

**Under embargo until 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

## V FOR VICTORY!

SALISBURY'S SECRET SPITFIRES MEMORIAL IS A GO

- **Full-size Spitfire replica has been built**
- **She travelled to Salisbury in three parts today, 7<sup>th</sup> August**
- **She will be stored at the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection, Old Sarum, until next Summer**
- **Over £75,000 raised in 10 months**
- **Fundraising efforts continue to ensure the future of the Memorial**
- **Secret Spitfire Charity planning legacy activity thanks to support**

Images and video: <https://secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk/media/>

TO DONATE, VISIT: [HTTPS://SECRETSPITFIRESMEMORIAL.ORG.UK/DONATE](https://secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk/donate)

**Salisbury, 07.08.20:** The Secret Spitfire Charity is delighted to announce that the planned Memorial to the hundreds of young girls, women, boys, elderly men and handful of engineers who built Spitfires in secrecy during WWII is going ahead, after the idea captured the imagination of the public.

The central element of the Memorial itself – a life-sized fibreglass rendition of the country's best-loved aeroplane – has been built and delivered to Salisbury following an extraordinary level of donations from the general public, historical and aviation societies and industry, alongside a concerted programme of fundraising by the Charity and Memorial committee.

The committee and all involved in the organisational and fundraising side of the project have extended their heartfelt thanks to all the supporters of the efforts to make the Memorial a reality. They have also expressed their excitement at this landmark stage, as well as their commitment to the future of the Charity.

Having been seen off by her creator Stefan Bailey of GB Replicas in North Norfolk, alongside local MP's Duncan Baker and Jerome Mayhew, the Spitfire made the 230-mile trip to the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection in Old Sarum. On arrival she was met by John Glen MP, Charity and Memorial Committee members and directors of the BDAC (names TBC). With many thanks to the BDAC, she will be stored until July 2021, when the Charity hopes to unveil the Memorial in its full glory during a celebratory public event at Salisbury RFC.

The build of the Spitfire itself took just over 18 weeks in total. The painstaking process involved an initial moulding of a gel base coat, followed by fibreglass, and finally an intricate painting programme. Whilst the build went incredibly smoothly, the process was not without its challenges. In the Spring, Stefan noticed that a robin had been coming in and out of the GB Replicas workshop for a while. One morning, leaves were discovered underneath a Spitfire wing – at that time 10ft off the floor. Lo and behold, a nest with three eggs was discovered and left in peace to hatch and successfully fledge. The Spitfire also narrowly escaped the implications of a national shortage of Perspex due to Covid-19, and her screen was fitted with the last of GB Replica's supply.

Having been on track to unveil the memorial on July 10<sup>th</sup> at a public celebration to coincide with the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the Coronavirus pandemic meant that these plans were put on hold. However, of the initial £100,000 target, over £75,000 has been raised in just 10 months, a sum which means that as well as the build, the landscaping and fencing can be assured.

Now, the Charity is gearing up for another big fundraising push to ensure that the Memorial will be maintained and protected in the future, alongside legacy activity to celebrate and commemorate the remarkable achievement of all those involved in this most special part of the war effort. Plans for a series of blue plaques to be installed at the

Salisbury locations requisitioned for Spitfire building have been set in motion, and the Charity's Trustees are in the early stages of discussing the provision of an aviation bursary with engineering organisations.

Speaking on behalf of the Secret Spitfire Charity, Chairman Chris Whalley said: *"We have been truly humbled by the outpouring of support for the project, which has captured the imagination of the public more than we could have hoped for – but rightly so. We cannot thank our supporters enough and we hope to do them proud not just now, but in the future. We aren't resting on our laurels, there is lots more we want to achieve, so we are asking for support. This isn't the beginning of the end – we are simply one step closer to the end of the beginning."*

The Boscombe Down Aviation Collection's Project Director Sqn Ldr John Sharpe added: *"The creation of the Salisbury Spitfire will commemorate the efforts of the people of Salisbury to build the aircraft so crucial to the outcome of the Second World War. The Boscombe Down Aviation Collection is pleased to be able to provide a temporary home for the aircraft and it will also enable visitors to the Collection to view the aircraft prior to its removal to its final location."*

The charity also reveals today further plans for the Memorial's landscaping, which is due to take place over the Autumn and Winter months. Designed by local firm Hewlett's, the proposal is to use the gradient of the site to create an impression of the White Cliffs of Dover, with planting representing the sea, shore, cliff and countryside.

Before landscaping takes place, the concrete base and steel pole will go up. Planting is due to take place in the Spring of 2021 – leaving just the Spitfire to put in place ahead of the grand unveiling, which will be on July 9th.

Those wishing to donate are encouraged to do so via JustGiving or by sending a cheque, ideally along with a GiftAid form, to the charity's registered address.

## ENDS

Contact: [info@secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk](mailto:info@secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk)

### **Notes to Editors**

#### **Secret Spitfires Memorial**

Website: <https://secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SecretSpitfiresMemorial>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SalsSpitfires>

#### **Secret Spitfire Charity**

Registered charity number: 1183978

Registered address: The Rickyard, Silver Street, Alderbury, Salisbury SP5 3AN

Trustees:

Sir Christopher Benson, DL

Josh Green, Chartered Tax Adviser

Chris Whalley

Stephen Whitmore

### **The Secret Spitfires (2016 film):**

For news and information on the film and details of any upcoming screenings and to buy a DVD, visit the website at: <https://www.secretspitfires.com/>

#### **Synopsis:**

*In 1940, the Germans destroyed the Spitfire factories in Southampton and believed they had ended the threat from their nemesis. But unknown to them, the British were building Spitfires in secret. Salisbury, Trowbridge, Reading and return of Southampton become the new major manufacturing centres for Spitfires hidden in secret sheds, garages, bus depots, a hotel, even bedrooms. Secret workforce, mainly made up of unskilled young girls, boys, women, elderly men and a handful of engineers, built almost half of 22,000 Spitfires, other half built at the shadow factory in Castle Bromwich. An achievement that was instrumental in winning the Battle of Britain.*

*Witnesses tell the story of this amazing achievement, recounting times of terrible sadness as well as joyous times that included GI dances, a Glenn Miller concert and a Joe Louis boxing match. Set against a backdrop of picturesque English countryside, we talk to 90 year old veterans who as teenagers built the aircraft in their local villages and towns, along with stories from famous ATA pilots Mary Ellis and Joy Lofthouse. Modern-day fighter pilots tell us their stories for whom the Spitfire holds a special place in history. This incredible story concludes with Dame Vera Lynn reciting a moving poem written by a Spitfire pilot.*

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/secretspitfires](http://www.facebook.com/secretspitfires)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/secretspitfires](http://www.twitter.com/secretspitfires)

### **The Book**

#### **Secret Spitfires: Britain's Hidden Civilian Army**

192 pages. Published by The History Press. Available in Hardcover or Kindle Edition.

#### **Synopsis**

September 1940: In the midst of the Second World War, the Luftwaffe unleashed a series of devastating raids on Southampton, all but destroying its spitfire factories. But production didn't stop. Instead, manufacturing of this iconic fighter moved underground, to secret locations staffed by women, children and non-combatant men. With little engineering experience between them, they built a fleet of one of the greatest war planes that has ever existed. This is their story.