



The replica Supermarine Spitfire bought by Michael Oliver

Aircraft due to be auctioned at Goodwood

Businessman swoops for replica 'Spit'

By James Wilson

A REPLICA Supermarine Spitfire owned by The Royal British Legion has been sold to a Knutsford businessman before it was due to go up for auction.

The replica plane was due to be auctioned at the Goodwood Revival sale on September 17 and had attracted a pre-sale estimate of £50,000 to £60,000.

But the new owner, Michael Oliver, chairman of Knutsford-based Oliver Valves stepped in before the auction day.

He will now house the Spitfire with his collection of cars in the town at the Parkgate Industrial Estate.

Before he took possession, he agreed that the Spitfire could be used by the RAF at the Battle of Britain commemorations at York Minster on September 19 and at a graduation ceremony at RAF Cranwell on September 30, the RAF's training college in Lincolnshire.

He will then be making the Spitfire available to the Legion for future fundraising events.

Michael said: "I'm 72 now and I spent the first six years of my life hiding from the German bombers during the war.

"What those guys did in the war was magnificent - this plane really shows what Britain is."

The replica represents aircraft number W3850, which was flown by Pilot Officer Joe Atkinson, later Flight Lieutenant Sir Joe Atkinson KCB CB DFC, over France on 13 October, 1941, in an attempt to protect Blenheim bombers attacking port installations.

Pilot Officer Atkinson, in formation with

other aircraft from 609 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Airforce (West Riding of Yorkshire), engaged and damaged a number of German Messerschmitt 109s during this flight. He was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Michael added: "I'm absolutely thrilled to have this tremendous machine as part of my collection and am very pleased that The Royal British Legion is benefiting.

"It seems very fitting for it to be used at the Battle of Britain commemorations and to support Legion fundraising."

Stephen Cooper, commercial director of The Royal British Legion, said: "This is a fantastic outcome. The offer was very generous and the buyer is being most kind in making this iconic Spitfire available for worthy causes."

Stuart Gendall, the legion's director of corporate communications, added: "We are delighted the Spitfire is going to such a good home, and the proceeds will help fund our vital work in caring for and supporting Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families."

Built in 2008 by members of the Ripon Branch of the Legion in order to publicise their work, the Spitfire took 10 months and 11,000 man hours to construct and was built using original Supermarine blueprints and original Spitfire parts.

Since its construction, the Spitfire has been used at a variety of Legion branch and regional events, and at RAF Leeming events, including the bases 70th anniversary celebrations.

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The plane will be made available to the RBL for fundraising