

# CHRISTIE'S

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## LAST OF ITS KIND SPITFIRE TO BE AUCTIONED FOR CHARITY

ONE OF TWO ORIGINAL AIRWORTHY MK.1 SPITFIRES TO BE DONATED  
BY AMERICAN ENTREPRENEUR AND PHILANTHROPIST



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*“I wonder what happened to my Spitfire and I wonder if anyone will ever find it?”*  
– Flying Officer Peter Cazenove

**London** – This summer, Christie’s London is honoured 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 (estimate: £1,500,000-2,500,000, *illustrated above*). As we commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of France and the Battle of Britain, Christie’s is proud to mark this moment in history by offering Spitfire P9374 in *The Exceptional Sale* on 9 July 2015.

**Robert Copley, Deputy Chairman Christie’s UK and Head of The Exceptional Sale:** *“Christie’s is proud to be entrusted with the sale of this Spitfire; a truly iconic aircraft which is symbol of the bravery ‘of the few’ in the Battle of Britain. We look forward to seeing this extraordinary Mk.1 Spitfire reach new heights at ‘The Exceptional Sale’, which will be a unique moment in auction house history.”*

There are only two remaining Mk.1 models restored to the original specification and still flying, P9374 and N3200, both belonging to Thomas Kaplan, American philanthropist and art collector. As part of a hugely 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. One of the most instantly recognisable silhouettes in the air, the Spitfire is not just a thing of beauty but a war machine that helped save Britain in 1940 and ultimately to win the Second World War.

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. With eight Browning machine guns hiding beneath elliptical wings, Peter Cazenove, Flying Officer and later a veteran of the 'Great Escape', was flying the aircraft when it was attacked and hit by what is thought to have been a single bullet fired from a Dornier 17-Z bomber. Before executing his belly-landing on Calais beach, Cazenove had radioed that he was OK, and: *"Tell mother I'll be home for tea!"* Cazenove was soon captured as a Prisoner of War and Spitfire P9374 was consumed by successive tides and sunk deeper into the sands; he sadly 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 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, and was flown by John Romain, Pilot and Chief Engineer at the Aircraft Restoration Company who later remarked of P9374: *"This is a fantastic restoration to be justifiably proud of. Spitfire P9374 is a truly lovely aircraft, and she flies beautifully."*

Originally built at the Vickers Armstrong factory in Woolston, Spitfire P9374 was delivered to 92 Squadron at RAF Croydon in March 1940, one of the most celebrated squadrons in the RAF. The Merlin III engine installed in P9374 was built at Rolls-Royce, Derby, on 27 October 1939. During Spitfire P9374's service with 92 Squadron it is known to have been flown by at least eight different pilots, and was almost certainly flown by the Commanding Officer of 92 Squadron, Squadron Leader Roger Bushell, later 'Big X' of the Great Escape fame. Records show that P9374 had a total flight time of 32 hours and 5 minutes at the time of its loss. Spitfire P9374 will be flying again at IWM Duxford in the VE Day Anniversary Air Show on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May, which Christie's looks forward to with great anticipation and excitement.

**Thomas S. Kaplan:** *"When my great childhood friend, Simon Marsh, and I embarked upon this project, it was to pay homage to those who Churchill called "the Few", the pilots who were all that stood between Hitler's darkness and what was left of civilization. The upcoming events of July 9<sup>th</sup> 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. The return to Duxford of N3200, which was itself piloted by the heroic Commander of RAF Duxford, is an act of love for Britain that began with my and Simon's mutual passion for aircraft and desire to enshrine a British legacy. The sale of P9374 for charity is likewise an opportunity to share that passion with others and to benefit causes that have moved me since boyhood. The RAF Benevolent Fund represents a way to honor that breed who gave so much for Britain when its existence was imperiled. In a more similar way than one might realize, we are also highlighting my family's consuming passion, the conservation of the world's imperiled wild cats...other breeds at a pivotal crossroads. By dedicating proceeds to Panthera, now the premier organization focused solely to the conservation of the wild cats and their critical habitats, as well as Oxford University's excellent Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (the WildCRU), which hosts the leading university-based field conservation program, my family wishes to highlight the need to save these species from extinction while there's still time. And so, as history tells us all, 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."*

Please click [HERE](#) to explore an interactive documentary following the full story of this remarkable Spitfire and its restoration. The documentary is accompanied by a separate short video in which Presenter Jodie Kidd and Historian James Holland visit P9374 at IWM Duxford.

