

A brief history of Spitfire P7350 (Mk IIa)



P7350 is the oldest airworthy Spitfire in the world and the only Spitfire still flying today to have actually fought in the Battle of Britain. She is believed to be the 14th aircraft of 11,989 built at the Castle Bromwich 'shadow' factory, Birmingham. Entering service in the August of 1940, she flew in the Battle of Britain serving with 266 Squadron and 603 (City of Edinburgh) AuxAF Squadron. Whilst serving with the latter at Hornchurch, on or about 25 October 1940, she was involved in a combat with ME Bf 109s and forced to crash land. She was quickly repaired at No 1 Civilian Repair Unit, Cowley, and flew again on 15 November, only 3 weeks after the crash landing; repaired bullet holes can still be seen on her port wing. She subsequently served operationally with 616 and 64 Squadrons. After April 1942 she was relegated to support duties serving with the Central Gunnery School and 57 OTU and ending her operational career with 19 MU. During the War, 'P7' suffered three 'Cat B' flying accidents (at Tangmere, Hornchurch and Sutton Bridge).

Having survived the War, 'P7' was then sold for scrap to Messrs. John Dale Ltd in 1948 for the princely sum of £25; fortunately the historical significance of the aircraft was recognised and she was generously presented to the RAF museum at Colerne. Restored to flying condition in 1968 for the epic film 'The Battle of Britain', she was presented to the BBMF after filming was completed.

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Since 1999 P7350 has worn the colours of 603 Sqn, the Squadron she served in during the Battle of Britain, initially representing XT-D, the aircraft of Squadron Leader George Denholm DFC, the Squadron Commander, then briefly XT-W for a photoshoot, the colours she was wearing when forced down in 1940. Now, she wears the letters XT-L, representing the aircraft of Gerald 'Stapme' Stapleton, our most frequent veteran visitor who served on 603 Sqn all the way through the Battle of Britain.

A brief history of Hurricane R4118



Hawker Hurricane Mark I, R4118, was delivered new to 605 (County of Warwick) Squadron at Drem on 17 August 1940. During the Battle of Britain it flew 49 sorties from Croydon and shot down five enemy aircraft. After being battle damaged on 22 October 1940, the aircraft was rebuilt and taken on charge by 111 Squadron at Dyce on 18 January 1941. There it was flown on patrol over the North Sea and was again in combat. Over the following two years it was used primarily as a training aircraft with 59 and 56 OTUs, and was rebuilt a further three times following major accidents, including hitting a lorry on the runway and being stuffed into a snow bank!

In December 1943, R4118 was crated at Cardiff and shipped to India as a training aircraft. However it was never needed and remained in its packing case in Bombay until 1947 when it was struck off charge. It was donated to a university for

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engineering instruction. The fuselage was stood outside in a compound with the propeller, wings and tailplane laid on the ground. There it remained until June 2001

when Peter Vacher was able to conclude six-year-long negotiations and R4118 was loaded into a container. The aircraft has now been restored to flying condition.

During its lifetime, it was fitted with no fewer than five Rolls-Royce Merlin III engines, and underwent four major rebuilds. It is still powered by a Merlin III (the only other aircraft in the world to retain a Merlin III is the Sea Hurricane at Shuttleworth). It is said to be the most historic fighter aircraft to have survived the war.

Meticulous restoration was undertaken by Hawker Restorations Ltd in Suffolk. This included fitting every piece of equipment which was in the aircraft during the Battle, such as the first of the VHF radios (the TR1133), the Identification Friend or Foe unit, the original 8 Browning machine guns, and the camera gun in the starboard wing.

Pete Kynsey from the Fighter Collection flew its first test flight on 23 December 2004, since when it has been displayed at airshows throughout the U.K.

The full story is told in 'Hurricane R4118', by Peter Vacher, published by Grub Street Publishing @£20. Obtainable from the publishers 020 7924 3966, bookshops or Amazon.

A brief history of the Messerschmitt 109

(Hispano HA-1112 MIL (Buchon) G-BWUE)



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The Buchon is essentially a Rolls-Royce Merlin-engined Messerschmitt Bf109. The Luftwaffe-manned Condor Legion left around 40 Bf109B/E's for the Spanish Air

Force to use upon its return to Germany in 1939. In 1943 the Spanish government agreed a licence production with Messerschmitt to produce 200 Bf109Gs. A total of 25 dismantled airframes were sent to Spain in 1943 as pattern aircraft for future production, although engines, propellers, tailplanes and armament failed to arrive. As the war worsened, Germany was unable to supply the remaining components for the airframes, the technical drawings or appropriate jigs. By late 1944, when neither missing parts nor engine were available from Germany, Hispano Aviacion modified the airframes and tried two different engines, the second French built engine being the more successful. Improving relations between the Spanish government and the West from 1952 onwards, saw a more powerful engine sourced from Britain, the two-speed Rolls Royce Merlin 500-45. The combination of ex-German airframe and British power plant was successful and the first prototype flew its maiden flight on 30 December 1954. This particular aircraft was given the construction number 223 when built by Hispano Aviacion in Seville in 1959. Its service history has yet to come to light but unit code 7-54 stamped into a panel on the wing indicates that the Buchon served with *Ala 7* at Tablada and El Corpero, although it remains uncertain whether the aircraft saw combat in the Spanish Sahara.

