

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SPITFIRE I X4590/8384M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 78/A/872

- 09 Jun 40 Ordered from Vickers-Supermarine as part of a batch of 500 aircraft, contract No.19713/39. Fitted with Merlin III engine.
- NB.** Inspection by Cardington technicians 1995 revealed that port wing dated 11.03.38, Pobjoy Airmotor A/C Ltd.
- 22 Sep 40 Taken on charge.
- 08 Oct 40 To No.609 Squadron, Middle Wallop, Hants. Coded PR-F.
- 10 Oct 40 Probable first operational flight; A Flight patrol at 15,000 feet in response to two enemy raids of 30+ aircraft. Pilot 23-year-old Plt Off S J Hill, a graduate metallurgist pre-war. Took off at 12.05, landing at 13.15 - see O.R.B photocopy (PRO. Ref. AIR 27/2102) on Spitfire I correspondence file.
- 11 Oct 40 A Flight patrol over base at 20,000 feet; Pilot P/O Hill; see Squadron O.R.B photocopy on correspondence file, taking off at 14.50, landing at 15.20.
- 12 Oct 40 O.R.B reads 'Patrol Point 1. Recalled by R/T. Pilot P/O Hill; took off at 13.45, landing at 13.50.
- 14 Oct 40 Patrol over base at 6,000 feet. Pilot P/O Hill. Took off at 16.25, landing at 17.10.
- 21 Oct 40 Whilst being flown on a patrol over Portland by 'Red 2' - Pilot Officer Hill - the aircraft took a half share in shooting down a Ju 88A-5 w/nr 8116, code 9K+BH of 1/KG51 that had been on a mission against the Gloster Aircraft Works at Brockworth, then busy producing Hurricane fighters, but missed its target and instead strafed at 50 feet the Army Co-operation airfield at Old Sarum, Wilts. Following a very low level tree-top chase and interception 3 miles north of Lymington at 1.40pm, the aircraft crashed, exploded and burnt out at Manor Farm Field, Black Bush, Milford on Sea at 1.47pm; The four crew were killed. A full squadron combat report and Squadron diary account (B439) of the event are held in DoRIS. This was the 100th enemy aircraft claimed by No.609 Squadron, which at this time was mostly flying interceptor patrols and coastal patrols over the Southampton/ Portland areas during these latter stages of the Battle of Britain.
- 25 Oct 40 Damaged whilst again being flown by Plt Off J Curchin. When landing at

Middle Wallop he forgot to lower the undercarriage.

- 15 Nov 40 50 minute Patrol at 20,000 feet as part of 'A' flight; pilot 745790 Sgt John Anthony Hughes-Rees, taking off at 13.05. See Squadron O.R.B photocopy on correspondence file.
- 17 Nov 40 'Red Section Scramble'; pilot Sgt. Hughes-Rees; took off at 15.00, landing at 15.30.
- End of Nov 40 Squadron moved to Warmwell, Dorset.
- 19 Nov 40 A flight patrol off Isle of Wight; pilot Sgt. Hughes-Rees; took off at 15.25, landing at 16.40.
- 20 Nov 40 Red Section patrol over Warmwell; pilot Sgt. Hughes-Rees; took off at 12.40, landing at 13.20. Further flight that afternoon; Squadron Scramble, pilot Sgt. Bennett, took off at 16.05, landing at 17.00.
- 22 Nov 40 Red 1 and 2 scramble - Pilot Officer Hill. Took off at 16.20, landing at 16.45.
- 23 Nov 40 A Flight scramble; pilot was the Canadian P/O Alfred Keith Ogilvie. Took off sat 13.25, landing at 14.10.
- 24 Nov 40 Squadron flying practice and patrol over base; took off at 14.55 and landed at 16.25.
- 28 Nov 40 Yellow section scramble; pilot P/O Hill, taking off at 10.35 and landing at 11.00. Also later that day, Pilot Officer Ogilvie, flying X4590 as Yellow 3, was scrambled at 13.35 and returned at 14.55, only to be scrambled again at 15.50 in X4590 and vectored towards the Solent to intercept a formation of Me 109s of JG2 led by Major Helmut Wick. The Germans had the height advantage and bounced the Spitfires; Ogilvie escaped in a damaged X4590, as recorded in his diary; 'I was Yellow 3 and was weaving merrily behind, keeping an eagle eye above, when I caught a glimpse of three yellow noses in my mirror. They were obviously crack pilots by their tight formation and strategy. I gave the warning and dove as the centre Johnny opened fire on me, and was speeded on my way by a cannon shell up the fuselage and a second through my prop'. Returned to base at 16.55.
- 12 Dec 40 Scrambled at 13.35, returning at 14.40; pilot F/O Ostaszewski. Scrambled again at 15.10, returning at 15.15; same pilot.
- 21 Dec 40 Scrambled at 13.20, returning an hour later; pilot Sgt. Short.
- 23 Dec 40 Scrambled at 16.50, returning 10 minutes later; pilot P/O Atkinson.
- 27 Dec 40 P/O Atkinson scrambled in X4590 at 13.25, returning an hour later.
- 28 Dec 40 P/O Atkinson scrambled in X4590 at 16.45, returning at 17.05.

