



THE RATCLIFFE SPITFIRE P9503

Supported by The Leonard Stillwell Bursary and The Spitfire Society
THE WORLD'S ONLY SPITFIRE BUILT BY STUDENTS

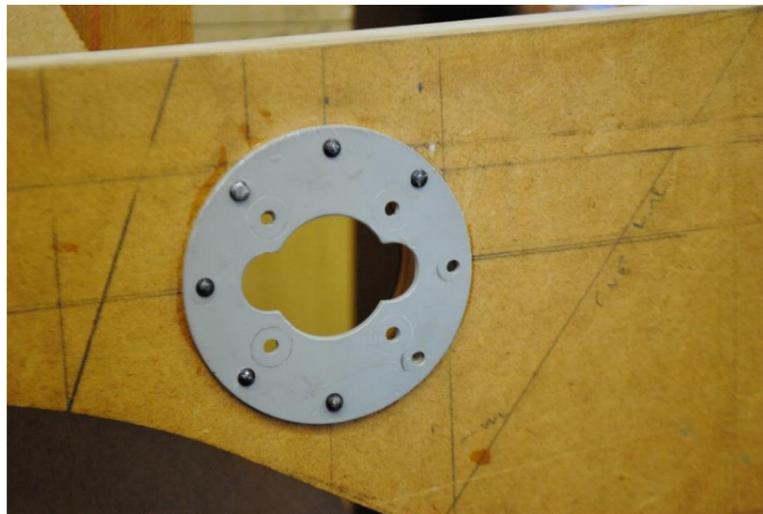
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2016 brings us to the fourth year of the project. To answer the first question that we are always asked, there is no definitive date when we anticipate the project to be completed, but in the spirit of all good New Years' wishes, let's hope that 2016 brings us closer to our goal.

The Build

As we are currently still limited to building the project in the Art Department, what we can achieve is becoming increasingly restricted. All the frames for the fuselage are made, as is the entire tail section which includes the fin, rudder, horizontal stabiliser and elevator. All hinges are in place, and as a unit, it can be



assembled and looks impressive. We have recently had quite a radical re-think about how we will finish the aircraft. Having had the intention to skin the aeroplane in 1.5mm flexi-ply, and begun doing this for the leading edge of the rudder and some of the lower fin, we have now discussed the potential of using aluminium sheet. The advantages of doing so are fairly obvious, not least of which the 'feel' of the aircraft will be far more authentic, it will weather correctly and feel cold as only metal can. Aluminium will also take the many curves that make up the Spitfire's beautiful shape

more easily than the plywood, which, although flexible, does not flow as well as aluminium. Compound curves would also require steaming of the sheet material, which is something we have done, but it is quite an involved process and dolly and hammers are a great technique to teach the students! We remain extremely wary of skinning at the moment, as the Art room is not the safest place to do this sort of work as the risks of damage are high.

Work has begun on the wing spars as well as the ribs (23 per side), and we are also working on detailing some of the frames that will be visible in the cockpit, such as Frame 8 which needs hundreds of correctly-sized and shaped rivets positioning on its exposed side.

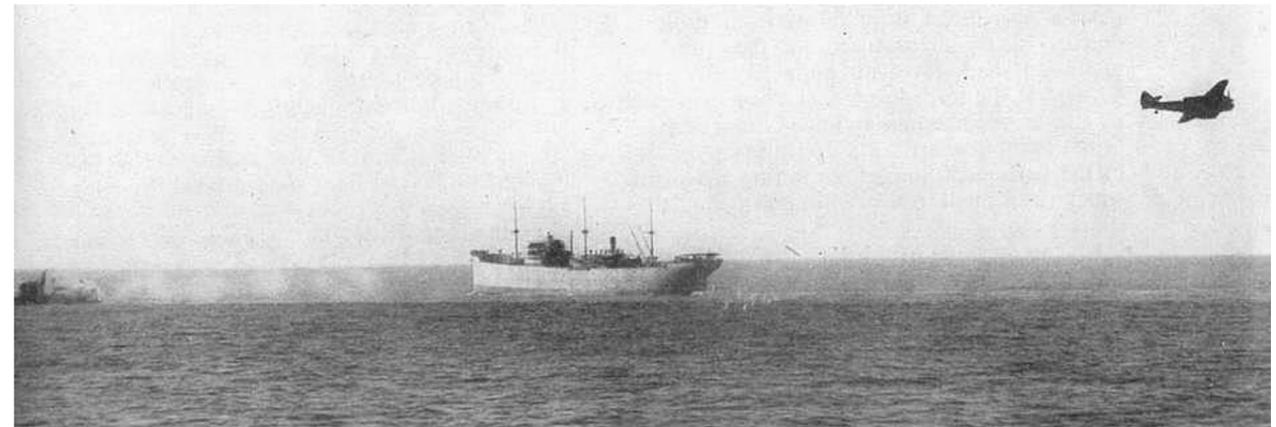
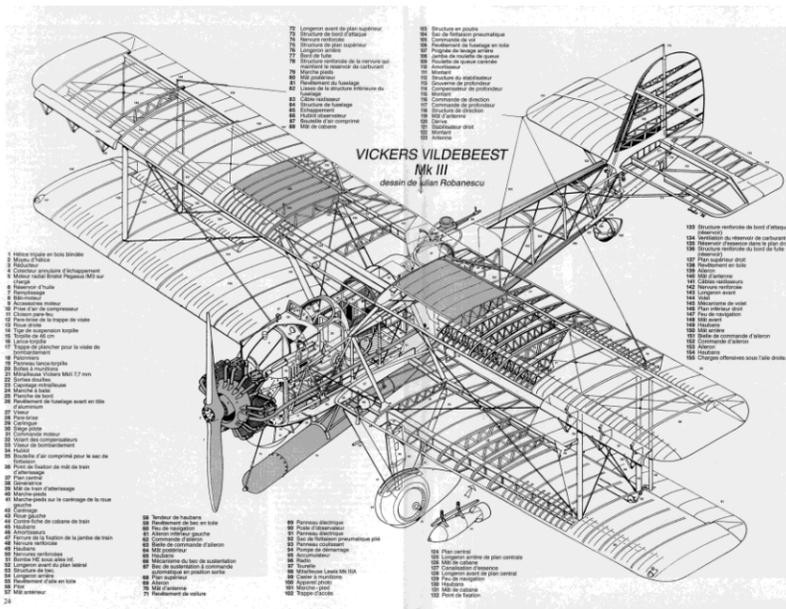


