

1944

SPITFIRE T Mk VIII

MT818



Originally built as a Type 359 Spitfire F.Mk.VIII and allocated to the Controller of Research and Development at High Post in June 1944, the airframe carrying the Royal Air Force serial number MT818 and constructor's number 6S/729058 was purchased by Vickers in February 1945 and was converted to the Type 502 Spitfire T.Mk.VIII two-seat demonstration trainer at Chilbolton, first flying in September 1946.

G-AIDN flew in its demonstration – and sometimes racing – role with Vickers from 1947 to 1952. During this period G-AIDN was sent to RAF Boscombe Down for handling trials.

Stored at Chilbolton from 1952 to 1956, again becoming active for a number of air races, before being moved to the Hampshire Aero Club in August 1956 and owned by Vivian Bellamy at Eastleigh from September 1956 to 1963. During Viv Bellamy's ownership, G-AIDN took part in several cross country air races – including the 1961 King's Cup Air Race in a light blue colour scheme with the racing number 99.

G-AIDN was sponsored by Billy Butlin in the 1959 London to Paris Air Race becoming the fastest piston engined aircraft to travel between London and Paris.

In 1963 G-AIDN was sold to John Fairey, the son of Richard Fairey, founder of Fairey Aviation – for £2000.

From 1978 to 1983 G-AIDN was the property of George F. Miller of Baginton and later Dinas Powys and during his ownership the two seat Spitfire was damaged while landing at Baginton on 6 February 1978. It was repainted at RAF St Athan in 1980, emerging as MT818/G-M.

MT818 was operated by Tillamook NAS Air Museum in Oregon from 1997 to 2002 and then passed into the hands of Provenance Fighter Sales in Murrieta, California. It was then sold to Paul Andrews for the G2 collection, dismantled at Tillamook and was subsequently shipped back to West Sussex in October 2007.

Restoration at Kemble, Gloucestershire – including the installation of a Mark 266 Merlin engine – has since been completed and MT818 appeared from 30 June to 5 July at the Masterpiece London 2011 event at the South Grounds of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

G-AIDN is the only surviving Spitfire prototype in existence. Now operated by Biggin Hill Heritage Hangar.