## **AUCTION:**

*The Exceptional Sale*

Christie's London, King Street

Thursday, 9 July 2015, 17:00 pm

## **VE DAY ANNIVERSARY AIR SHOW:**

**23-24 MAY**

IWM Duxford

Cambridgeshire

CB22 4QR

## **VIEWING:**

**4-9 JULY**

Churchill War Rooms

Clive Steps

King Charles Street

London SW1A 2AQ

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion) in 2014, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 54 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Shanghai, New Delhi, Mumbai and Dubai.

### **IWM Duxford**

IWM Duxford is Britain's best-preserved Second World War airfield, with a fascinating history that dates back to the First World War. Historic buildings intersperse with state-of-the-art exhibition halls, including *AirSpace* and the *American Air Museum*. Historic aircraft can regularly be seen taking to the skies from Duxford's wartime airfield. Through the rich displays of aircraft and the powerful stories of the men and women involved, we tell the story of the impact of aviation on the nature of war, on people's lives and on the social and economic history of the region. With one of the finest collections of tanks, military vehicles and artillery in the UK, we also show the impact of technological development on war and conflict.

### **The Aircraft Restoration Company / Historic Flying Ltd**

The Aircraft Restoration Company / Historic Flying Ltd is the largest of the specialist aero engineering companies sited at IWM Duxford. From this historic base, the company provides an extensive range of aviation services for aircraft owners. Aircraft Restoration Company has completed many outstanding restorations, both flying and static, for museums, collections and private owners. The company's owner is John Romain, a former Hawker Siddeley and BAE aero engineer. John is also a highly experienced warbird pilot with dozens of different types in his logbook; over 750 hours on Spitfires alone.

### **Thomas S. Kaplan and Daphne Recanati Kaplan**

Thomas S. Kaplan is an American entrepreneur, investor, philanthropist and art collector. In his youth, he developed a love for aircraft...and a passion for wildlife conservation. He later revisited this passion as the co-founder, with his wife Daphne Recanati Kaplan of the conservation groups Panthera and the Orianne Society. Before entering the business world as a natural resources entrepreneur, he pursued the study of history at Oxford, where he earned his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees from the university. In 2014 Dr. Kaplan was decorated as a member of the Order of the Légion d'Honneur of France. In presenting the decoration, the French Ambassador to the United States François Delattre said of Dr. Kaplan: "Through your multifaceted life and your support for an incredible array of causes, I believe you are the very definition of a game changer and Renaissance man - a

young Renaissance man: as Chairman of the Y, as an environmentalist in Brazil, as an entrepreneur, a historian, a philanthropist, an art collector and a politically engaged individual."

### **RAF Benevolent Fund**

RAF Benevolent Fund: The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund is the RAF's leading welfare charity, providing financial, practical and emotional support to all members of the RAF family. We are here for serving and former members of the RAF, as well as their partners and dependants, whenever they need us. We help members of the RAF family deal with a wide range of issues: from childcare and relationship difficulties to injury and disability, and from financial hardship and debt to illness and bereavement. For more information visit: [www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org) Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RAFBF>

### **Panthera**

Panthera, founded in 2006, is devoted exclusively to the conservation of wild cats and their ecosystems. Utilizing the expertise of the world's premier cat biologists, Panthera develops and implements global conservation strategies for the most imperiled large cats – tigers, lions, jaguars, snow leopards, cheetahs, cougars and leopards. Representing the most comprehensive effort of its kind, Panthera works in partnership with local and international NGOs, scientific institutions, local communities and governments around the globe. Visit [Panthera.org](http://Panthera.org) and see the link for [Panthera's Mission Video](#).

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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