



THE RATCLIFFE SPITFIRE P9503

Supported by The Leonard Stillwell Bursary and The Spitfire Society

September 2015
Dominic JH Berry

10

Well I guess reaching our first double figures is a special event of sorts; welcome to Bulletin 10!

www.ratcliffespitfire.com

September 15th, Battle of Britain Day, saw the launch of our brand new website. Built over the summer break, with the usual last-minute rush to get as many loose ends tied up as possible, we launched it to Old Ratcliffians, parents, friends, and



everyone on the readership mailing list of these bulletins. I'm pleased to say that initial traffic to the site has been very good, and I hope that people will continue to come back to it every so

often. We also hope that more and more will sign up for the up-dates, as this will then automatically 'ping' them an email when new 'stuff' is added.

A few recent purchases

This project, as is well known, survives on the financial generosity of those prepared to support it in that manner. It is one of my primary functions, to source those funds as and when needed...or sometimes desired! Recently some items have become available, and I am very pleased that we were able to purchase them. The first was a very nice reproduction aluminium pilot's seat. This is the correct type for a Mk1a

Spitfire, although strictly speaking not the exact type fitted to P9503 on the day of her demise. (We have a pile of fragments from her original seat, which was of the compressed paper and resin variety). We also managed to get a pair of undercarriage pintles which do not appear on the market that often, and are the structural components which join the undercarriage legs to the wing spars. The second purchase, and this really is rather special, is the complete set of plastic glazing for our Spit. This comprises, the front Perspex wrap-around screen, (for those interested enough, later marks had different front screens made of more than one part), the



main canopy with correct flat-sides and pilot's knockout panel, and the rear canopy, essentially a glorified hoop of Perspex fixed between frames 11 and 12. The optical clarity of the workmanship that has gone in to making the glazing is stunning, and they really are a thing to behold. The company who produce them make the canopies for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight aircraft, as well as racing car screens among other

things. A massive thank you must go to The Spitfire Society who gave us the funds for this expensive purchase. Looking after the screens is a priority as they will not be fitted to the aircraft until she is almost complete. Making the framework for them will be a delicate job...one slip with a drill, knife or anything else...and it will be an expensive remedy!

Replica P9503

We have made a very good start to the term, with an extremely enthusiastic bunch of new recruits joining us from Year 7...and two from the Sixth Form. Mr Rogers, our new D&T teacher is also helping out, and that has taken some of the pressure off me, being essentially a one-man-band for a few years now. Having recently taken stock of what frames have been cut, we are very close to having all frames done, both for

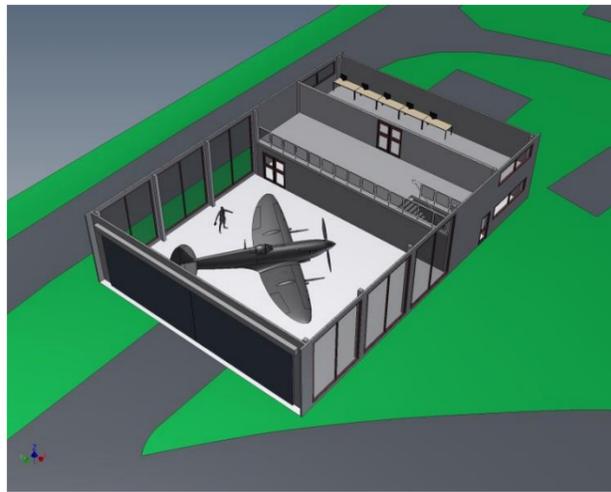




P9503 and for the simulator cockpit section. After we achieve that goal, we will continue with the excellent work we have already begun on the wing spars, and then we really will be fast approaching a point where very little else can be done. Until we can begin final assembly, in our hangar, the progress of the project will dramatically slow down.

The Ratcliffe Spitfire Education Centre

This build, which will house a unique Spitfire, the only full-sized replica anywhere in the world to be built by children and to have amongst its parts, original pieces from the actual aircraft it represents, is fundamental to the progress of this project. Please take a little time to look at our website, and the links that will take you to our justgiving page, and consider a donation to help push this fundraising along. Any donation, no matter how small will get us that little bit closer to achieving this momentous goal; and you will have been part of that.



Mary Wilkins-Ellis – ATA Ratcliffe Pilot

As time has gone on, the names of the women, and men, who flew with the Air Transport Auxiliary have become as well-known as those of the pilots who flew the same aircraft in anger. Many years ago, as a boy of about 12, I had the honour of meeting Lettice Curtis, who, at the time, lived in our village in Berkshire. I remember sitting in her house with my father, having afternoon tea with her and listening to her stories. Our connection here with the ATA has been well documented in previous bulletins, and it has always been my hope that



someday, perhaps one or two original members of the ATA might make it up to Ratcliffe to see our project, and visit the airfield. I have strong family links on the Isle of Wight, and have known for some time that Mary Ellis is quite active down there, so it was lovely to hear through a mutual friend just recently that she was happy for me to have her telephone number and to speak to her about our project. It was fascinating to hear that her first posting was to No.6 Ferry Pool, Ratcliffe no less. Moving away to other locations during the war, she returned later on to continue delivering aircraft from Ratcliffe. I hope to make it down to the island soon to be able to meet her in person, and add to our knowledge of what Ratcliffe was like back then.



Simulator Cockpit

As mentioned above, we are making pretty fast progress in cutting the frames out for our second cockpit section. Unfortunately, despite not having wings, nose or rear fuselage and tail sections, it will still be too large to make in the Art Department as when built it will not fit through any of the doors, so it too will have to wait until it can be assembled in our hangar. But, we have had sponsorship from Chillblast gaming computers, and they have built us a custom-made machine to run our software at cost price. By the time of publication of this bulletin it should have been delivered, and we can at least start to get used to flying a Spitfire; exciting times for all of the many children (ok, and adults) involved in the project. We will be using old screens initially, but hope to somehow get three good ones at some stage, (the specs of the system will easily take a three-screen set-up).



Unfortunately, the contacts I had made before the summer break, who said they would be able to provide us with actual flight sim instruments have gone cold, so back to the drawing board for that one.

