

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE MK.VB BL614/4354M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 82/A/1716.

- 24 Oct 40 Ordered as one of a batch of 1000 Mk.VB aircraft (serials BL231 - BM653) built by Vickers-Armstrongs at its Castle Bromwich plant against contract No.B981687/39; originally ordered as Mk.III aircraft and delivered between Nov 1941 and May 1942, including the serial block BL613-647. Cockpit c/n CBAF 1646 and fire-wall c/n CBAF 1341.
- 41 Built at Castle Bromwich with the constructors number CBAF.1646.
- Dec 41. First flight from Castle Bromwich
- 4 Jan 42 From Castle Bromwich to No.8 Maintenance Unit RAF Little Rissington, Gloucs, for fitting with operational equipment.
- 7 Feb 42 To No. 611(West Lancashire) Squadron at RAF Drem, near Edinburgh coded FY-.The squadron was being rested following a very active period of fighter sweeps with No.11 Group, and was involved with convoy escort patrols.
- 18 Feb 42 First operational sortie; patrol over Queen May Isle, Firth of Forth, flown by Flight Sergeant W.L. Miller, 11.15 – 12.45 hours.
- 27 Feb 42 Scramble; Sgt. C.E. Graysmark, 17.30 – 18.30.
- 8 Mar 42 Suffered Cat.B damage during operations. Repaired in works. BL614's history becomes unclear at this point; The movement card records this damage with no further use until June, whereas No. 611 Squadron's ORB records six operational sorties between 16 March and 23 May, listed below, as recorded in 'Spitfire Mark V in Action' by Peter Caygill (X002-8712).
- 16 Mar 42 Scramble, F/Sgt Boyle, 16.40 – 16.55.
- 26 Mar 42 Scramble, Sgt. Rogers, 16.15 – 16.45; the same pilot made a dusk patrol from 19.20 – 20.40.
- 29 Mar 42 Convoy Patrol, F/Sgt D.A. Bye, 08.05 – 09.25
- 9 Apr 42 Convoy Patrol, F/L Edwards, 20.55 – 21.40.
- 23 May 42 Scramble, F/L W.M. Gilmour, 06.30 – 06.50.

- 2 Jun 42 Returned to Drem to serve with No.242 (Canadian) Squadron, Coded KV-
- 7 Jun 42 First operational sortie with No. 242 Squadron; Scramble, F/Sgt G. E. Mather, 13.20 – 13.50. Scramble same evening, Sgt. A. Hampshire, 21.10 – 22.40.
- 8 Jun 42 Training flight, Sgt B W Hamblin, plus an air to ground firing practice flight by F/Lt D I Benham.
- 9 Jun 42 Return flight to RAF Turnhouse, followed by single flight to Turnhouse.
- 10 Jun 42 F/Lt D I Benham made a squadron formation flight and then flew to Longtown and back.
- 11 Jun 42 F/Lt Benham made two air to air firing practice flights.
- 15 Jun 42 Formation flying by F/Lt Benham.
- 16 Jun 42 Scramble, F/Sgt G B Buist, 06.55 – 07.10. Night Flying Practice/Patrol same evening – F/L D.I. Benham, 23.45 – 01.45.
- 17 Jun 42 Formation flying by F/Lt Benham.
- 18 Jun 42 Air to ground firing flight, F/Lt Benham, Practice attacks by Sgt B W Hamblin, followed by Convoy Patrol, F/L Benham, 23.30 – 00.20.
- 22 Jun 42 Local flight by P/O Parker, then air to ground firing, Camera gun instructor and Formation flying all by F/Lt Benham.
- 24 Jun 42 Air to sea firing by P/O Parker, formation flying by F/Sgt G B Buist, formation flying by Sgt T G Sullivan and F/Lt Benham, and dusk landings by Sgt Meachin- a day of intensive use.
- 25 Jun 42 Squadron formation flying by F/Lt Benham.
- 26 Jun 42 Another intensive day of training flights – three, including an army exercise, by F/Lt Benham, dog fighting by F/Sgt Mather, and squadron formation flight by F/Lt Benham.
- 27 Jun 42 Formation flying by Sgt J Harrison, and training attacks, height climb and night flying by F/Lt Benham.
- 28 Jun 42 Formation flying by P/O Parker and Camera Gun attacks by F/Lt Benham.
- 29 Jun 42 Formation flying by F/Lt Benham.

