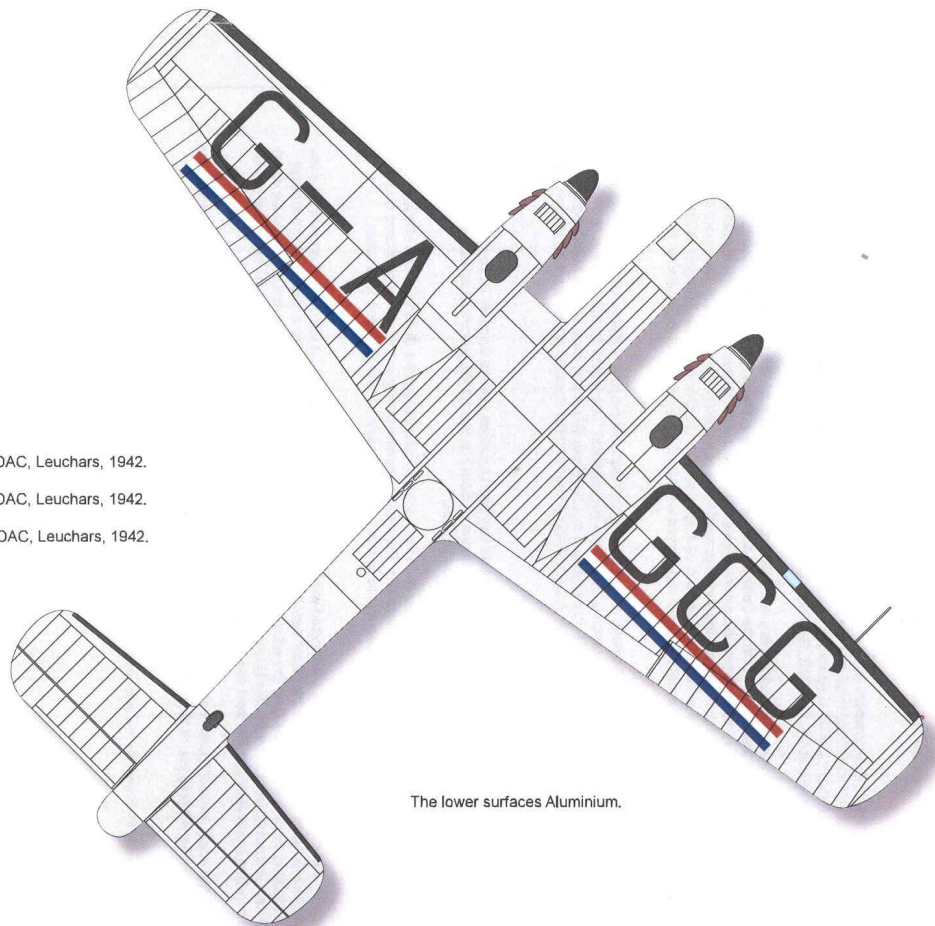
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Typical starboard side camouflage pattern.



Upper surface camouflage pattern. The colours are Dark Green and Dark Earth.



The lower surfaces Aluminium.

Front page:
 Armstrong Withworth Whitley Mk.V, G-AGEB, BOAC, Leuchars, 1942.
 Armstrong Withworth Whitley Mk.V, G-AGEC, BOAC, Leuchars, 1942.
 Armstrong Withworth Whitley Mk.V, G-AGCG, BOAC, Leuchars, 1942.