



# The Spitfire Fund

## Chapter 3

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Written for children aged 7+

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 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCE  
museum**

Having seen Spitfires fighting above London to save Britain from the Nazis, the children decide to travel to the RAF Museum in Cosford. They've heard that Wolverhampton – near to Cosford – did lots to raise money and they want to help. And they know that the Germans had been bombing Birmingham and Wolverhampton during August 1940. But will other cities in Britain want to help? How can you ask people for money when they're poor, at war and their sons and some daughters are fighting away from home?

Yusra's dad drove the children to Wolverhampton. He said he would take them to the RAF Museum, Cosford after they had first had a look around the town. He would wait in a coffee shop so they knew where he was if they needed him. Then he suggested they could go to Cosford on the train together.

As soon as he had gone Yusra, Danny and Lily put on their Spitfire Fund badges. They were keen to get cracking, to raise some money in wartime Wolverhampton.

Badges on, the whole shape of the town suddenly changed. Huge blocks of concrete, metal and glass buildings disappeared, revealing old buildings made of stone, dark stone, discoloured by smoke. And everything was lower, fewer storeys, with more sky and light and warmth. The noise from the roaring ring road faded to that of the calls of market traders. Passers-by were wearing old fashioned clothes, no jeans or fashionable dresses in the late summer warmth.

And then – once again – she was there. The woman from the London Museum. She was holding a board of badges and a collecting tin.

'Do your best, children,' she encouraged, giving the children their collection tins and pin badges. Then she disappeared between two market stalls.

The children stood and watched the lady vanish, each of them thinking how odd it was that the weird things happening to them didn't feel so weird at all.

It was time to get started.

'Sustain the valour of the Royal Air Force,' Yusra shouted out, holding the collecting tin before her.

'Help fortify the cause of freedom!' Lily added.

Danny looked at them. 'What are you saying?'

Yusra started laughing. 'I don't know, but it's working.'



And she was right. The children already had a queue of people waiting to buy pin badges. Most put coins in the tin. But one man put in a bank note.

‘Thank you, sir,’ Danny said. ‘God bless you.’

Now Yusra and Lily were laughing at Danny as children fished their pocket money out and dropped it into the tin.

After selling all their pins and filling their collection tins, Danny, Lily, Yusra and her dad took the train out of Wolverhampton towards Cosford, accelerating through yards packed with trucks delivering to warehouses and then into the countryside. The trains were not like what they were used to in London. In these 1940s trains you sat in compartments, a bench of seats big enough to hold four or five facing another bench opposite. There were racks above the seats where passengers stored their bags.

Yusra’s dad didn’t appear to notice anything odd, so none of them mentioned it to him. ‘It’s like the inside of a Harry Potter train,’ Lily suggested quietly, as she opened the window in the side of their compartment, causing the man opposite’s newspaper to flutter in the wind. She shut the window and apologised.

‘Not a problem,’ the man said, nodding, then went back to his newspaper.

The children spent the rest of the journey staring at the countryside and at the front page of the man’s newspaper.

The Wolverhampton Express & Star  
Saturday 14th September 1940 RAF  
DOWN 37 ENEMY FIGHTERS IN ONE DAY

Once they arrived at Cosford the children took their Spitfire Fund badges off. But not before they gazed at what the airfield looked like in the 1940s.

‘Wolverhampton was where they built the Boulton Paul Defiant during the war,’ Yusra’s dad said. ‘And Cosford is where many female pilots flew Spitfires, transporting them from one base to another for the men to fly in battle. But,’ he smiled, ‘I’ll leave you three to it. I’ll be in the café in the Museum if you need me. They do lovely scones and hot chocolate, I seem to remember.’

The airfield was a huge expanse of grass, with a pair of hangars in the background, covered over in green, black and brown blotches to camouflage them from the German bombers.

Now with badges off, the children saw the same airfield in the modern day. It had a runway going left to right and more hangars at the top end of the field. But the 1940s hangars were still there. And now – instead of Spitfires – they saw a pair of Jaguar Jets and a group of RAF men and women standing around them being trained.

They walked up the side of the airbase, watching one of the Jaguars taxiing down the runway, stopping at one point to watch a red helicopter hover over them, then come into land near the road.

Then the Museum. Up a winding path underneath the huge wings of a Lockheed Hercules and past a Vickers VC10.

