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NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

SILVER SPITFIRE TO FLY AROUND THE WORLD



Artist's impression ©John Dibbs / Simon Smith

## Iconic British Spitfire Aircraft to be Restored for a New Audience in a World First Circumnavigation of the Globe

Today marks the official launch of an extraordinary project which will come to fruition in Summer 2019 when a newly restored original Mk IX Spitfire aircraft will begin a spectacular flight around the world. Flown by British pilots Matt Jones and Steve Brooks, the iconic aircraft will depart from the UK westwards and embark on a journey of more than four months in a physically, mechanically and logistically challenging adventure.

**Silver Spitfire - The Longest Flight** is a world-first project to fly a newly restored original Spitfire aircraft around the world in a celebration of engineering, design excellence and as an inspiration to all those who will experience this unique aircraft in some of the world's most iconic and beautiful locations. The expedition is the brainchild of British pilots **Matt Jones and Steve Brooks**. They located a long-lost Spitfire aircraft and are restoring it into a shining silver aircraft. Starting in summer 2019, they want to bring this aircraft to a global audience in a flight around the world, which will cover a distance of approximately 27,000 miles. The expedition's principal sponsor is **IWC Schaffhausen**, a leading manufacturer of Pilot's Watches from Switzerland.

Matt Jones said: *"The decision to fly the Silver Spitfire around the world was an instinctive one to honour the plane's history, the people who built, maintained and flew it through more than 50 missions, and we want to commemorate those who lost their lives in the pursuit of freedom. It's going to be exciting to bring the Spitfire back to many of the places it has served and to fly it for audiences who will see this beautiful and historic machine for the very first time".*

Accompanying pilots Matt Jones and Steve Brooks are Project Director **Lachlan Monro** and Chief Engineer **Gerry Jones**, who are passionate about bringing the Silver Spitfire to a new audience and fulfilling their long-held dreams of flying this historic aircraft around the world. Steve Brooks commented: *"Our aim for the flight is to inspire everyone who encounters this wonderful Silver Spitfire to achieve their ambitions,*

*however daring, unusual or challenging. The chance to showcase this piece of British precision engineering for a truly global audience is a pilot's Everest and an unmissable opportunity."*

**Silver Spitfire – The Longest Flight** is also a celebration of the people, the engineering and the design of this classic aircraft as the 'best of British'. In the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the British Royal Air Force, the flying masterpiece is restored and presented to audiences around the world. The GREAT Britain campaign is proud to support the expedition which will tell the story of British engineering to audiences all around the world. International Trade Secretary, **Dr Liam Fox MP**, said: *"The Spitfire is an iconic symbol of world-class aerospace engineering, and I'm delighted to see this unique piece of British history brought to a global audience. Extraordinary projects such as this are exactly what the GREAT campaign is there to promote - showcasing the best of Britain to the world, encouraging people to visit, study and do business here."*

The principal sponsor of **Silver Spitfire – The Longest Flight** is IWC Schaffhausen, a leading luxury watch manufacturer from Switzerland. The company, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, was founded 1868 by the American watchmaking pioneer Florentine Ariosto Jones. Combining Swiss craftsmanship with modern American manufacturing methods, he aimed to produce the best pocket watches of his time. To this day, IWC's six watch families bring together precision engineering and timeless design. IWC is particularly famous for its Pilot's Watches, characterised by their design reminiscent of cockpit instruments. Their history harkens back to the early days of aviation when pilots needed a reliable navigation instrument for the cockpit. The first watch IWC explicitly built for aviators in 1936 was engineered to cope with the harsh conditions pilots often faced. In 1948 IWC developed the Mark 11, a navigator's wristwatch for the British Royal Air Force (RAF) with a movement resistant to magnetic fields. In 2003, IWC introduced a Spitfire themed collection.

The plane will be restored and unveiled to the public in **Spring 2019**. It will begin with test flights around the UK in the spring and summer, before departing westwards in **Summer 2019**. The precise routing is still being developed and the provisional itinerary includes flying to the USA via Canada, traversing the Arctic before the winter weather arrives. After that, the Spitfire will head towards South East Asia, and India, before flying through the Middle East to reach Europe more than four months later in mid-December. The team will face a daunting task flying the Silver Spitfire through arctic, tropical and desert landscapes, requiring regular refuelling in remote areas unused to civilian aircraft combined with the physical endurance required by the two pilots on this circumnavigation. Fully restored, the aircraft that first flew in 1944 will now fly around the globe some 75 years later.

MJ271, the original MK.IX LF plane (serial number CBAFIX970) was **one of the original Spitfire aircraft made in Castle Bromwich in 1943 by British manufacturers Vickers Supermarine Ltd.** It flew more than 51 missions. It was in storage in a museum before its restoration began early in 2017. Over 24 painstaking months, the Spitfire is being restored piece by piece, seeing the 80,000 rivets and many parts being entirely dismantled, checked, cleaned and restored before being unveiled in its glory in spring 2019. Highly polished to reveal its iconic shape and to highlight its precision engineering the Spitfire will be renamed the Silver Spitfire with a new call sign G-IRTY. The aircraft that first flew in 1944 will now fly around the globe some 75 years later as one of the most original Spitfire aircraft in the world.

