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A SPITFIRE TAIL-WHEEL RUBBER TYRE

Late 1940's

The tyre bearing various manufacturers marks, some with "AERO", one with the insignia of the Air Ministry,

DIMENSIONS: 26cm (10^{3/4"}) Wide

STOCK CODE: 26547

HISTORY

The Supermarine Spitfire remains one of the classic fighter aircraft of all time, and certainly one of the most instantly recognizable. In this country it has become a part of folklore- the aeroplane that saved the United Kingdom in the Battle of Britain; a slightly overstated claim but one that is held dear.

In all, an estimated 22,579 Spitfires served in all spheres of the World War II and afterwards. The Spitfire was one of the most effective fighters of its time. It was designed by R.J.Mitchell in 1935. As an act of engineering and certainly of aerodynamic streamlining it was at the cutting edge of technology from the mid 1930's until nearly 1950, and was extensively developed during the period of its service. It encompasses, in one aircraft type, most of the major developments of the end of the piston-engined fighter era. And the Spitfire is synonymous with the most effective aero engine of the War, the Rolls-Royce Merlin.

During the war, largely due to successive targeting by the Luftwaffe, the manufacturing base spread and fragmented from the original Southampton factories of the Supermarine company that had originally designed it - with various different factories manufacturing component parts - to the extent that as the successive generations and refinements of Spitfire evolved it is known to have become difficult to identify the source for some parts.

As production came to halt in the late forties one of the manufacturing companies - making the tyres, is known to have had a debt with another firm, a glass manufacturer in Haslemere,

Surrey - making the glass and perspex cockpit hoods. They settled some of the debt with a consignment of Spitfire wheels. The window firm saw the wheels as being potentially useful for their many trolleys in the factory. The tyres were not all used and largely remained on a shelf in the Haslemere firm since 1949.

On purchasing the lot, LASSCO is delighted to have sold many of the tyres to the owner of one of the few remaining air-worthy Spitfires flying today. Fortuitously, with the vulcanised rubber having been stored in darkness, most of them still retain enough elasticity in the rubber to be pressed into use on the aircraft and have been stockpiled as otherwise expensive consumables.