



Derek Edwards  
(SLIM)  
Jordan  
Paddy Fay

Fulstow 1994

Wing Commander Warren "Smokey" Schrader DFC and bar

Squadron Leader Harvey Sweetman DFC

**THE PREDATOR**  
by Ron Fulstow © 1994

Spitfire Mk IXb ML 407 "OU-V" of 485 (NZ) squadron RAF flown by Flying Officer Johnnie Houlton on D-Day 1944 when, during a patrol behind the invasion beaches of Normandy he became the first allied pilot officially credited with the first two air-to-air combat victories over enemy aircraft following the landings.

Flight Lieutenant Maurice "Red" Mayston

Flying Officer Max Collett M.I.D.

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Doug Starvo  
 Jack Rae  
 Orlanbouts  
 John Palmer  
 Johnnie Houlton  
 King  
 H. Griffiths  
 Johnny Lechevets  
 & L. Aggo  
 Maurice "Red" Mayston  
 Ken Salt  
 Eddie Atkin's  
 Donald Hugh (Tommy)

Harry McLeod  
 15th  
 Vic Sturt  
 Vic Hall  
 Vic Eynon



# WINGS OF THE WARRIORS

*Limited edition fine art print series*

## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

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"There was considerable surface flooding in our patrol area, it was quite murky and unfriendly looking down there and it wasn't difficult to imagine ourselves as predators, which of course we were at that time. There you are, there's a title for your painting." (Johnnie Houlton, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1990).

With Johnnie Houlton's remarks ringing in his ears the artist went back to the beginning; discarding the original sketches of the combat scene. The challenge of showing the classic Spitfire, all grace and elegance, as a menacing machine of destruction hinged entirely upon creating the appropriate mood. It appears to have worked as Houlton's reaction when confronted with the finished painting was a simple, emphatic "Yes."

Johnnie Houlton also made the point that his involvement with the Spitfire was relatively brief and, although he disapproved of the tendency of some to deify the Spitfire, he thought the enduring existence of ML 407 might lend weight to their view. His point was taken and therefore this print is dedicated to the aircraft; its birth, its service career and its story since its guns were last fired in anger.

The story of ML 407 cannot at the time of writing be concluded as this unique aircraft is still flying. Its very existence fifty-four years after it was first flown is a story of remarkable coincidence, luck, passion, determination and courage. It cannot all be told here, but fortunately writers, historians and others have documented ML 407 and its history in considerable depth, notably Hugh Smallwood's *Second TAF Spitfire. The story of Spitfire ML 407* published by Solo Enterprises, UK.

Built at Castle Bromwich near Birmingham, ML 407 was taken on charge by the RAF and delivered to 485 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF on April 29, 1944, the delivery flight was made by ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary) ferry pilot Miss Jackie Sorour.

ML 407 was selected by Flying Officer Johnnie Houlton, RNZAF, a 21-year-old from Christchurch. The aircraft became "his" for the duration of his stay with 485 Squadron, although, due to a shortage of aircraft, other squadron pilots also flew her, including Maurice Mayston, one of the signatories of the print (and Houlton's number two on D-Day).

Houlton's ground crew, flight mechanic Ron White (fitter), Vic Strange (rigger) and Michael Fahy (electrician) took charge of '407 and applied the squadron identity code "OU" and individual aircraft letter "V."

'407's first operational duties commenced the following day (May 1, 1944) escorting bombers to targets in France. A week later ML 407 was again flying escort duties until 20 May when, with a 500-pound bomb slung under the fuselage and Johnnie Houlton at the controls, a V-1 flying bomb site in France was dive-bombed.

From this time on there was much activity attacking ground targets, a decidedly unhealthy occupation as ground-fire took a heavy toll of aircraft engaged in this work. ML 407 however bore a charmed life.

By now the build-up for the invasion of "Fortress Europe" was gathering momentum and on June 3, 1944, ML 407 was given her "invasion colours." This entailed the painting of broad black and white identification stripes on the rear fuselage, upper and lower wing surfaces and the repositioning of the letter "V" (as in the painting). The serial number ML 407 was totally obscured.

D-Day, June 6, 1944, marks the point at which ML 407 began its journey into the history books. With the invasion in full swing the air above and around the invasion areas were alive with allied aircraft. ML 407, flown by Johnnie Houlton, leading Blue Section (Flt/Lt K J Macdonald, F/O M C Mayston (Houlton's number two) and Flt/Sgt E G Atkins) were flying a beach patrol south of "Omaha" beach when a Junkers Ju 88 bomber was sighted, chased



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he chased and damaged a Me 109. The following weeks were spent flying patrols, escorting bombers, armed recce's, fighter sweeps and attacking ground targets.

