

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE MK XIVe MT847/6960M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 84/A/1185

- 27 Jul 42 Ordered as one of a mixed batch of 700 Mk VIII and MK XIV aircraft built by Vickers - Armstrongs to contract No. 1877 C.23 from Dec 43 to Oct 44, including the serial batch MT847 - 858, at the Keevil Works, Wilts. MT847 was the prototype for the introduction of thicker skin at the tailplane root. Constructor's number 6S-643774.
- 4 Apr 44 First flight. Presumably used for manufacturer's trials.
- 28 Feb 45 To No.6 Maintenance Unit RAF Brize Norton, Oxon.
- 15 Dec 45 To Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment at Boscombe Down for unspecified tests.
- 18 Feb 46 To No 29 Maintenance Unit, High Ercall, Salop for storage.
- 14 Nov 50 To No. 226 Operational Conversion Unit at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, where it was coded UU-A. This unit used Meteors and Spitfires to train Fighter pilots until Meteor PR9s replaced the Spitfires in mid 1951. The Fighter Reconnaissance Flight operated MT847 and other MKs XIV and XVIII Spitfires for specialised fighter reconnaissance training.
- 2 Aug 51 To No 33 Maintenance Unit, RAF Lyneham, Wilts following damage at Stradishall.
- 9 Feb 52 Declared a non-effective airframe.
- 7 Apr 52 Allotted to No.90 MU, RAF Warton, Lancs as a gate guard, with maintenance serial 6960M.
- 30 Apr 52 Transferred to RAF Warton.
- 28 May 52 Placed on gate at RAF Warton, still coded UU-A.

One report suggests the aircraft was at RAF Kirkham 1952 -1955.

- 55 To the nearby Medical Training Establishment at RAF Freckleton, Lancs for gate guard duties, coded MT-E in honour of this establishment. Painted overall silver, fuselage code E. Photos - Spitfire - A Look Back Over The Gate p.15; Military Aviation Review Nov 78 p.10 (1963).

E-mail from Gp Capt (retd) Richard Smith, January 2015;

‘(MT847) was certainly still at RAF Freckleton when I arrived there arrived on 19th November 1962 but I cannot now remember when it left or where it went. The Medical Training Establishment moved to RAF Halton in 1964 and Freckleton closed - unlamented - the same year. Most of the non-specialist equipment went to RAF Weeton, the parenting unit, and the Spitfire may well have also gone there.

I was the station adjutant, in the lofty rank of pilot officer. I well remember that some time in early 1963 the Spitfire suffered the indignity late one night of being ‘walked’ sideways out of the main gate by a visiting course of medical officers and left in the middle of a nearby road junction. Needless to say, no-one saw it leaving and we were lucky that it wasn't involved in a motor accident. I got a phone call from the police in the early hours and - having reluctantly accepted that it wasn't a hoax call - decided that instead of getting all the officers back out of bed, it would be quicker and easier to get the Pool Flight of National Servicemen out to return it to its plinth. So I did that and told the CO about it next day: he congratulated me and then assembled all the MOs to give them a roasting.

RAF Freckleton was the most dreary, run-down, hutted camp imaginable. It looked and felt like a POW camp’

Later possibly at the technical training station at RAF Weeton, Lancs c.1963/4.

- Aug 64 From Weeton to RAF Cosford Salop where it was mounted on a pylon on the parade ground. Photo in 1970 - Spitfire - A Look Back Over The Gate p.15. Painted silver overall with no codes. Also Military Aviation Review Nov 78 p.10. (1967); Flypast Apr 97 p.47; Air Britain Digest Jul 66 p.181.Engine and engine bearers to Cosford dump before it was mounted at Cosford.
- early 70 Taken down and restored for the resident Aerospace Museum as the RAF's last Spitfire MK XIV. Photo with undercarriage lowered prior to lifting off the Pylon - Control Column May 1970. Restoration underway late 1970-mid 1972. Photos on display - Spitfire Survivors p.26; Spitfire - A Look Back Over The Gate p.16; Spitfire Survivors Round The World (021352) p.121.Latterly given the codes AX-H with the propeller rotated by an electric motor.
- Oct 77 Undergoing interior refurbishment at Cosford.
- 22 Mar 95 To Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. Replaced Spitfire VB BL614, which was sent to Rochester for restoration, and in turn replaced at Cosford by Spitfire MK XVI RW393.

9 Feb 2014 By road to RAFM Hendon for use in 'Britain From Above' photographic exhibition in Bomber Hall; assembled for display the following day. Photos leaving Manchester – Flypast April 2014 p.6; Britain at War Magazine March 2014 p.8; Spitfire No 62 Spring 2014 pp.24-25.

Other spitfire XIV survivors include MV293 airworthy with the Fighter collection at Duxford and NH799 with the Chariots of Fire Collection at Omaka, New Zealand.

TEXT: ANDREW SIMPSON

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