This aircraft was one of 27 purchased at auction from the Spanish Air Force by Spitfire Productions for use in the making of the 1968 film "Battle of Britain". Wing tips were squared off, tail struts added and dummy machine guns fitted to the wings to more visually represent the Messerschmitt BF109E of the Battle of Britain period. Filming started in Spain, but later the 17 airworthy aircraft were flown via France to Duxford, UK. Throughout the summer of 1968, the 17 Buchons, 2 Heinkel Bombers and 9 Spitfires engaged in mock dogfights above East Anglia and The Wash. Upon completion of filming, the aircraft were returned to their owners or in the case of the Buchons put up for disposal.

By now registered as G-AWHK, this particular Buchon was one of eleven taken by Texan pilot and aircraft collector Wilson C "Connie" Edwards as payment for flying services during the filming. It was shipped to his ranch in Texas where it flew briefly as N9938 before being placed on static display in 1971 with the Confederate Air Force in Detroit. Acquired by the Old Flying Machine Company, it arrived at Duxford in May 1996, re-registered as G-BWUE and sold on to The Real Aircraft Company at Brighton in Yorkshire, who initiated a full rebuild to airworthy condition. The aircraft is marked up as Hauptmann Werner Schroer's Bf 109G-2/trop 'Red 1', which he flew whilst serving on the Greek island of Rhodes in early 1943.

Owners, Spitfire Ltd., purchased the aircraft in November 2006. G-BWUE now resides at Duxford once more, where it will be maintained by the Aircraft Restoration Company, for its future appearances at airshows.

The Pilots

Flying the Spitfire...

SQUADRON LEADER IAN SMITH

Squadron Leader Ian Smith joined the RAF in 1983 and has been flying ever since, now with over 5,000 hours. His first posting was to Chinook helicopters in Germany with tours in Northern Ireland and the Falkland Islands . Following an instructional tour at Linton-on-Ouse he was posted to 41(F) Squadron flying Jaguars at RAF Coltishall and took part in operations over Iraq and Bosnia . A tour with the Red Arrows was followed by a year in Saudi Arabia as Team Manager for the then embryonic Saudi Hawks Aerobatic Team. Having seen the Jaguar out of Service at RAF Coningsby he was posted in 2007 to command No 1 EFTS at RAF Cranwell flying the Tutor. This is his third season with the BBMF.

Flying the Hurricane...

SQUADRON LEADER A C PINNER MBE BSC RAF OFFICER COMMANDING - BATTLE OF BRITAIN MEMORIAL FLIGHT

Squadron Leader Al Pinner, the son of Ken, an RAF pilot, was born on 1 Jun 1965 in Chatham, Kent. He was educated as a boarder at Stamford School from 1973 to 1983, establishing a long-standing link with Lincolnshire, before going up to Kings College, London to read Physics and Electronics. Al joined the RAF on 28 Aug 1983 as a University Cadet and on completion of his degree he went to Initial Officer Training in Sep 1983.

After flying training at Cranwell and Valley, and the Tactical Weapons Unit at Brawdy, Al was posted to be the first ab initio pilot on No 1 Harrier GR5 course at Wittering. Following the course he was posted to No 1(F) Sqn at RAF Wittering. At the end of the tour Al was selected for the Qualified Weapons Instructor course before posting to No IV(AC) Sqn at RAF Laarbruch. During his tour at Laarbruch he was lucky enough to fly on the first RAF Harrier II operational missions over both Iraq and Bosnia, both times on the wing of a Jaguar while the Forces rotated.

Subsequent tours on exchange to Canada on the CF18, during which he was promoted in 1998, and a tour as a Flt Cdr on IV (AC) Sqn at Cottesmore followed, during which time Al's tally of operational sorties surpassed 100, encompassing the roles of Reconnaissance, Close Air Support, Air Interdiction and Air Defence. Following this tour he was posted to No 20(R) Sqn again at RAF Wittering as a staff QWI, and subsequently was trained to become an A2 QFI on the Harrier. In 2003 Al switched

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to the Professional Aviator
Spine to allow him to continue flying. He has around 4100 flying hours, of which
over 3400 have been on single seat fighters. Al became OC BBMF in Jan 2006 after
3 seasons as a volunteer fighter pilot.

