



Last of its kind Supermarine Spitfire to be auctioned for charity

P9374, one of only two original Mk. 1 Spitfires to still be flying, is to be donated by the American entrepreneur and philanthropist who masterminded its painstaking restoration, and offered in the Exceptional Sale on 9 July

This summer, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of France and the Battle of Britain, Christie's London is proud to present a unique and remarkable piece of British history at auction: an authentic and immaculately restored Vickers Supermarine Spitfire Mk.1A – P9374/G-MK1A.

This Spitfire, a thing of beauty but also an iconic war machine that helped save Britain in 1940, and ultimately to win the Second World War, will be offered in The Exceptional Sale on 9 July 2015, with an estimate of £1,500,000-2,500,000. For more on the history of Spitfire P9374 and the remarkable story of its painstaking restoration, see our [full interactive documentary presentation](#), featuring videos, interviews and picture galleries.

There are only two remaining Mk.1 models restored to the original specification and still flying today, P9374 and N3200, both belonging to the American philanthropist and art collector Thomas Kaplan. As part of a generous gift, Spitfire P9374 will be sold at Christie's to benefit the [RAF Benevolent Fund](#) and [Panthera](#), a leading wildlife conservation charity. Spitfire N3200 will be going to the [Imperial War Museum Duxford](#). 'As history tells us all,' says Kaplan, 'there comes a time when one simply has to step up... to act with passion, and to remember with gratitude the few that actually do.'

In September 1980 the wreckage of Spitfire P9374 emerged from the sands of Calais beach where it had crash-landed after being shot down on 24 May 1940 during the air battle of Dunkirk. Flying Officer Peter Cazenove, later a veteran of the 'Great Escape', was flying the aircraft when it was attacked and hit. Before executing his belly-landing on Calais beach, Cazenove had radioed that he was OK, adding, 'Tell mother I'll be home for tea!'



Explore the full story of the discovery and reconstruction of Spitfire P9374. This [interactive documentary](#) goes behind the scenes at Duxford Aerodrome to follow its extraordinary restoration. Image courtesy of the Peter R Arnold Collection

Cazenove was soon captured and taken as a Prisoner of War, while Spitfire P9374 was consumed by successive tides and sunk deeper into the sands. Sadly, Cazenove passed away shortly before the recovery of his aircraft.

Post-recovery the Spitfire went first to the Musée d'Air at Le Bourget, Paris, and subsequently to further collections until the parts eventually ended up with the Aircraft Restoration Company / Historic Flying Ltd. at Duxford, who have since brought this remarkable Spitfire back to life. Twelve highly skilled engineers have spent three years carrying out what is considered to be the most authentic restoration of an original Mk.1 Spitfire to date, incorporating many components from the original plane into the build.

The completed aircraft successfully returned to flight for the first time since the Second World War on September 1, 2011. It was flown by John Romain, Pilot and Chief Engineer at the Aircraft Restoration Company, who later remarked, 'This is a fantastic restoration to be justifiably proud of. Spitfire P9374 is a truly lovely aircraft, and she flies beautifully.'

Says Thomas Kaplan: 'When my great childhood friend, Simon Marsh, and I embarked upon this project, it was to pay homage to those who [Winston] Churchill called "the Few", the pilots who were all that stood between Hitler's darkness and what was left of civilisation. The upcoming events of July 9th are, more than anything else, concrete gestures of gratitude and remembrance for those who prevailed in one of the most pivotal battles in modern history.'

Auction times

9 July - The Exceptional Sale 2015
London, King Street

Viewing times

23–24 May
VE Day Anniversary Air Show
IWM Duxford
Cambridgeshire
CB22 4QR

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