2 Jan 41 Sgt. Mercer of B Flight scrambled in X4590 at 09.45, returning at 11.00.

13 Jan 41 P/O Baraldi of B Flight scrambled at 13.30, returning at 13.50.

24 Feb 41 To No.66 Squadron, Exeter, Devon. Codes LZ-. Carrying out interception and convoy patrols. No.66 was one of a succession of Hurricane and Spitfire squadrons based at Exeter in early 1941, having swapped its original Spitfire II's with No.609 Squadrons Mk.I's, hence the transfer of X4590. No.66's status as a 'resting' squadron seems not to have warranted the latest Spitfires!

07 Apr 41 To No.57 OTU Hawarden, near Chester, coded LV-, PW- or XO-. No.66 Squadron had moved to Perranporth, Cornwall the same month but did not take X4590 with them.

07 Jul 41 Flown by No.57 O T U test pilot, Flight Lieutenant Tony Garforth Pickering, on 30 minute air test. Logbook extract on RAFM 3/4/Spitfire I file.

18 Jul 41 To No.303 (Polish) Squadron, Speke, near Liverpool. Tasked with defending the Mersey area. The squadron was posted to Speke this month for a three month rest after much action in fighter sweeps over the channel, but probably did not keep X4590 long enough to apply its RF-codes.

24 Jul 41 To No.43 Groups' Disposal Account as surplus to requirements.

30 Jul 41 To Scottish Aviation Ltd for work.

31 Oct 41 To No.37 MU Burtonwood, Cheshire - an aircraft storage unit.

14 Feb 42 To No.53 OTU Llandow, coded MV- or QG- this was a Spitfire OTU with a satellite landing ground at Rhoose.

16 Feb 42 Damaged. Repaired locally. No Accident Card.

28 Mar 42 Pilot's Flying Log book of F/Lt Alex A Vale records two flights in X4590, a 40 minute 'circuits, experience on type' flight, followed by a similar 45 minute flight.

08 Aug 42 Repaired and back in service with No.53 OTU.

09 Mar 43 Further accident - Repaired in works.
Piloted by Sgt K C Loe - taxiing to take off the a/c collided with a roller on the runway that the pilot did not see.

19 Apr 43 Back in service with No.53 OTU, by now flying alongside fellow RAFM Spitfire I K9942, and from 12 May 43, Science Museum Spitfire I P9444.

09-10 May 43 No.53 OTU moved from Llandow to Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincs.

30 Jul 43 Log book of Peter Bone records two flights in X4590 at No.53 OTU - low

flying/aerobatics and dogfighting.