Al is married to Lis and lives near Stamford. He has 2 children, Angus and Lucy and
a Black Lab. His interests include Dinghy sailing, playing squash and golf and
watching rugby.

Flying the Messerschmitt 109...

AIR MARSHAL C R SPINK CB CBE FCMI FRAeS RAF (Rtd)

Air Marshal Spink joined the RAF in 1963 as an Aircraft Apprentice and joined No
104 Entry at Halton. He was awarded a Cadetship at the end of his apprenticeship and
went to the RAF College Cranwell to train as a pilot. He graduated with his wings in
1968 and was selected for duties in fighter aircraft. Following advanced flying on
Gnat and Hunter aircraft he was assigned to the Lightning and after conversion
training at RAF Coltishall he was posted to No 111(Fighter) Squadron at Royal Air
Force Wattisham.

In 1973, following the Lightning Weapons Instructor Course, he was briefly re-
toured on Treble One Squadron before joining No 56 (Fighter) Squadron at Royal Air
Force Akrotiri in Cyprus. As the resident air defence squadron on the island, No 56
Squadron was heavily involved in the 1974 conflict. In January 1975, he returned
with No 56 Squadron to Royal Air Force Wattisham.

In July 1976, he was posted on promotion to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
and, following short courses at the School of Infantry Warminster, he took up duties
as an instructor on the Standard Military Course. In 1979 he returned to front line
flying and, after converting to the Phantom, he joined No 111(Fighter) Squadron at
Royal Air Force Leuchars as a Flight Commander. In April 1982 he joined the last
course at the National Defence College Latimer, from where he was posted to staff
duties at the Headquarters Royal Air Force Germany. Promoted shortly after his
arrival, he then completed 3 years as Wing Commander Air Defence, responsible for
air defence matters in West Germany, the Inner German Border and the Berlin Air
Corridors.

In November 1986, he took command of No 74(Fighter) Squadron at Royal Air Force
Wattisham which was equipped with the Phantom F4J. In January 1989 he was
promoted to Group Captain but remained with the 'Tigers' until handing over
command in April 1989. He assumed command of Royal Air Force Mount Pleasant in
June 1989 and served for 12 months as the Station Commander and Deputy
Commander British Forces Falkland Islands. Following conversion to the Tornado F3

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he took command of Royal Air Force Coningsby in November 1990. Almost immediately he went to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, as Detachment Commander of the Tornado Recce, Fighter Bomber and Air Defence aircraft for the duration of the 1991 Gulf Conflict.

In 1989 he was appointed to the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire as an Officer, and in the 1992 New Years Honours List, was appointed as a Commander. Promoted to Air Commodore in January 1993, he joined the Royal

College of Defence Studies, and shortly afterwards was appointed as Senior Air Staff Officer at Headquarters No 11 Group, Bentley Priory. In April 1996, following a period as the Chief of Staff No 18 Group, he was promoted to Air Vice-Marshal and appointed the first Air Officer Commanding No 11/18 Group which was formed at Bentley Priory on that date. He took up the post of Director General Saudi Armed Forces Project on the 29 July 1998 and was promoted to Air Marshal in June 2000. Air Marshal Spink was made a Companion of the Bath in 2002 and he retired from the Royal Air Force in June 2003 after more than 40 years in RAF uniform. In all he has flown over 6500 flying hours, the majority of which have been on fighter aircraft but he is an experienced pilot in all aspects of Sport, Vintage and General Aviation.

Since retiring he formed his own Company dealing in a range of Aviation interests. He has a Display Authorisation for Jet and Piston aircraft and is a Display Authorisation Evaluator for the Civil Aviation Authority. He is Managing Director of Spitfire Limited which operates a small fleet of vintage aircraft, Chairman of Lydd Airport, Director and Board Member of Contingency Planning Associates Ltd a London based international security consultancy, and is a partner and joint owner of a Swiss watch and luxury goods branding company. He is a regular guest lecturer to University Courses in aviation safety and has acted as Aviation Expert in legal cases. He is President of the Historic Aircraft Association, the Royal Observer Corps Association and recently became President of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Association. He is a Liveryman and Warden to the Court of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators of the City of London.

Air Marshal Spink retains a reserve commission in the Royal Air Force and continues to fly both piston and jet vintage aircraft as his major hobby but in quieter moments enjoys looking after house and garden. He is married to Caroline, a microbiologist, and they have 2 children, Laura 29 and Robert 26.