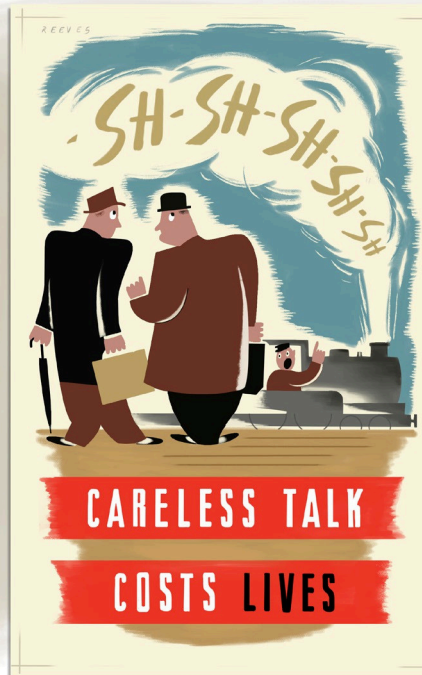
‘These planes are amazing,’ Lily gasped. ‘I love it here.’

‘There’s more inside,’ Yusra said, excited. ‘Massive planes just hanging off wires and some ten times bigger than these. And a Spitfire. This place is just as fab as the RAF Museum in London. My dad brings me here a lot when he’s working in Birmingham.’

‘Oh yes ...’ Danny enthused. ‘I can’t wait.’

Inside the Visitor Centre the children asked for directions to the Battle of Britain exhibition. They walked through the Test Flight Hangar, past a Fairey Delta 2 and through a dark corridor to the War in the Air Hangar.

There they saw German and British aircraft; a Junkers 88, a Hawker Hurricane and – of course – a Supermarine Spitfire. There were a range of uniforms from the Second World War, including the uniform of Sir Hugh Dowding who was the commanding officer of RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. There was also a mysterious poster ...



The poster read CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES.

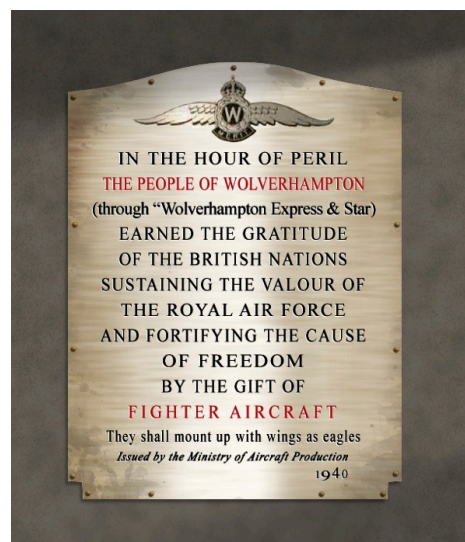
‘What does that mean?’ Danny asked.

‘In the war, you had to be careful what you said,’ Yusra explained. ‘There were spies who wanted to find out things that the Germans could use against us. Everyone was made to be suspicious. Just to ...’

Yusra stopped talking when they saw the plaque. It was made of brass. A sheet of metal attached to the wall.

On the plaque were written the words:

In the hour of peril the people of Wolverhampton earned the gratitude of the British nations sustaining the valour of the Royal Air Force and fortifying the cause of freedom by the gift of fighter aircraft.



‘Sustain the valour of the Royal Air Force,’ Yusra said under her breath.

‘Help fortify the cause of freedom!’ Lily muttered.

Danny was speechless. The writing on the plaque was the same wording as the things Yusra and Lily had said a few hours before when they’d been raising money in Wolverhampton.

The three children took their pins out of their pockets and stared at them.

‘What is this all about?’ Lily asked, as Danny dropped his on the floor crying out in pain.

Quickly the girls did the same.

‘They’re red hot,’ Danny said.

Now the three children stared at each other.

‘The badges going hot must mean something,’ Lily said.

‘Something we have to do?’ Yusra asked. Then Danny looked at a newspaper headline on the display.

‘The date,’ he said. It read:

14th September 1940 ZERO HOUR. IT’S NOW OR NEVER FOR THE INVASION LONDON HOLDS ITS BREATH

‘We have to get back,’ Lily gasped. ‘To London. Now.’

‘What? Why?’ Danny sounded confused.

‘Tomorrow is 15 September. 80 years since the day Germany was supposed to soften Britain up for invasion. Operation ... what was it called?’

‘Sea Lion,’ Yusra said. ‘Come on. My dad’s just texted to say there’s a train due at about quarter past.’

‘But should we?’ Danny asked another question. ‘Is it really a good idea to go to London when there’s bombs falling out of the sky? What if ... what if ... one falls on us?’

**Tom Palmer is proud to be the RAF Museum’s Children’s Author in Residence. He has written several First and Second World War children’s books, including the Wings series that he wrote with the help of the RAF Museum, featuring stories about the Sopwith Camel, Spitfire and Typhoon.**

The children have helped raise money to build Spitfires in London and Wolverhampton. Now they are heading back to London to try to help out on the day that Hitler is supposed to be invading Britain. Yusra and Lily want to get stuck in, but Danny is reluctant. The trio have ridden their luck so far, but how many times can they dodge danger in 1940s Britain before something catastrophic happens?

**Find out more in chapter four ...**