- 30 Jun 42 Cloud Flying by Sgt J Harrison, Formation flying by 2nd Lt P H Bosch and F/Lt Benham.
- 2 Jul 42 Formation flying and air to ground flying by F/Lt Benham.
- 3 Jul 42 Formation flying, camera gun attacks and army co-operation flights by F/Lt Benham, formation flying and formation flying by 2/Lt Bosch.
- 4 Jul 42 Formation flying by Sgt Hamblin and P/O Parker.
- 5 Jul 42 Formation flying (two flights), Ayr to Drem flight, three height climb flights, practice intercept, camera gun attacks – nine flights in all- by Sgt Harrison, F/Sgt Buist, Sgt M Steel, Sgt T G Sullivan and F/Lt Benham.
- 7 Jul 42 Scramble, Sgt. Sullivan, 08.50 – 09.35. Scramble same afternoon, F/Lt Benham, 13.25 – 14.35, followed by cloud flying, F/Lt Benham.
- 8 Jul 42 Cloud flying by Lt P H Bosch, and formation flying and night patrol by F/Lt Benham.
- 11 Jul 42 Air to air firing by Sgts Harrison and Hampshire.
- 14 Jul 42 Formation flying by F/Lt Benham and Sgt L B Murray.
- 15 Jul 42 Scramble, Sgt. Hamblin, 12.55 – 13.20. Also dog fighting, camera gun attacks, formation flying and air to ground firing by P/O W R Lindsay, Sgt Hamblin and Lt P H Bosch.
- 16 Jul 42 Formation flying by F/Sgt Mather and camera gun attacks and air to air firing by P/O Lindsay.
- 17 Jul 42 Two camera gun attacks by Sgt Hamblin and Squadron formation flight by Sgt T Sullivan.
- 18 Jul 42 Squadron formation and aerobatics flights by F/Sgt Mather and camera gun attacks by Sgt T Sullivan.
- 19 Jul 42 Squadron formation flying by P/O Lindsay.
- 21 Jul 42 Air to air, formation, and squadron formation flights by Sgt B W Hamblin and formation flying by Lt Bosch.
- 22 Jul 42 Scramble, Sgt. Hamblin, 20.30 – 20.40.
- 23 Jul 42 Convoy Patrol, Sgt. Hamblin, 06.20 – 07.55. Followed by formation flying by Sgt R C Bolland and formation flying and low flying by Sgt J Harrison.

- 24 Jul 42 Dog fighting and squadron formation by Sgt Hamblin.
- 25 Jul 42 Air to air firing flights by F/Lt Benham, Sgt T Sullivan, F/Sgt Buist, and P/O Lindsay.
- 26 Jul 42 air to air firing, camera gun attacks and air combat training by Sgt A Hampshire, F/Lt Benham, F/Sgt Buist, Sgt T Sullivan and P/O Parker.
- 27 Jul 42 Air to air firing by F/Lt Benham (two flights)
- 28 Jul 42 Two air to air firing flights by F/Lt Benham.
- 5/6 Aug42 Army co-operation flights by F/Lt Benham.
- 11 Aug42 Transferred to No.222 (Natal) Squadron, which had moved from Winfield to Drem the previous day, coded ZD-F - No.242 Squadron had moved to RAF North Weald that month, leaving BL614 behind.
- 16 Aug 42 Squadron moved to RAF Biggin Hill, Kent to cover the landings at Dieppe (Operation Jubilee) three days later.
Former ground crew to BL614 have confirmed that during the Dieppe action the aircraft was damaged in the wings, possibly by small-arms fire, particularly in the flaps and ailerons, and the front section of the fin - the resulting patch repairs remain visible on the aircraft today.
- 17 Aug42 Feint Ramrod sortie, Beach Head Area, Sgt. J.W. MacDonald, 15.20 – 16.00.
- 18 Aug42 Feint Rodeo flown by Sgt. J.W. MacDonald on a Rodeo in the Calais/Cap Gris Nez area, altitude 19,000 feet, 13.05 – 14.35, and also on an evening standing patrol by Sgt. J. Ekbery, 19.10 – 20.30.
- 19 Aug 42 For Operation Jubilee, flown by Sgt. MacDonald on an early morning shipping patrol off Dieppe, 05.53 – 07.35, with another, providing withdrawal cover for ground and naval forces, again uneventful, in the evening, 17.00 – 18.20.
- 20 Aug 42 Squadron returned to Drem.
- 22 Oct 42 Squadron moved to RAF Ayr, Strathclyde, and continued the convoy escort patrols operated from Drem.
- 29 Nov42 Convoy Patrol, Sgt. C.A. Joseph, 15.30 – 17.00.
- 16 Mar43 Local flight from Ayr by PO Gordon Braidwood.