Silver Spitfire – The Longest Flight launches in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Royal Air Force, and is proud to be part of the **RAF 100 celebrations**. The launch of the project coincides with the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in the Battle of Britain, in which the Spitfire took a hugely significant part.

The Silver Spitfire will be accompanied by a specially adapted support aircraft for filming and unique viewing opportunities. Stamp TV Producer Ben Uttley and Producer and Director of Photography John Dibbs will fly in the support aircraft throughout the journey capturing this incredible journey in a documentary. This global adventure will also be captured in a book.

**For all media enquiries or for further information please contact Charlie Morison or Jo Calam at Campbell Bell Communications on 01931 713288 or jo@campbell-bell.com.**

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Key Facts and Timeline

15 September 2018	Official Expedition Launch
Spring 2019	Aircraft build completed
April 2019	Aircraft unveiling
May 2019	Round the UK test flight
August 2019	Flight Departure – the Longest Flight begins travelling westwards around the globe touching down in over 30 countries many of which have special associations with the Spitfire aircraft
December 2019	Estimated arrival back in UK

Website	<a href="http://silverspitfire.com">silverspitfire.com</a>
Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/thesilverspitfire">@thesilverspitfire</a>
Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/longestflight">@longestflight</a>
Instagram	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/thesilverspitfire">@thesilverspitfire</a>

### Silver Spitfire Team

#### **Matt Jones – Pilot**



Matt first took to the skies while in the RAF CCF section at Exeter school where he flew Chipmunks. After studying Civil Engineering at Newcastle University and working for an investment bank in London he saw the light and made plans for a career in aviation. He went to the USA where he acquired his first private and professional licences (FAA Commercial CFI, CFII, MEI) and on his return converted to a CAA Frozen ATPL.

Matt's first experience of classic aircraft was in Gore in New Zealand where he converted to the Tiger Moth, his first tail-dragger and at that point hoped but never really dreamed it would be possible to fly vintage aircraft such as the Spitfire. Matt first found work with a business jet management company, Hamlin Jet in Luton. He now manages and captains a Lear45, and also flies a Squirrel helicopter and of course the Spitfire. He is a display pilot and instructor. Matt is the co-founder and managing director of the Boulton Flying Academy.

#### **Steve Brooks – Pilot**



An avid explorer and helicopter pilot who has travelled to over 150 countries and set new records: in 2001, Steve designed and drove the world's first land based vehicle across the Bering Strait from America to Russia and in 2004 became the first person to fly a helicopter from pole to pole. Involved in property development and investment since 1987 when he jointly founded the Boulton Group, Steve owns and manages BoultonLDN an investment and development portfolio of residential, office, and retail property. Steve is also co-founder of clean tech company Synergy Energy which was set up in 2011 to invest time and capital into new technologies and businesses which efficiently and sustainably generate, store or reduce the use of energy.

After buying a two seat Spitfire in auction nearly ten years ago, Steve and Matt set up the Boulton Flight Academy to share their passion of Spitfires with as many pilots as possible, and have to date flown over 2,000 people.

## Gerry Jones - Chief Engineer



Gerry or Gerallt to his fellow Welshmen, was born in North Wales. Having spent his early years with his father, who was a mechanic and his uncle, who was a farmer, a practical and hands on career was the only way forward. Gerry started his apprenticeship in aircraft engineering at Caernarfon Airport when he was just 16 years old, 3 days after leaving school. As part of his apprenticeship, Gerry studied Aeronautical Engineering at Deeside College in Flintshire. At Caernarfon, Gerry worked on a variety of general aviation aircraft, including a DH 89 Dragon Rapide. This is also where he had his first flight in a Spitfire. December 1999 saw a big move from Wales to the south coast of England to work for Goodwood Aircraft Engineering. Whilst at Goodwood, Gerry met his now wife of 13 years and counting! Sarah. They have two boys Daniel and Gareth (a budding engineer himself).

## Lachlan Monro - Project Director



Lachlan is a former British army officer and entrepreneur with 20 years' experience of managing complex businesses in frontier markets around the world. He has always been interested in all things flying; his childhood was immersed in aviation as his father was a career pilot, military and civilian, and so the opportunity to be involved in something where he could combine all his skills and knowledge of managing complex operations, his love of travel and the ultimate flying adventure, was irresistible. Lachlan is managing the operational and commercial aspects of the trip. This includes implementing a wide variety of partnerships, commercial and non-commercial, devising the logistics plan and pulling all aspects together to try and ensure as smooth an expedition as possible!

## Main Sponsor



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.

## Key Partnerships



Stamp Productions are powering the video content of the adventure, Silver Spitfire: The Longest Flight. Founded in 2008 and based in London, Stamp develops and crafts content to inspire audiences, telling stories imaginatively with authenticity and passion. Working with some of the world's greatest brands and rights holders helping them to reach far and connect deeply. Stamp's founder Ben Uttley will executive produce and direct the Silver Spitfire documentary with renowned aerial cinematographer John Dibbs as director of aerial photography.

**GREAT**

**BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND**



The GREAT Britain campaign is the UK Government's most ambitious international marketing campaign ever and showcases the very best of what our whole nation has to offer in order to encourage the world to visit, study and do business with the UK.

Silver Spitfire – The Longest Flight is proud to support the Royal Air Force's 100th birthday as part of the RAF 100 campaign which aims to inspire, to reflect its history and achievements and to celebrate its current work and future plans.



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