- 04 Oct 43 Damaged again - Cat.B - repaired in works. No Accident Card.
- 18 Feb 44 Awaiting collection.
- 20 Mar 44 To No.33 MU Milton, an aircraft Equipment Depot.
- 16 May 44 To No.82 MU Lichfield, Staffs - Packing Unit. Packed two days later, then fitted with Merlin s/n 13827. Airframe 1036.45 hours. (See 82 MU log book in Archives).
- 28 Aug 44 To No.52 MU Cardiff, (Packing Unit) for packing for Museum purposes - one of several early spitfires put aside for preservation at this time. (Interestingly, fellow RAFM Spitfire I K9942 went to No.52 MU for the same reason on this same date, having been sent to No.82 MU Lichfield the day before X4590). Boulton Paul Defiant N1671, also at Hendon, was packed at Cardiff the following month. By 31st October 1945 52 MU had closed and the aircraft moved elsewhere.

In August 1944 No.52 MU also handled RAFM Hurricane I P2617 as part of this careful round-up of historic airframes, together with fellow 609 squadron veteran Spitfire IA R6915 now at the IWM, Spitfire IA P9444 displayed by the Science Museum, and Hurricane I L1592 also now at the Science Museum.

- Sep 54 By now part of the Air Historical Branch collection of aircraft and normally stored crated at RAF Stanmore, X4590 went on public display for the first time, at Horseguards Parade, London during Battle of Britain Week. Photos: Flight 17 Sep 54 p.434; AAHS Journal Spring 1961 p.34.
- The aircraft retained its 1943/4 colours as carried at No.53 OTU - grey/green camouflage on the upper surfaces, grey undersides, yellow wing leading edges, pale blue band around the rear fuselage and type C1 Roundels.
- c.1958 Stored at RAF Fulbeck with the rest of the AHB collection.
- Jun 59 Displayed in Brighton, still in late war colour scheme, with no codes.
- Aug 59 At No.71 MU Bicester by this date, together again with Spitfire I K9942, both aircraft being used for mobile display work throughout the 1960s. Unusually, X4590, unlike K9942 was not used in any way in the making of the 'Battle of Britain' film in 1967/8.
- Sep 59 Displayed on Horseguards parade during Battle of Britain week. ABD Oct 59 p.116; Undated photo on Horseguards Flypast Apr 97 p.32.
- Sep 60 Again displayed on Horse Guards Parade. Photo: Aviation News 15-28 Jul 84 p.180
- 16 Jun 62 Statically displayed as PR-F at RAF Upavon, Wilts, for the 'Golden

Jubilee of British Aviation'. Photo - The Halton Magazine
Vol. XXV No.3 Autumn 1962.

- 1964 Displayed at the annual Fete of the 'Trueloves' school for physically handicapped boys at Ingatestone, Essex.
- Sep 68 Displayed at RAF display at Nottingham, by now restored to its No.609 Squadron colours as PR-F. (Worn since 1961 at least)
- 26 Aug 70 -
06 Sep 70 Displayed in Newcastle-on-Tyne in one of the provincial Battle of Britain displays.
- Sep 71 Displayed at RAF Biggin Hills' Battle of Britain open day.
- c.Jan 1972 Transferred by No.71 MU from Bicester to the RAFM storage facility at RAF Henlow.
- 15 Nov 72 Formally transferred to RAFM collection.
- 5 Sep 73 Allotted RAF Maintenance Serial 8384M.
- Sep 74 By this date X4590 was displayed at the Station Museum at RAF Finningley, Yorkshire, having been moved from Henlow.
- 1976 With the closure and dispersal of the Finningley collection the aircraft moved to the growing collection at the Aerospace Museum, Cosford.
- 1978 Moved to the new Battle of Britain Museum, Hendon, which opened 28 Nov 78. On display in the E-Pen shared with Hurricane P2617 ever since. Photos - Plane Talk Spring 2000 p.5; Flypast January 2003 p.43.
- 3 Aug 98 One of a number of aircraft donated to the RAFM by the MoD.

The previously mentioned Spitfire IA R6915 now displayed at the IWM South Lambeth was, very briefly a contemporary of X4590 with No.609 Squadron for the period 7-14 Oct 1940. Spitfire IA P9444 now displayed at the Science Museum, South Kensington flew alongside X4590 with No.53 OTU at Kirton in Lindsey during the Summer of 1943, as did fellow RAFM Spitfire I K9942.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON

© ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM 2007.