- 31 Mar 43 To the newly arrived No. 64 Squadron, also based at Ayr, coded SH-V (The Squadron had arrived on 28 March). The Squadron practised carrier landings and undertook convoy patrols, reconnaissance flights and Air Sea Rescue searches. No.222 Squadron had moved via Martlesham Heath to Rochford, Essex, four days earlier leaving BL614 behind.
- 11 Apr 43 Convoy patrol, Sgt. D. Ledington, 12.00 – 12.45.
- 16 Apr 43 Convoy patrol, P/O B.C. Kelly, 07.20 – 09.10.
- 19 May 43 Convoy patrol, P/O F.R. Burnard, 21.05 – 22.35.
- 28 May 43 Convoy Patrol, P/O B.C. Kelly, 12.30 – 14.00.
- 6 Jun 43 Convoy patrol, Sgt. C.A. Rice, 19.55 – 21.35.
- 27 Jul 43 Convoy patrol, Sgt. A. Pugh, 17.25 – 18.55.
- 7 Aug 43 No.64 Squadron moved to Friston, Sussex.
- 15 Aug 43 Patrol between Beach Head and Shoreham, F/O B.C. Kelly, 13.15 – 14.00.
- 17 Aug 43 Patrol, F/O B.C. Kelly, 0500. – 06.20.
- 19 Aug 43 Unit moved to RAF Gravesend, Essex.
- 30 Aug 43 Suffered Cat.Ac damage at Gravesend - repaired on site.
- 6 Sep 43 Escorting USAAF B.26's on attack on Amiens marshalling yards – F/O K.V. Calder. 17.10 – 18.45. This and the ensuing five sorties were as close escort for medium bombers attacking airfields and marshalling yards in northern France during Operation Starkey.
- 7 Sep 43 Escorting USAAF B-25 Mitchells attacking St. Omer. Sgt. J.D.M. Duncan, 07.40 – 08.55.
- 8 Sep 43 Escorting Mitchells attacking Vitry en Artois, F/L G.B. Silvester, 09.30 – 11.00. Same evening, escorted Mitchells attacking Boulogne, F/O K.V. Calder, 17.05 – 18.25.
- 9 Sep 43 Escorting Lockheed Venturas attacking Merville; F/O Calder, 14.15 – 15.45.
- 11 Sep 43 Returned to No.64 Squadron, now based at RAF West Malling, Kent, where it was involved in bomber escort and coastal anti-shipping strafing attacks.
- 13 Sep 43 Rodeo 253 Le Touquet – Abbeville; F/O Calder, 17.45 – 19.10.

