



THE RATCLIFFE SPITFIRE P9503

Supported by The Leonard Stillwell Bursary and The Spitfire Society

October 2014

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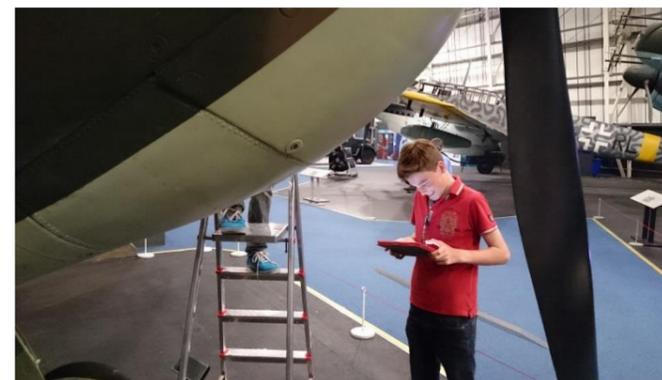
The summer seems a long way off now with the project in full swing once again. I am very conscious of the fast approaching, self-imposed deadline of September 2015, (75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain) and our desire to have something substantial put together by then. With that in mind we are now meeting twice a week, doubling the time we put in to the build, as well as our bi-termly Sunday mornings. I have already seen the difference this has made in the few weeks since the start of term, not least because we have benefitted from a number of new starters to the project, 4 of whom are able Sixth Form students. With no build space yet available for us to begin assembling the fuselage, this is also a major issue if we are to have a hope of reaching our 12 month goal.

RAF Hendon

During the first week of the summer holiday I went to the RAF Museum in Hendon with Gavin Howling (father of James Year 7-8) and 5 boys to visit Mk1 Spitfire X4590. I had previously contacted Head of Collections, Ian Thirsk and explained our project to him. He was only too happy to allow us to come down and crawl over this rather special airframe. X4590 sits on display in the Battle of Britain hangar alongside a Hurricane, Bf109e and other aircraft of the period. What makes this Spitfire particularly interesting to us, is that she is a contemporary of



our, P9503, having served with 609 Sqn at the same time as P9503 did, and actually took part in the very same air battle which claimed the life of Paul Baillon. We were greeted on arrival by Brendan, an apprentice with the museum. He was extremely helpful, opening up the hatches on the airframe, allowing us to climb over it, and spend as much time as we needed taking measurements, photographing, and looking over it. Having the opportunity to examine parts that for months we had been working out how to make was quite revealing. It was amazing to see how much tolerance there is



in things like the trailing edge of the rudder, and the leading edge of the horizontal stabiliser. Once they are covered with canvas and dope, and painted, our 0.5mm working tolerance is well within what a real Spit seems to be. So we're doing ok!



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With our own rudder almost at the stage of being ready to canvas and dope, it was remarkable to centre the rudder pedals on X4590 in the cockpit, and notice that the rudder was straight at the top, but twisted the further down the trailing edge you, looked.

Sunday Workshops

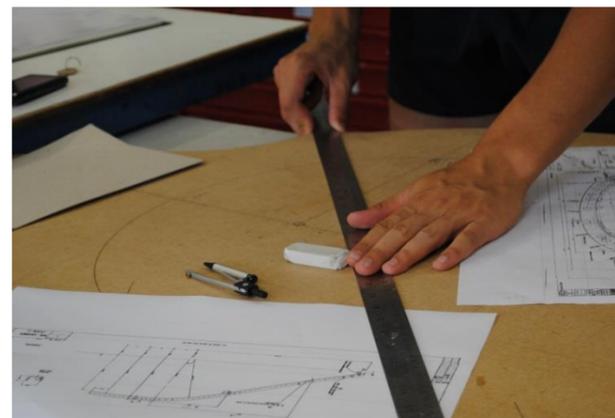
We have already had our first Sunday of the academic year, being September 14th. In that time we managed to make some good progress, in particular with Frame 11 and the stabiliser. Our goal right away is to try and focus as much attention on the cockpit area, (Frames 5-13) as we can, utilising some of our new students to facilitate this.



New Old Stock

Over the holidays I rather enjoyed having the time to watch eBay and see what parts, if any, became available for our project. There seem to be plenty of Spitfire parts regularly for sale on the internet, but finding parts suitable for our Mk1a requires a good knowledge of the many differences in each of the 24 variants of the Spitfire. Of course, being a Mk1 also makes the parts rarer, and in some instances well out of

any budget we may have. However, I managed to find a few. In order to create as authentic a cockpit as possible, we have no choice but to buy some original parts. It is not impossible to make replicas, but without a lathe and milling machine buying original is the best way forward.



Summary of the History of P9503

Serial no: P9503 Mark: 1a Construction Number: 646 Factory: Eastleigh
Engine: Merlin III

FF 19.4.40
AMDP DeHavilland prop trials 26.4.40
9 Maintenance Unit 5.6.40
257 Sqn 7.6.40
610 Sqn wearing codes 'DW-D' 11.7.40
Category 2 Ops 31.07.40
GAL 609 Sqn 26.9.40
Damaged by return fire from bomber P/O Baillon aircraft abandoned nr Upavon Category 3 27.10.40
Struck off Charge 1.11.40



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