The Spitfire Simulator

Students have begun getting to grips with our Mk1a Spitfire simulator software. Running IL2 Cliffs of Dover, it is the most authentic Mk1a simulator I have currently found, having the capability of almost endless adjustments, from an arcade style game that allows novices to get an easy feel for very basic flight characteristics, to full realism, where the pilot starts on the ramp with a cold engine and must follow the correct start-up procedures before taxiing to the designated runway and taking off either for a free flight, or fighter or bomber intercept. An example of the software can be seen above; it really is extremely realistic. As has been said before, we will ultimately build this into a fully functioning, ground level cockpit that will reside next to our unique full-size aircraft, but until we move into some form of workshop, and in the spirit of 1940's RAF acronyms, this will be added to the list of 'Jobs on the Back Burner' or JOBBs!

Ratcliffe - A Flying History

The idea for our Education Centre, when it is done, is not only to house our unique replica, but also to afford an appropriate place to bring together the history of flying at Ratcliffe. With this in mind, this is the first in a series of articles highlighting some of those stories. Perhaps the most appropriate place to start would be to look at Paul Baillon's siblings, and in particular one of his brothers, Mark. All of the Baillon children served during the war. Brothers Fl Lt Mark Baillon and Aircraftman L.B. (Brabs) Baillon were in the RAF, their sister, Assistant Section officer M.A. Baillon was in the W.A.A.F, and Corporal R.O. Baillon was in the Army.



But it is Mark's story that we will focus on here. Mark joined Ratcliffe in 1923, the same year as Paul, although he was the youngest of the boys. He distinguished himself at Games and became Head Prefect, leaving the College in 1933. He joined the RAF for a Short Service Commission in 1935, and subsequently was attached to the Fleet Air Arm from 1937-39. It would have been at this time that he almost certainly would have learned the early art of deck landings as well as anti-shiping attacks using torpedoes and bombs. Following his stint with the Navy, Mark returned to the RAF and 42 Squadron, flying continually from the outbreak of hostilities, from September 1939. 42 Squadron was one of only two torpedo strike units in the UK, and it is plain to see that Mark's experience flying with the Navy made him a prime candidate for this duty. Initially flying the very out-dated Vickers Vildebeest bi-plane, in late Spring of 1940 the squadron converted to Bristol



Beauforts, flying mine laying and anti-shipping sorties along the coast of northern Europe.

On the 4th June 1940 Mark was piloting Bristol Beaufort I L4483 AW-L and was returning from a training flight to RAF St Eval. The wind had picked up since their departure, and a misjudgement was made on final approach, causing the aircraft to undershoot the runway, where it struck the roof of a house and dived into a hay field, coming to rest approximately 100 yards northwest of the aerodrome. It is quite probable that, having only very recently converted to the faster and more rugged Beaufort, that the cause of the crash could also be put down to a lack of time on type. Mark together with Flying Officer Lloyd were uninjured, but Flight Sergeant MacAskill suffered minor injuries.

The squadron were kept very busy flying a variety of unescorted anti-shipping and mine-laying operations, both in the English Channel and off the coast of Norway. Later in June they carried out an attack on the key German battleship *Scharnhorst* during which three aircraft were lost. Returning from one of these operations on December 28th 1940, having attacked a tanker off Trondheim, Norway, Mark's Beaufort, N1162, AW-G was last seen off Sumburgh, Shetland. She failed to return; the cause of the crash is not known. The logbook and some wreckage was later found off Kirkwall in Orkney. The aircraft's crew, whose bodies were never found were: F/Lt M.R. Baillon, MiD, P/O L.S. Hill, RCAF, P/O J.H. Gow and Sgt C.F. Young.



This was exactly a month to the day after Paul was lost flying Spitfire R6631.

Mark's name is inscribed on the Royal Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede.

"...overlooking the Thames on Cooper's Hill four miles from Windsor, commemorates the names of over 20,000 airmen who were lost in the

Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom



and North and Western Europe and who have no known graves. They served in all commands from Bombers to Maintenance, and came from all parts of the Commonwealth as well as countries in Europe which had been taken by the Germans (such as Denmark, the Netherlands, or Poland) and whose airmen continued to fight in the ranks of the Royal Air Force. The memorial was designed by Sir Edward Maufe with sculpture by Vernon Hill and ceilings by John Hutton." findagrave.com

