

Rita Baines - ATA Pilot

1943 – One of the many Air Transport Auxiliary [ATA] pilots Rita met, while working at the Rootes shadow aircraft factory in Blythe Bridge, suggested she apply to join the ATA herself for flying training. She was accepted and in December went for training, where she met fellow ATA trainee Pat Rhonie who became a lifelong friend.

January 1944 – Rita flew her first plane, a Magister. She made her first solo flight after only 14 hours tuition and later progressed to Proctors based at Thame airfield. While working as a pilot she attended theoretical lectures concurrently and used her “ferry pilots notes” and maps on her lap while in the air as all flights were made solo. All pilots were instructed to land before dark.

28 September 1944 – Rita flew her first Spitfire and recorded it – like all the others – in her logbook and by October 1944 she was a fully-fledged pilot.

The ATA was the first organisation in the UK to gain equal pay for both men and women doing the same job. Although many men at that time felt the women should be at home cooking the dinner!

November 1944 – Rita moved to live in a cottage at Hamble, near the airfield.

September 1945 – Rita made her last delivery as an ATA pilot – a Tiger Moth, from Cowley, near Oxford, to Llandau in South Wales.

Between January 1944 – September 1945, Rita spent 448 hours flying 19 different types of aircraft, including 54 Spitfires.

November 1945 – the ATA was disbanded, but Rita had not finished with planes!

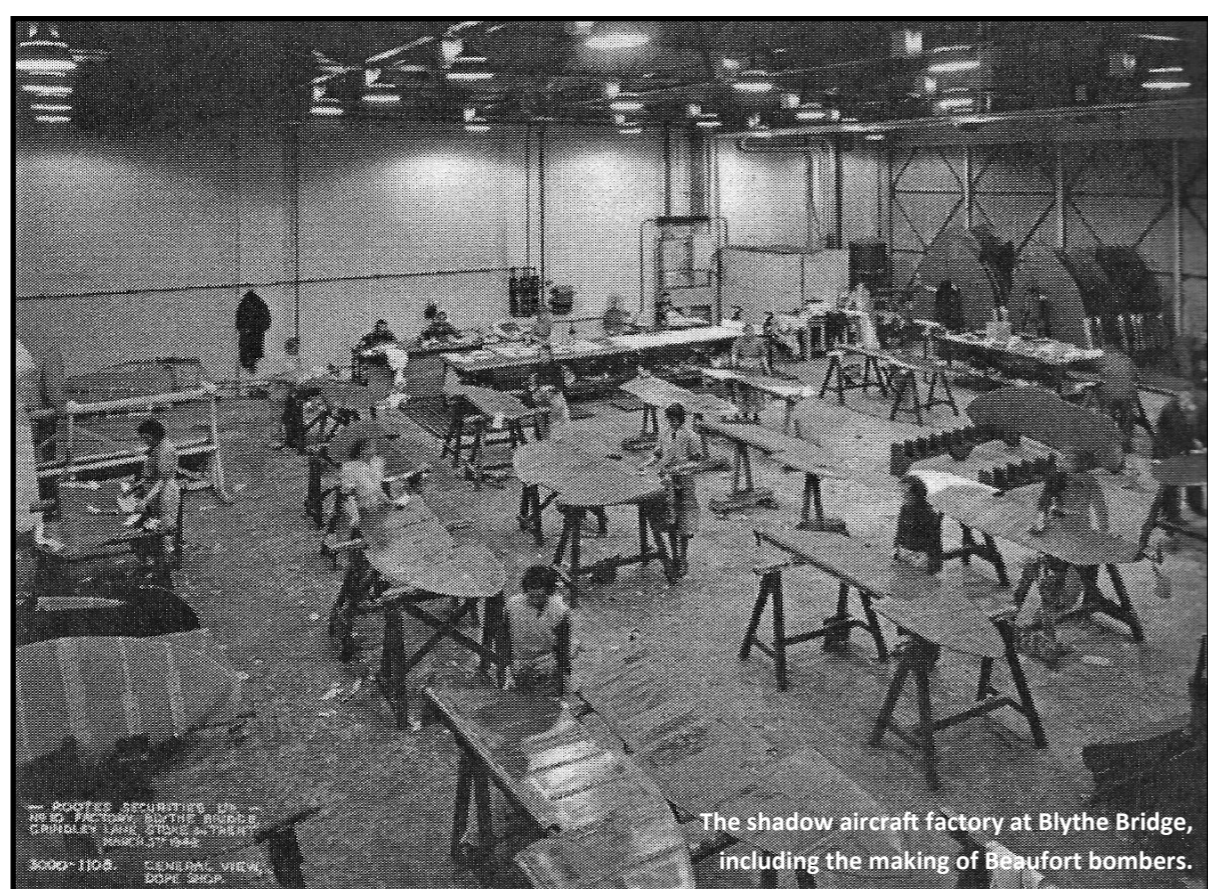


Rita in her ATA uniform - Private collection

BAINES, Rita Pauline 20790

◀ The Woodlands, Trentham, Staffs. ▶

Born 13th November 1921 **at** Stoke-on-Trent
Nationality British
Rank, Regiment, Profession Pilot
Certificate taken on A.T.A. "Wings" (240 hrs)
At Air Transport Auxiliary, White Waltham
Date 14th December 1945.



The shadow aircraft factory at Blythe Bridge, including the making of Beaufort bombers.



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All smiles: ATA women pilots at No 15 Ferry Pool, Hamble in 1943. Rita is at the far left of the front row. From a Daily Mail article on the Spitfire girls 17February 2017

OCTOBER	1	SPITFIRE V	W3519	SELF	—	COLERNE - CATPOSS
"	2	FAIRCHILD	HR 632	"	—	THAME - WH. WALTHAM - THAME
"	5	MARTINET	M3614	"	—	READING - KIRKBRIDE
"	7	SPITFIRE IX	MJ 114	"	—	COWLEY - COSFORD
"	7	SPITFIRE XI	PL 952	"	—	COSFORD - BENSON
"	12	FAIRCHILD		"	HENNINGS	THAME - COWLEY
"	12	SPITFIRE VII	M0160	"	—	COWLEY - COLERNE
"	12	SPITFIRE IX	BS147	"	—	COLERNE - KIRKBRIDE
"	12	MASTER II	DL363	"	—	KIRKBRIDE - MEIR
"	13	"	DL363	"	—	MEIR - DESBOROUGH
"	14	DEFIANT III	T4043	"	—	DESFORD - WORTHY
"	15	FAIRCHILD	HB598	"	2 PASS	THAME - COSFORD - THAME
"	15	"	42592	"	1 "	THAME - CRANFIELD - HAMWELL - THAME
"	16	MASTER II	DL395	"	—	TERN HILL - CROUGHTON
"	24	SPITFIRE XI	PL960	"	—	BRIZE NORTON - BENSON
"	29	FAIRCHILD	HR188	"	2 PASS	HAMBLE - TARANT-LEE - HAMBLE
"	30	SPITFIRE IX	ML840	"	—	HAMBLE - COSFORD
"	30	SPITFIRE IX	NH183	"	—	COSFORD - THORNEY ISLE

Extract from Rita's logbook for October 1944, courtesy of the digital archives of the Air Transport Auxiliary Museum. It details the planes she flew and the destinations of the flights on particular dates. ATA Museum & Archive at Maidenhead Heritage Centre (atamuseum.org)