

**UNIQUE IN EUROPE,
THIS GERMANY-BASED
ENTERPRISE OPERATES A
FANTASTIC COLLECTION
OF WARBIRDS AND
HISTORIC AIRCRAFT**

It does not get much better than this — two of the most-famous Allied WWII fighters in formation over Germany. Well, actually, it can get better! The TF-51D and T. Mk. IX are both dual-control aircraft, which means a visitor to The Fighter Academy can get instruction in both airplanes.

The Air Fighter Academy

BY RICHARD PAVER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD PAVER

Usedom is Germany's second largest island and is situated in the Baltic Sea very close to the border between Germany and Poland. Located on its south coast close to the town of Zirchow is Heringsdorf Airfield which was an active *Luftwaffe* base during WWII and it was also used by the Soviet Air Force during the post-WWII Cold War era. Further north, approximately 25-mi away, is the very historic site of Peenemünde, the secret facility which was the base of Third Reich rocket development.

Today, Heringsdorf is home to a very exciting flying museum known as The Air Fighter Academy (AFA) or The Hangar 10 collection. The Collection, which is open to the pub-

lic, is very much the brainchild of keen aviator Volker Schülke and his family and comprises a large stable of historic aircraft, vehicles, engines, and many WWII artefacts and interactive displays.

Volker Schülke is a very successful businessman and in addition he is a keen and experienced pilot with a particular interest in the his-

toric combat and training aircraft of WWII. Hangar 10 now comprises a superb collection of German, American, British, and Russian types — many of which are airworthy and regularly flown.

To complement the fliers, they had a number of static aircraft — the notable examples being the extensively rebuilt Fw 190D-9 and Bf 109G-14 completed for the collection by Sandy Air Corps. These have now gone to the USA, while there is a very interesting Bf 109E-3a wreck owned by the same company that is displayed as recovered from its mountain crash site where it came to grief on 28 November 1940.

In his collection, Volker has the following airworthy WWII fighters: TF-51D Mustang 44-63473/D-FUNN; Yak 9UM 470406/D-FAFA and no fewer than two airworthy examples of Messerschmitt's iconic fighters — one of which has been converted into the long extinct G-12 dual trainer. This machine started life as a Spanish-built Hispano HA-1112-MIL *Buchón*, the type made famous for playing the "bad guys" in the *Battle of Britain* movie. Serving with the Spanish Air Force as C.4K-169, c/n 234, it was struck off charge in 1966 and sold to T.G. "Hamish" Mahaddie and

then appeared on the British civil register as G-AWHT on 14 May 1968 and was flown in the *Battle of Britain* film. After the film was completed in 1968 the registration was cancelled as the aircraft was sold in the USA. The then-named Confederate Air Force at Harlingen, Texas, acquired it.

However, it would eventually find its way to Harold Kindsvater, registered as NX109W. In late 2009 the aircraft was sold to the AFA, arriving disassembled at overhaul specialist Meier Motors at Bremgarten Airport, Eschbach, Germany, in early January the following year.

The *Buchón* was successfully test flown at Bremgarten in May 2010 and then delivered to Heringsdorf. Unfortunately, the aircraft tipped up on its nose after hitting soft ground in April 2013. This was immediately prior to what had been a planned first test flight of the year. As a result, the aircraft suffered extensive shock loading damage to its engine and prop and after recovery was dismantled and returned to Meier Motors for a detailed assessment prior to any repair program. After this survey and further consideration, the AFA made the decision in late 2013 not to repair this aircraft in its Merlin engine single-seat *Buchón* configuration but instead to rebuild and re-engine it as a two-seat Bf 109G-12 trainer, complete with dual controls and a new Daimler-Benz DB605 engine.

The vision behind this was to provide an opportunity