- 14 Sep 43 Escorting USAAF Marauders on attack on Lille – Nord, F/L Silvester, 16.55 – 18.10.
- 25 Sep 43 No.64 Squadron moved to RAF Coltishall, Norfolk and BL614, together with other 64 Squadron Spitfire Vbs transferred to No.118 Squadron, coded NK-E, on 19th September. The squadron had just moved to RAF Peterhead, Grampian, with a detachment at Skaeabrae as air defence for northern Scotland.
- 22 Sep 43 Patrol, Sgt. S.V. Piper, 08.10 – 08.35.
- 25 Sep 43 Dusk Patrol, P/O J.M. Hemstock, 17.45 – 19.30.
- 28 Sep 43 Dusk patrol, F/Sgt. F.L. Spencer.
- 10 Oct 43 Scramble, F/Sgt. Spencer, 18.00 – 18.45.
- 13 Oct 43 Dawn Patrol, Sgt. D.G. Ballard, 07.15 – 08.30.
- 14 Oct 43 Dawn Patrol, Sgt. R.A. Hamilton, 07.10 – 08.10. BL614's last recorded operational sortie.
- 19 Oct 43 Squadron moved to RAF Castletown, Highland, with a detachment still at Peterhead.
- 2 Nov43 To No.3501 Support Unit (General Duties Flight), RAF Cranfield, Beds.
- 23 Nov43 Allocated to No.2 School of Technical Training, RAF Cosford, Salop with the instructional serial 'M4354.'
- 6 Dec 43 To No.6 School of Technical Training at nearby RAF Hednesford, Staffs. At this point the history of BL614 becomes entangled with that of fellow Mk.V 'M4353.' (AB871) It would appear that these non-standard maintenance serials were applied to the wrong aircraft. The real AB871 was scrapped at RAF St.Athan in the early 1950s.
- Mar 48 Remaining Mk.V Spitfires stored by RAF struck off charge.
- 20 Apr 48 To No.7 Recruits Centre, RAF Bridgnorth, Salop wearing the M4353 serial allocated to AB871, and latterly as M4354. Also at Bridgnorth was at one time (1948/49) painted silver overall with no visible serial.
- 3 Mar 55 To RAF Credenhill (Hereford) for gate guardian duties, marked as M4354, and at one point c. 1961 painted silver overall with no serial. when later repainted in wartime markings in 1964 it was restored as AB871 coded SH-S. Photo at Credenhill August 1961, lacking panels, main undercarriage fairings and

serial; Spitfire - A Look Back Over The Gate p.3; as restored with incorrect serial AB871 and codes SH-S; p.3. Also Veteran and Vintage Aircraft (Hunt -013355) p.32 and Flypast December 2007 p.126 (colour).

- 64 Repainted at RAF Hereford. The strip down prior to this revealed evidence of its former squadron identities, including the 118 Squadron codes NK-, but the incorrect serial AB871 and code SH-S were applied.
- 24 Oct 67 One of 18 RAF Spitfires loaned to Spitfire Productions Ltd for use in the 'Battle of Britain' film and taken from Hereford to RAF Henlow, Beds by No. 60 MU, two days later.
- 68 Repainted at Henlow without any external identity markings, but still marked as AB871 in the radio compartment. Given Spitfire Productions Ltd identity number T.6 to indicate taxi aircraft No.6.
- Mar 68 Original Merlin 46 90939 overhauled at Henlow by an RAF working party and the 4-blade propeller from Spitfire Mk.16 SL574 fitted, the original 3-blade prop being fitted to Spitfire Mk.16 TE176. Radio fitted, plus sheet metal wing tips, undercarriage doors, and new oil cooler cowl, and cannon stubs removed.
- Late Apr 68 To RAF North Weald by road and used as one of seven taxiing Spitfires during filming, the others all being Mk.XVIe aircraft.
- 14 May 68 Noted taxiing at North Weald uncoded and without a serial number.
- 15 May 68 Whilst taxiing at North Weald, hit a bump, left the ground and 'flew', landed and tipped onto its nose breaking the 4-blade propeller. Fitted with a replacement 4-blade unit from Spitfire Mk.16 SM411 the same day.
- 20 May 68 Noted taxiing at North Weald as N3327/AI-O.
- May 68 To Duxford, Cambs for further filming.
- Jul 68 To Hawkinge for filming as N3315/DO-W. (The aircraft in the film regularly had their identities changed).
- Jul 68 To Duxford again as N3315/DO-N.
- 24 Jul 68 Noted at Duxford as N3315/BO-D.
- 28 Jul 68 Noted at Duxford as N3315/DO-.
- 6 Aug 68 Noted at Duxford as N3313/EQ-D and AI-D.
- Aug 68 Noted at Duxford as BO-D.

