

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE F.24 PK724/7288M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NO.74/A/22

- 20 Jun 43 800 Spitfire LF.IX ordered - contract No.B981687/39. Contract altered several times, and only 571 of the order delivered, including 27 re-ordered as F.22s but delivered as F.24s, including PK712-726. PK724 was assembled at Supermarines, South Marston works with a Griffin 61 Engine, the components being built at Castle Bromwich. A total of 70 F.24s were built. The Spitfire 24 served with only one regular RAF squadron, No.80 in Hong Kong.
- Jan 46 Under construction at Castle Bromwich - photo D.C.O (Spitfire Society) Spring 1998 pp.18-19.This was one of 54 incomplete Spitfire Mk.22 airframes removed from the factory that month and taken to South Marston where they were completed as Mk.24s.
- 27 Feb 46 Piloted by Lt Wigley PK724 made a twenty-minute test flight from South Marston. (Total airframe hours for this aircraft only 7 hours of flying).
- 21 Oct 46 Made three test flights - one 15 minute, two 20 minutes at South Marston flown by Flt Lt Colquhoun.
- 30 Oct 46 To 33 MU Lyneham, for storage, flown by Flt Lt Watts.
- 05 Apr 49 To Westland Aircraft Ltd for modifications, to update the airframe, flown by Sqn Ldr D A S Colvin.
- 14 Apr 49 Transferred to another location, possibly in Scotland, for further work. (Possibly either Scottish Aviation Ltd at Prestwick or 45 MU RAF Kinloss)
- 31 Jan 50 Work completed.
- 02 Feb 50 Awaiting collection.
- 09 Feb 50 To 9 MU Cosford for storage.
- 14 Dec 54 Declared non-effective airframe (Most other Spitfire 24s struck-off-charge and scrapped 1956),
- 27 Oct 55 Allocated maintenance serial 7288M.

- 04 Nov 55 To RAF Norton, Sheffield for instructional use. Norton was part of No.90 Signals Group. Photo: Spitfire - A Look Back over the Gate (Coulson). By 1957 at least the original serial was retained on the aircraft, which was silver overall.
- Mar 61 To 71 MU Bicester for repaint and overhaul. Given camouflage colour scheme.
- 01 Dec 61 To RAF Gaydon, Warwickshire, for use at Gate Guardian aircraft. Wrecks and Relics (1961) notes PK724 and fellow Norton Spitfire LF16 TB308, as being for sale at this time, prior to the move to Gaydon. Photo at Gaydon - Flight International 11 Oct 1962 p.618.
- 18 Sep 65 Exhibited at RAF Cottesmore Battle of Britain Day.
- Sep 66 Displayed at RAF Gaydon's own BoB Day display - Photos: Air Britain Digest Nov 66; Airfix Magazine Dec 66 p.142.
- 06 Mar 67 To RAF Henlow for possible use in connection with the 'Battle of Britain' film - one of many Spitfires collected for the film. Survey found the airframe and engine to be well preserved and a rebuild to flying condition was considered - it was described as 'A credit to its base at Gaydon' (Control Column July 1967). Some parts taken from Spitfire F21 LA198, at that time with Worcester ATC, to aid restoration and others from F21 LA226, (Little Rissington). Parts taken also from PRXIX PM651, (RAF Benson).
- However, 'This aircraft, although out in the open for some time, has only 7 hours flying time. It apparently started with very little effort but, unfortunately, the radio people burnt out the electrical harness whilst installing a radio, and it now looks as though this aircraft will not participate in the film after all'. (Control Column Sep 1968). This was indeed the case. Photo at Henlow Sep 67 - Warbirds Worldwide No.5 p.9.
- An RAF working party overhauled the engine in situ at Henlow and the aircraft was re-wired. When ground run, the engine had barely 20 hours running since new in 1946. Work on the aircraft had ceased by 1 May 68 (File report).
- 13 Aug 68 Returned to RAF Gaydon in time to be displayed at the following months Battle of Britain display at the base. Transported by 71 MU Bicester.
- Sep 69 '724 was hangar bound, having been mounted in flying altitude on a short pylon for display at Gaydon's Battle of Britain Day 'At Home' show.
- Gaydon was due to close in 1970 and PK724 had to move: 'It seems that PK724 will not, after all be flown to Finningley, as was proposed by Gaydon' (Control Column Jan 1970).
- 19 Feb 70 PK724 dismantled at Gaydon.

- 20 Feb 70 Moved to Finningley by 'Queen Mary' transporter.
- 19 Sep 70 Displayed still mounted on its pylon and plinth, in a hangar at Finningley's Battle of Britain 'At Home' day. At Finningley the aircraft was prepared for display at Hendon.
- 11 May 71 Aircraft moved to Hendon, where it has remained on display in various positions within the main aircraft hall/'Historic Hangars' ever since. Again transported by 71 MU Bicester. Displayed in factory finish since the aircraft never saw unit service. Photo on display; Spitfire Survivors round The World (021352) p.133.
- Two other Spitfire F.24s survive, both on static display: the RAFM owned PK683/7150M 'Solent Sky', formerly Hall of Aviation, Southampton, and VN485/7326M at IWM Duxford.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON