

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

ROYAL AIRCRAFT FACTORY SE5A F938/G-EBIC/9028M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 74/A/23

- 1918 Built by Wolseley Motors Ltd of Adderley Park, Birmingham as part of serial batch F851-F950 delivered from August 1918 to contract No.35A/534/C.410. A few of this batch did reach the Western Front before the November 1918 Armistice though F938 is recorded with No 84 Squadron in Germany July 1919. Delivered with 180hp Wolseley Viper 1 V-8 engine. Airframe constructor's number 687.2404.
- 26 Sep 23 Certificate of Registration No. 1036 issued to Major J.C.Savage for this aircraft, along with the former F904 and F938, now with the Shuttleworth Collection and Science Museum respectively.
- 17 Apr 24 Received Civilian CoA as G-EBIC - one of a total of 33 SE5A aircraft used by Major John Clifford 'Jack' Savage in his Savage Skywriting Co Ltd Fleet, based at Hendon from 1922 until his last SE5A, G-EBVB, was withdrawn from skywriting use in 1934. As a skywriting aircraft, G-EBIC had extended asbestos lagged exhaust stacks extending to the tail, giving out white smoke during a demonstration, and received a modified instrument panel and had the pilots' headrest removed. Photos in this condition, painted overall silver with black 'G' on fin and G-EBIC on upper wing top surface and fuselage sides; Aeroplane Monthly Jul 73, p.128 (at Manston, Kent 2 Aug 24), RAFM photo P022353 (undated) seen at Cinque Ports Flying Club, Lympne, 1924-30; Air Pictorial March 2001 p.222; Wingspan International No.27 (2005) p.30.

There is some debate about the exact identity of this airframe. Three former Savage SE5As survive, all preserved in the UK and all from the same batch of Wolseley built aircraft; the former Savage G-EBIA, constructor's number 654, now flies with the Shuttleworth Collection as F904, its presumed original serial. The other ex-Savage survivor is G-EBIB, displayed in the Science Museum, South Kensington, in full skywriting configuration. Some sources, such as the Putnam UK civil register book, suggest that G-EBIB (Science Museum) and G-EBIC (RAFM) exchanged components during their time with the Savage fleet, confusing their identities. The Putnam book quotes 'IB as constructor's number 688, serial F938, and the RAFM's aircraft as 687/F937 prior to their suggested exchange. Ellis and Green (Air Enthusiast Jan/Feb 1996 p.36-39) are sceptical about the suggested component exchange and quote 688/F938 for the Science Museum aircraft and 687/F937 for the Hendon aircraft, rather than F938 as currently worn - i.e. the identities quoted by the Putnam book being retained and not exchanged later. To confuse matters further, in 1961 the Science Museum's '1B was restored as F939; the text of the Ellis/Green article contradicts its own tabulated information given above and gives the Science Museum aircraft as 687/F937 and Hendon's as 'should hold the constructors' number 688 and serial F938'. The general assumption is that Wolseley's contractor's numbers ran in sequence with the RAF serials.

Ellis/Green also mention that the RAFM aircraft is reported to have been marked F937 in the late 1950s/1960s. Sturtivant & Page also quote c/n 688 for 'IB and 687 for 'IC.