- 12 Sep 68 Noted at Duxford as N3313/AI-D. Also operated as N3318 and N3323.
- Sep 68 To RAF Henlow, Beds by road.
- Sep-Oct 68 Renovated at Henlow by RAF/Spitfire Productions Ltd working party - 3 blade propeller loaned to TE476 refitted and 4 blade prop refitted to SM411. Gun stubs refitted, wing tips removed and aircraft incorrectly repainted as AB871 without code letters and placed in store. As filming was completed, 'AB871' was one of 13 Spitfires returned to the RAF custody on 28 Oct 1968.
- 14 Sep 69 Taken by road by No. 71 MU to the Guildhall Yard in the City of London for Battle of Britain display via RAF Northolt. Photo - Flypast Oct 1989 p.61. (Colerne file says 18 September)
- 15 Sep 69 On display.
- 16 Sep 69 Removed by road from the Guildhall by No.71MU and stored at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk. (Colerne Spitfire file states 24 September)
- 16 Sep 72 Displayed at RAF Wattisham Battle of Britain display.
- 27 Sep 72 By road to the station Museum at RAF Colerne, Wilts to replace Spitfire P7350 which was maintained in flying condition by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Transported by No.71 MU, Bicester.
- 1974 Stripped for restoration; paint removal revealed the correct serial number and BL614 was restored to No 222 Squadron markings with the codes ZD-F to recall its role when it flew in support of the Dieppe raid on 19 August 1942. Photo as restored, June 1974 - Spitfire - A Look Back Over the Gate p.4; Aircraft Illustrated Oct 75 p.419 (colour); Flypast Apr 83 p.44 (colour).
- 75 Temporarily displayed at RAF Cosford .Photo - Aeroplane Monthly Supplement April 1994 p.14.
- 28 Aug 75 To the regional collection at RAF St Athan prior to the closure of RAF Colerne and its aircraft collection in March 1976.
- 8 Jan 80 Temporarily moved to RAF Abingdon, Berks to provide parts and patterns for the rebuild of damaged BMBF Spitfire Vb AB910 which had been involved in a taxiing accident during an airshow at Bex, Switzerland 21st August 1978. Photo of BL614 at Abingdon - The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (028314) p.43. BL614 was stripped of everything forward of the fireproof bulkhead to service AB910.

- Sep 81 Returned to RAF St Athan.
- 7 Dec 82 Left St.Athan by road and installed in the new Manchester Air & Space Museum. Photos -Control Column Feb 83 p.10; Aircraft Illustrated Jul.83 p. 321; Spitfire Survivors p.13; Spitfire-A Look Back Over The Gate p.4; Flypast May 95 p.11; Spitfire Survivors Round The World (021352) p.107.Some restoration work done on instrument panel and respraying of cockpit area by Museum volunteers in Sep.1984. The engine had been previously removed. The Museum became the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry in Dec 1985.
- Mar 95 To Rochester Airport, Kent for restoration by volunteers from the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society. (Formed from members of the Royal Aeronautical Society Medway Branch). Replacement Merlin Mk 46 engine provided by RAF Museum RC&RC Cardington. Engine bearers, wing tips, rudder, firewall and cockpit components replaced by the restoration team. Photo under restoration – Spitfire Society Journal Autumn 2003 p.13.
- Feb 97 Partly restored fuselage displayed in Pentagon Shopping centre, Chatham, Kent.
- 11 Sep 97 Completed aircraft formally handed over to RAF Museum in ceremony at Rochester Airport. Photos - Flypast Nov 97 p.6-7; Aeroplane Monthly Jan 98 p.62; Aircraft Illustrated Feb 1998 p.4. Again carries the codes ZD-F.
- 27 Oct 97 By road from Rochester to RAF Museum Hendon, replacing Spitfire Mk.1 K9942 on display in the main aircraft hall/'Historic Hangars'. Photo on display - Flypast Oct 98 p.28; Aircraft Illustrated February 2003 p.84.

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