

Shirley Spitfire Trail



In 1940, the Spitfire, vital to Britain's survival in the Second World War, was being made in Supermarine's Southampton factories. On 24th & 26th September 1940, their factories at Woolston were bombed and production 'dispersed' to over 30 'secret' sites across Southampton and more beyond. Many of these were in Shirley. Follow the trail to find out where some of them are located.

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Key:

- Stop off points
- Points of interest
- Main walking route
- |||| Cross the road with care
- Traffic lights

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Follow these directions to discover more about Shirley and the Spitfire plane.



Start at the St.James' Park building Originally built as the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Report and Control Centre Post No 6 during WW2. At the time, the park was known as

Shirley Recreation Ground. A mobile anti-aircraft gun was also fired from the streets around the park during raids by the Luftwaffe. **From the park, cross in front of St.James' Church and turn right until you reach...**

1 Shirley Parish Hall At the start of WW2, this was a Rechabite Hall that was requisitioned by Auto Metalcraft of Emsworth Road, one of many small sub-contract companies across the country. By 1944, around 60 women and 10 men were making parts for Spitfire jettison fuel tanks and air filters here.

Head along Colebrook Avenue before turning left into Wilton Road and looking out for...

2 16, Wilton Road From 18th June 1943, 'Two Sheds' behind this house were on a list of requisitioned Supermarine sites. They were most likely used to store parts produced at our next stop on Winchester Rd.



The Sunlight Dye Works and Laundry

Shirley Retail Park The Sunlight Dye Works and Laundry stood on the site where the two right-hand units are now located. Requisitioned after the bombing, from November 1940 onwards it was producing "details and sub-assemblies" for Spitfires. **Walking further up Winchester Road you will come to...**

4 Halfords The Hants & Dorset Bus Garage had high ceilings needed for the large jigs used to make the Spitfire's wings. This location was earmarked by Supermarine early on, but had to be forcibly requisitioned from the Fire Service. **Cross Winchester Rd at the lights, down Malvern Rd, towards....**

5 Hollybrook Road Wooden huts once stood where the industrial units on the left are now located. These became the Hollybrook Stores for spare Spitfire parts. Taken over before the bombing, blackout secure corridors between the huts were added and it was in use by the end of September 1940. **Return to Winchester Road via Norham Avenue & Vincent Avenue walking down to...**

6 Petrol Station & The Range This was the site of Seward's Garage, one of the first locations to be taken over by Supermarine. Spitfire fuselages were produced here. After the war, Seward's returned to the top floor and Folland Aircraft of Hamble used the ground floor to make wings for their early jets. **Cross over Winchester Road opposite the Vets and walk down to...**



Seward's Garage

7 St. James Close Here once stood the old coach house of Oatlands House, which became the Light & Law Garage. They ran this together until the early 60s. It is thought they made small parts for Spitfire propellers. **Cross through St.James Close and walk back down St.James Road until you reach...**

8 St. James' Church On the left between the main door and the churchyard wall you can find a black marble memorial to the 'Spitfire Sweethearts'. Reg and Daisy Ralph met whilst working at the Sunlight Laundry. Her sister Florrie, who also worked at the laundry, met Reg's friend Roy Jackman, another Spitfire Maker. There was a double wedding here at St.James' Church on 13th June, 1942.

Return to St.James' Park During WW2, Royal Air Force (RAF) and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) personnel staffed a barrage balloon on the field. The balloon was winched above the Shirley Recreation Ground during air raids to protect the Spitfire factories and local population. 'The Rec' also provided public trench shelters for protection during an air raid.



Produced in association with:

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Workers inside Seward's Garage

Photographs courtesy of Solent Sky Museum & Southampton City Archives.