

Fokker D.XXI rolled out

On 30 May at Hoogeveen Airport, in the north-east of the Netherlands, an airworthy replica Fokker D.XXI project was rolled out of a small, windowless hangar, where it has been under construction by veteran aircraft restorer, 73-year-old Jack van Egmond and several members of his family. It is hoped that the fighter, the prototype of which first flew in March 1936, will take to the air during 2020.

Way back in the 1960s, a 14-year-old Jack van Egmond acquired some original D.XXI drawings and began collecting related items. Over the years that followed he completed the restoration of a wide range of historic aircraft, including a Spitfire IX, Fairchild PT-26, Focke-Wulf Stieglitz and many others. No examples of the D.XXI had survived in the Netherlands, although a static replica of the welded metal tube-fuselage, fabric-covered aircraft was built in a joint project between the Fokker company and Royal Netherlands Air Force technical schools from 1984-86. Plans to make it a flying example had to be shelved early on due to a lack of funds. This replica is now on display in the National Military Museum at Soesterberg.

In the early 1990s another project was begun, with the intention to build an airworthy D.XXI or alternatively, a Fokker S9. A new search for drawings and components started — the project now has 397 of the 416 drawings for the type — but it wasn't until 10 years ago that it really started shaping up with the acquisition of an undercarriage from Denmark, and a Wright GR-1820-F52 engine which was obtained from the National Military Museum in exchange for a Farman HF-20 replica that Jack and his family constructed for the museum.

The Dutch Fokker D.XXIs were originally fitted with Bristol Mercury VIII engines,



ABOVE: A first view of the structurally complete Fokker D.XXI replica, PH-XXI, at Hoogeveen Airport on 30 May. BEN ULLINGS
RIGHT: Jack van Egmond with his grandson Tom Wilps, who has grown up working on the D.XXI. BEN ULLINGS



but no example could be sourced for the project. Fifty D.XXIs were delivered to the Finnish Air Force, equipped with the Pratt & Whitney R-1535 Twin Wasp Junior, and one was built under licence in Spain for the Republicans, fitted with a Russian Shvetsov M-25, a licence-built version of the Wright Cyclone. This powerplant was also found on period Fokker drawings and appeared in one of the company's brochures.

While involved in the Spitfire restoration project Jack

the aircraft up using the wealth of original drawings. But the drawings have not always proved to be millimetre-precise, and invaluable support has been received from Fokker Services at Woensdrecht where drawings were verified and set up in 3D. They also revised the aerodynamic calculations. Other authentic parts include a tailwheel, and a pilot's seat that came from Finland.

The Finnish Air Force gave the D.XXI its combat debut during the Winter War against the Soviet Union in late 1939.

“Driven by Jack van Egmond's perseverance, the small group of volunteers has slowly built the aircraft up using original drawings”

stumbled upon a big box full of Dutch aircraft instruments in a warehouse in Shoreham, West Sussex, that had once been owned by the John Parker and Son steel company. These are now a key element in the authentically fitted-out cockpit.

The first wooden parts of the D.XXI were glued together during March 2014. From that date onwards, driven by Jack's perseverance, the small group of volunteers has slowly built

When Germany attacked the Netherlands on 10 May 1940, 28 D.XXIs were serviceable with the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Early that morning a flight of D.XXIs intercepted a formation of Junkers Ju 52/3ms that had crossed into Dutch airspace, 37 of the 55 troop transports being shot down.

Later that day, six D.XXIs escorted a formation of Fokker T.V bombers for a raid on the Meuse bridges. After being

intercepted by Messerschmitt Bf 109Es, a single D.XXI and two T.Vs were shot down, with one Bf 109 destroyed and two damaged. The following day at least two further Bf 109s were shot down by D.XXIs: although it was less well-armed and much slower, the Fokker fighter scored high when it came to manoeuvrability.

The forward fuselage, cockpit and engine of a D.XII that was shot down by Messerschmitt Bf 110s on 11 May 1940 were recovered from a crash site in 1993, and are now on show in a museum at Aalsmeerderbrug, northern Holland. Jack and his team have used these well-preserved remains as a further reference point for the flying replica, which is now registered as PH-XXI.

An original Finnish Air Force machine, FR-110, which scored 10 victories in the Winter War, is preserved at the Aviation Museum of Central Finland at Tikkakoski. Seven of those kills were scored while FR-110 was being flown by Lt Viktor Pyötsiä, in whose colours it is now on show.