

Immediate release

## UP, UP AND AWAY FOR SECRET SPITFIRES MEMORIAL

FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN FOR TRIBUTE TO SALISBURY'S SECRET WARTIME CONTRIBUTION TAKES OFF

- **Full-size Spitfire replica to be erected almost 30ft high at Salisbury RFC following unanimous Council approval**
- **During WWII Salisbury residents, many of them women, produced over 2,000 Spitfires in total secrecy**
- **Campaign launches to raise an initial £100,000 for memorial build and maintenance**
- **British Armed Forces' most senior female officer, Air Marshal Sue Gray attends launch event and offers support**

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

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

**Salisbury, 15.10.19:** The Secret Spitfires Memorial fundraising campaign was officially launched today at Salisbury Cathedral by the Secret Spitfire Charity, alongside stars and creators of the 2016 film *The Secret Spitfires* following Wiltshire Council's approval of plans for an extraordinary memorial.

The campaign is initially aiming to raise £100,000 in donations to fund the building and maintenance of a life-size fibreglass Spitfire, which will serve as a lasting tribute to the hundreds of young girls, women, boys, elderly men and handful of engineers of Salisbury who contributed to an astonishing part of the city's history.

Following the bombing of Southampton's Spitfire production factories, over 2,000 of Britain's most iconic aircraft (around 10% of the total ever made) – the nemeses of the Luftwaffe – were built by Salisbury residents in a covert scheme which operated out of locations across the city centre and up to Old Sarum, High Post and beyond at Chattis Hill.

The Charity was proud to receive the support of the British Armed Forces' most senior female military officer, Air Marshal Sue Gray, through her attendance at the launch event. As an Engineer Officer and the RAF's Science Technology Engineering and Maths champion, Air Marshal Gray's presence honoured the achievements of the secret workforce, the majority of whom were young women exposed to engineering for the first time.

The previously untold story of Salisbury's Spitfires was brought to wide attention by the film *The Secret Spitfires*, released in 2016. Directed and produced by Ethem Cetintas & Karl Howman, it sparked the imagination of the public, none more so than that of Chris Whalley. Whalley, the retired President of Salisbury Rugby Football Club – whose car park was formerly Spitfire Factory Number One and where the memorial will be located – devised the idea for the memorial and is spearheading the project.

The proposal for the memorial sailed through the planning process with no opposition from residents, Salisbury and Wiltshire Councils earlier in the year. Following this, the Secret Spitfire Charity was established to manage the build and maintenance. It is intended that enough money will be raised in time to enable the memorial to be built and installed in time for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain in Summer 2020.

Speaking on behalf of the Secret Spitfire Charity, Chris said: *“After months of planning, we are delighted to have received approval for the memorial, which will commemorate the vital contribution Salisbury made to winning WWII. It will be an impactful addition to the City’s landscape and celebrate our Spitfire heritage for many, many, years to come. Now – to raise the money!”*

Air Marshal Sue Gray said: *“I am delighted to have been invited to help mark the launch of this campaign, that will highlight the achievements of these outstanding people and their amazing contribution to the country.”*

Salisbury’s Norman Parker, the film’s historian and Spitfire engineer during the war, who starred in *Secret Spitfires*, said: *“It gives me so much pleasure to see how the story of the secret Spitfires has spread and garnered such support since the release of the film. The memorial will be the latest chapter in an incredible tale. The people of Salisbury should be very proud of the contribution their city made to winning WWII.”*

Ethem Cetintas, director and producer of *The Secret Spitfires* film, added: *“I couldn’t think of a more appropriate and magnificent memorial to a group of extraordinary people, many of whom I had the great pleasure of meeting and whom are sorely missed. It will be a spectacular sight to see a Salisbury Spitfire finally taking centre stage in full view, high in the air where it belongs.”*

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.

Lloyd’s Bank in Blue Boar Row will also be holding a month-long exhibition celebrating the Secret Spitfires of Salisbury in their main hall from 15th October.

#### **Salisbury’s Secret Spitfires Memorial – key facts and figures:**

Initial fundraising target – £100,000

Location - Salisbury RFC, Castle Road; the former site of Spitfire Factory Number One

Core Materials – Fibreglass Spitfire, steel stand, concrete base

Wingspan – 36ft 5in

Nose-tail – 31ft 1in

Height – 9ft 6in

Supporting pole height – 20ft

Total height – 29ft 6in

Weight – Approximately one tonne

Creators – GB Replicas

**ENDS**

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

#### **Notes to Editors**

The film, *The Secret Spitfires*, is available for journalists to stream at <https://vimeo.com/345453117> until Friday 18th October. Please email [info@secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk](mailto:info@secretspitfiresmemorial.org.uk) with your mobile number to receive the password via text message.

## 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, Captain Salisbury RFC 1st XV, Chartered Tax Adviser  
Chris Whalley  
Stephen Whitmore, Partner, Wilsons Solicitors

## The Secret Spitfires (2016 film):

A few copies of the original film are available to buy behind the bar at Salisbury RFC.

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/>

*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, a small market town in the south of England become a major centre for manufacturing Spitfires, hidden in sheds, garages, back gardens, a bus depot and a hotel. With a workforce mainly made up of unskilled young girls, boys, women, elderly men and a handful of engineers, over 2000 Spitfires were built, 10% of the total build, becoming instrumental in winning the war.*

*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 veterans who as teenagers built the aircraft in their local villages and towns, and we hear from modern-day fighter pilots for whom the Spitfire holds a special place in history. This incredible story starts and concludes with Dame Vera Lynn reciting a moving poem written by a Spitfire pilot.*

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