The Ardennes offensive (the Battle of the Bulge) also saw ML 407 in support of ground troops with little evidence of air activity by a severely depleted Luftwaffe. However, '407 wasn't finished with the German Air Force just yet. On December 26, 1944, during a sweep over the Ardennes a Messerschmitt 262 jet aircraft was encountered and attacked by the Squadron. ML 407 on this occasion was in the hands of Warrant Officer A J Downer. Strikes were observed on the Me 262 but the results were inconclusive.

ML 407 went on to serve with 341 (Free French) Squadron as "NL-D," 308 (Polish) Squadron as "ZF-R," 349 (Belgian) Squadron as "GE-P," 322 (Norwegian) Squadron as "AH-B" and ultimately back to 485 (New Zealand) Squadron as "OU-B," at which time its operational career ended.

From September 1945 until July 1950, '407 languished in storage until acquired by Vickers-Armstrongs when it was converted into a two seat fighter trainer. In 1951 it taken on charge by the Irish Air Corps with the serial number "162" until 1960 when it was "demoted" for use as an instructional air frame.

In 1968 "162" was sold to Samuelson Films at Cricklewood, it was then sold in 1970 to Sir William Roberts at Shoreham, followed by a move to the Strathallan Aircraft Collection in 1972 until purchased by engineer Nick Grace in 1979.

Nick Grace moved the remains of this once proud fighter to its new home at St Merryn in Cornwall, where work began on its complete restoration to flying condition.

Its first post-restoration flight took place on April 16, 1985, carrying the registration number "G-LFIX" with Nick Grace at the controls and his wife Carolyn in the rear cockpit.

It was decided to paint the aircraft in its original war-time colours when flown by Johnnie Houlton during its service with 485 Squadron.

Johnnie Houlton was re-united with ML 407 "OU-V" for the filming of a television documentary, *The Perfect Lady* in July 1985, which tells the story of ML 407 and its ultimate return to the air.

Nick Grace's untimely death in October 1988 deprived us of a very popular and talented man, but Carolyn Grace was determined to preserve Nick's dream and keep ML 407 flying. She became the first woman to solo in a Spitfire in recent times and the first female Spitfire owner/pilot. Making her first display appearance in 1991, Carolyn Grace continues to fly ML 407 at venues in Britain and Europe.

The motto on the badge of 485 (New Zealand) Squadron is inscribed in Maori, *Ka Whawhai Tonu* (We will fight on). It could well have been written for those who still possess the passion and determination to preserve ML 407 in airworthy condition.

PRINT/REMARQUE N<sup>o</sup>

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DATE 11/2/99 R FULSTOW

*Ron Fulstow*



485 Squadron Signatures on Painting of Spitfire OU-V "The Predator" by Ron Fulstow 1994

NAME	Known as 1 <sup>ST</sup> NAME	INITIALS	FINAL RANK	DECORATIONS	NOTES
ATKINS	Eddie	E G	WT OFF		
BROWN	Doug	D G E	SQN LDR		
CHECKETTS	John "Johnny"		WG CDR	DSO DFC	
CLARKE	Russ	R M	FLG OFF	DFC	
COLLETT	Max	M A	FLG OFF	mid	
DE VERE	Bruce	S B	FLT LT		
GRIFFITH	Lester	L P	FLT LT	DFC	
HARDY	Owen		WG CDR	DFC and bar	
HUMPHREY		TP	WT OFF		
IGGO		D L	FLT LT		
KING	Norby	J N	FLT LT		Post war Vicar
LEE	Ken	K C	FLT LT		
MCDONALD	Colin	C J	FLG OFF		
MAYSTON	Red	M C	FLT LT		
PALMER	John	J J	FLT LT		
PATTISON	John"Johnny"	J G	SQN LDR	DSO DFC	
RAE	Jack	J D	FLT LT	DFC and bar	
ROBERTS	Allan	DA	FLT LT		
SALT	Ken	K H	FLT SGT		
SHAND	Mick	M M	FLT T	DFC	
SWEETMAN	Harvey	H N	SQN LDR	DFC	
TUCKER	Tommy	H S	FLG OFF		
SCHRADER	Warren "Smokey"	W E	WG CDR	DFC and bar	Spitfires at Malta, C O of 486 Tempest Squadron, Chief Pilot NAC
WALLIS	Sir Tim				Not a squadron pilot but Patron of 485 Squadron Association
HALL	Vic				NZ Signals Officer – connection unknown
Edwards	Derek (Slim)				485 Sqn ground crew member ?
Jordan	Len				485 Sqn ground crew member?
Foxy?	Paddy				485 Sqn ground crew member?
Mihalop	Harry				485 Sqn ground crew member
Roddis	Joe				485 Sqn ground crew member
Strange	Vic				485 Sqn ground crew member
Eynon					485 Sqn ground crew member?