
“SILVER SPITFIRE”: RESTORATION OF ICONIC AIRCRAFT COMPLETE

Schaffhausen/Goodwood, 8th July 2019 – IWC Schaffhausen and Boulton Flight Academy are delighted to announce that the restoration of the “Silver Spitfire” is complete. The unique surface of polished aluminium highlights the iconic silhouette of the British aircraft in a way never seen before. The “Silver Spitfire”, with the new G-IRTY registration, has been taking off for flight tests this month, before embarking on an unprecedented flight around the world in August.

The ambitious goal of “Silver Spitfire – The Longest Flight” is to circumnavigate the world in a Spitfire. IWC is supporting Steve Boulton Brooks and Matt Jones with their expedition as official time keeper and main partner. Never before in the history of aviation has the legendary British aircraft embarked on such a long and arduous journey. The two British pilots, and founders of Boulton Flight Academy, will fly the propeller-driven aeroplane around the world, covering a distance of over 43,000 kilometres and visiting some 30 countries on their way.

The original Supermarine Spitfire MX.IX, with the historic registration MJ.271, was built in Castle Bromwich back in 1943. Around 15 specialised engineers from Duxford’s Aircraft Restoration Company have worked tirelessly over the past two years, and at long last, the complex restoration programme is complete.

“The final result is simply breathtaking. Thanks to the shiny surface of polished aluminium, the beautiful silhouette of this iconic aircraft – with the unmistakable elliptical wings – is visible in its purest form. I am looking forward to the test flights and the start of this unique adventure,” says Christoph Grainger-Herr, CEO of IWC Schaffhausen.

A LABOUR OF LOVE

The restoration was a Herculean task for everyone involved. A Spitfire is made up of tens of thousands of distinct parts. More than 20,000 rivets, for example, had to be individually inspected, cleaned and, if necessary, replaced. The goal of everyone involved was to keep the Spitfire MX.IX in its original condition, as far as possible, and procuring the different spare parts proved to be a real challenge.

To begin with, the aircraft had no instrument panel and no flying instruments, and large parts of the hydraulic system, the undercarriage legs and the propeller were no longer in their original condition. All these additional components had to be procured and fitted at great expense.

The fuselage and wings of the aircraft were polished in a multi-stage process, using various compounds and pads. Importantly, this intricate process managed to preserve a unique patina, which had been caused by exhaust fumes tarnishing the Spitfire’s fuselage, during its many years of active service.

TECHNICAL UPDATES USING ORIGINAL COMPONENTS

Beneath its sleek exterior, the “Silver Spitfire” also received several internal system upgrades to prepare it for its daring mission. Among other things, the engineers installed additional fail-safe radio systems, fuel pumps, and vacuum pumps. These back-up systems will ensure that the pilots, the aircraft and the mission are not jeopardised, if any component fails during the flight.

Also, because the “Silver Spitfire” has a total of eight fuel tanks instead of two, various new pipes, valves and pumps had to be fitted. In addition, the powerful Rolls-Royce Merlin 70 engine, with an output of over 1700 hp, was given a thorough overhaul and is now ready for another 500 flying hours.

“Luckily, we were able to reuse as many original parts as possible, which has allowed us to retain the unique character of this strikingly beautiful aircraft. The “Silver Spitfire” is, without a doubt, one of the most original airworthy Spitfires in the world,” notes Gerry Jones, Chief Engineer at Boulton Flight Academy.

Just a few days ago flight testing began and, over the next weeks, the crew will familiarise themselves with the aircraft and its flight behaviour, eradicating any teething troubles. The start of the expedition is scheduled for the 5th August from Goodwood Aerodrome.

- #IWCheritage playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZsr7PIRNuw&list=PLatsy8T2hs5rDF5QiEJdA5tUThiXfCMo> (subtitles available in 13 languages)

- 360° cockpit tour
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxYJynJejiU>

BOULTBEE FLIGHT ACADEMY

Boulton Flight Academy is the world’s first Spitfire training school and approved Spitfire flight provider and is owned by British pilots Matt Jones and Steve Boulton-Brooks. Boulton Flight Academy offer Spitfire experience flights and a ground-breaking Spitfire flight simulator to non-pilots and Spitfire training to certified pilots. Boulton Flight Academy offers flights and experiences around the UK in an ever expanding number of locations. Their headquarters is based at Goodwood Aerodrome, West Sussex, its proximity to the white cliffs of Beachy Head and the Needles mean the Spitfire flying experience can be conducted around one of the most iconic landscapes on the south coast of the United Kingdom. Matt Jones and Steve Boulton-Brooks have partnered with IWC Schaffhausen to bring to fruition their dream of flying an original Spitfire around the world in “Silver Spitfire – The Longest Flight”.

IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN

With a clear focus on technology and development, the Swiss watch manufacturer IWC Schaffhausen has been producing timepieces of lasting value since 1868. The company has gained an international reputation based on a passion for innovative solutions and technical ingenuity. One of the world's leading brands in the luxury watch segment, IWC crafts masterpieces of Haute Horlogerie at their finest, combining supreme precision with exclusive design. As an ecologically and socially responsible company, IWC is committed to sustainable production, supports institutions around the globe in their work with children and young people, and maintains partnerships with organisations dedicated to environmental protection.

DOWNLOADS

Images of the "Silver Spitfire" can be downloaded free of charge at press.iwc.com

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