- 30 Sep 30 CoA expired. Stored at Hendon.
- 1936/37 Acquired by R G J Nash for his International Horseless Carriage Corporation based at Brooklands, Surrey. Photo stored derigged at Hendon 1936 - Aeroplane Monthly Apr 74, p.615 ('The Savage Skywriters Article). Photos reassembled at Hendon 15th August 1936 - Aeroplane Monthly Jul 73, p.128; Aeroplane August 2002 p.77. Not restored to flying condition, unlike other Nash aircraft at this time.
- 1938 Displayed alongside a Spitfire on the RAF stand at the Royal Tournament.
- 31 Dec 38 Registration cancelled in census.
- 1939 Stored for the duration of the war; at Brooklands until June 1940, then moved elsewhere at the request of Brooklands Aviation Ltd.
- Apr 50 To No.39 MU Colerne, Wilts for restoration. At this time it retained the skywriting fuel tank, containing a 'red oxide like deposit' in place of its fuselage mounted Vickers machine gun, a piece of angle iron bolted across the top longerons just ahead of the tailplane (presumably a bracket for the extended exhausts), and a divided rudder rejoined by metal plates where the two exhaust pipes had combined at a Y junction at the stern post to give a single outlet. There were also metal plates along the cockpit side instead of the usual fabric. The fuselage was recovered and the side metal plates replaced with fabric, and the long exhaust pipes repaired by welding due to extensive corrosion. The wing fabric was in very poor condition, and since lack of time did not permit wing recovering, it had to be patched over 90 times. See letter from R F J Earley - Air Pictorial Jul 57, p.250 and Air Enthusiast 64 p.76. Given spurious serial B4563, originally allocated to a Be2E.
- 08 Jul 50 Displayed newly restored at the RAF display at Farnborough, Hants. Photos: Air Enthusiast Jan/Feb 96, p.39; Aeroplane Monthly Jul 73, p.128; Flight 20 Jul 50, p.103. Still minus headrest at this stage.
- 19-21 Jul 51 Displayed at Daily Express Fifty Years of Flying display at RAF Hendon. Photos: The Aeroplane 27 Jul 51, p.89; Flypast June 2007 p.62-63.
- Dec 53 'B4563' and 8 other Nash collection aircraft purchased by the Royal Aeronautical Society.
- 1954 Further refurbishment by Vickers-Armstrongs at Weybridge.
- 13 Jun 54 Displayed at Royal Aero Club Garden Party at London Airport (Heathrow) with other Nash collection aircraft.

- 27 Apr 56 Loaned to No. 56 (Punjab) Sqn. At Waterbeach, Cambs for presentation of Sqn standard by HRH The Duchess of Kent.
- Jul 56 At No.15 MU Wroughton stored with other Nash Collection aircraft.
- 15 Jul 56 Displayed with other Nash Collection aircraft at Vickers airfield at Wisley, Surrey for the Royal Aeronautical Society Garden Party. Photo; Air Pictorial March 2001 p.223.
- Dec 56 Stored at Weybridge by this date - Merseyside Aeronews Vol.1, No.2.
- W/C 18 Nov 57 To RAF Hendon for storage in No.106 Bellman Hangar with other Nash collection aircraft - see RAF Hendon Station ORB Nov 57 - Aircraft dismantled and partly uncovered whilst at Hendon.
- 1959 Further restoration at BEA Engineering base, Heathrow Airport; still there 1961 - retained at that time spurious B4563 serial (Air Enthusiast Jan-Feb 96, p.38). Photos - Flight 20 April 1961 p.544; Prop-Swing Spring 2006 p.31.
- Mar 63 Nash Collection passed to newly established RAF Museum on loan.
- 1963 To RAF Biggin Hill, Kent, stored alongside Air Historical Branch aircraft displayed at Sep 63 Battle of Britain Day at Biggin Hill, marked as B4563.
- Dec 64 Moved to RAFM store at RAF Henlow, Beds by No.71 MU.
- 1965 Stripped for restoration.
- 1968 Restored at Henlow by RAF Museum craftsmen. Given Vickers gun and aldis sight. It had been hoped to display the aircraft at the Abingdon Royal Review (June 1968) but restoration was not completed in time. Photos: Air Enthusiast Jan/Feb 96, p.39; SE5A In Action (019518) p.49.
- Sep 68 Displayed at Horseguards parade, Whitehall, during Battle of Britain week - Photos: Aviation News 15-28 Jul 83, p.181; Scale Models Jan 74 (Colour Cover) and Aircraft Illustrated Feb 70 p.78. Carried F938 serial from this date.
- 1972 To RAFM Hendon and displayed there ever since. Photos: RAF Yearbook 1974; Air Enthusiast Jan/Feb 96, p.39; World War I Survivors (Rimmell 026001) p.104; Aeroplane Monthly Jul 73, p.128; Scale Models Jan 74, p.33-37; Aircraft 1975 annual p.91; Scale Aircraft Modelling Jun 98 p.168; Air Pictorial March 2001 p.223.
- Mar 92 Purchased from Royal Aeronautical Society by MoD and placed on loan to RAF Museum.
- 19 Jul 93 Allotted RAF Maintenance serial 9208M.

- 12 Mar 03 Moved to newly relocated Grahame White Factory building at Hendon for continued display. Photos; Aeroplane May 2003 p.5; Wrecks and Relics 19th edition.
- Sep 04 Gifted to the RAFM by the MoD along with the other former Nash Collection aircraft.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON