

20 Spitfires buried in Burma during WWII to be unearthed

Recently a fascinating story caught my eye. It's about 20 Spitfires buried in Burma at the end of World War II that have suddenly been discovered! It's like something out of a boy's adventure book or an Indiana Jones story. A British farmer's quest to find a squadron of legendary fighter planes lost in Burma during the war has finally paid off. Lincolnshire farmer David Cundall, 62, has spent about US\$207,000, travelled to Burma a dozen times and negotiated with the cagey Burmese government. All in the hope of finding a stash of iconic British Spitfires that are buried somewhere in the South Eastern Asian country. Burying planes might sound a bit odd but was commonplace at the end of WWII as the conflict wound down and new jet aircraft replaced propeller-driven fighters. Many aircraft were scrapped, buried or sunk by Allies Forces in order to prevent them from falling into enemy hands.

Cundall started his search after his friend heard from a group of U.S. veterans that they had stashed Spitfires in the region. Cundall was fascinated. He started placing adverts in magazines to try to find soldiers who might have been involved. The ones he was looking for arrived at the Royal Air Force base in Burma in August 1945, having been shipped to Burma then transported by rail to the British RAF base. This was just before the bombing of Hiroshima, so the fighters weren't needed. "In 1945, Spitfires were 10 a penny," says Cundall. "It was a typical British solution: Let's bury them lads!" He added, "They were just buried in transport crates. They were waxed, wrapped in greased paper and their joints tarred. They will be in near perfect condition." Getting the planes out of the ground is one thing. Getting them out of Burma is another. The country has been ruled until recently by a brutal military junta. However, following the visit by British Prime Minister David Cameron in April 2012, the Spitfires could soon be on their way back to the UK.

With the help of investors Cundall hopes the planes will be able to finally take to the skies. "Spitfires are beautiful airplanes and should not be rotting away in a foreign land. They saved our necks in the Battle of Britain and they should be preserved." Certainly, I can see the Discovery Channel or a movie being made about this story. Today only 35 Spitfires or so remain flying in the world. Wouldn't it be terrific to see a flying squadron of Spitfires at air shows?

Category: Discoveries / Aviation / Spitfires

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Spitfires: Think of three things you know about Spitfires. Go round the room swapping details with others.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) **What is the latest on this story?**

6. Geography: Burma: Where is Burma? What is its capital**? What is Burma's other name**? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you. (**see page 8)

7. The buried Spitfires: In pairs think of five things from the article about the buried Spitfires. Then add five ways to dig them out. Write them below. Discuss together.

The buried Spitfires	How to dig them out
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's roleplay 1: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *BBC World Service* radio studio. Today's interview is about: *20 Spitfires buried in Burma to be unearthed*.

1	David Cundall	3	A WWII U.S. veteran (Burma)
2	A Spitfire fan	4	David Cameron

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

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9. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Spitfires**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

10. **Let's roleplay 2:** In pairs. You are in a former RAF Bar on a disused airfield in Britain. Start a conversation about: *20 Spitfires buried in Burma during World War II to be unearthed*. *5-minutes*.

11. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What happening in August 1945?
- 2) What happened to many Spitfires at the end of WWII?
- 3) How were the Spitfires buried?
- 4) Where are the Spitfires buried?
- 5) Who recently visited Burma and gave a helping hand?

Student B

- 1) Name the farmer.
- 2) How many Spitfires are buried?
- 3) How many Spitfires are flying today?
- 4) Explain the term '10 a penny'.
- 5) Explain the term 'Getting them out of Burma is another.'

12. **Let's make a movie about this!** With your partner consider a good storyline for this story. Who might be in it? What will the beginning of the story be like? What about the middle of it? Finally what happens at the end of your movie?

13. **Burma:** In pairs, think of five things about Burma. Then add five recent developments that have taken place in the country. Write them below. Discuss together. What is your conclusion?

Burma	Recent developments in Burma
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class

14. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: **Spitfires or Burma**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation.

15. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Spitfires**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

16. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Spitfires _____
- b) This story is _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Is this article a real adventure story?
- 3) Why were so many old Spitfires scrapped?
- 4) Why is this 'find' so important for aviation?
- 5) When they find these planes what state might they be in?
- 6) What advice would you give David Cundall?
- 7) Did David Cameron's visit help with getting these Spitfires dug up?
- 8) Will you be following this story?
- 9) Do you know of any other planes that have been buried?
- 10) How might these planes be returned to Britain?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you have read?
- 2) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?
- 3) Would you like to go to Burma?
- 4) Would you like to go to Burma to unearth the 20 Spitfires? Why? Why not?
- 5) Are the British mad in wanting to dig up 20 old Spitfires?
- 6) Why has it taken so long to dig up these Spitfires?
- 7) How will the weather affect them being dug out?
- 8) How long might it take to fly these planes?
- 9) Have you ever buried anything? If yes, when? Why?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Spitfires

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

20 things about Spitfires

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

20 Spitfires buried in Burma during WWII to be unearthed

Recently a fascinating story caught my eye. It's about 20 Spitfires buried in Burma at the end of World War II that have suddenly been discovered! It's like something out of a boy's (1)_____ book or an Indiana Jones story. A British farmer's (2)_____ to find a squadron of legendary fighter planes lost in Burma during the war has finally paid off. Lincolnshire farmer David Cundall, 62, has spent about US\$207,000, travelled to Burma a dozen times and negotiated with the (3)_____ Burmese government. All in the hope of finding a (4)_____ of (5)_____ British Spitfires that are buried somewhere in the South Eastern Asian country. Burying planes might sound a bit odd but was commonplace at the end of WWII as the (6)_____ wound down and new jet aircraft replaced propeller-driven fighters. Many aircraft were scrapped, buried or (7)_____ by Allies Forces in order to prevent them from falling into (8)_____ hands.

Cundall started his search after his friend heard from a group of U.S. (1)_____ that they had (2)_____ Spitfires in the region. Cundall was fascinated. He started placing (3)_____ in magazines to try to find soldiers who might have been involved. The ones he was looking for arrived at the Royal Air Force base in Burma in August 1945, having been shipped to Burma then transported by rail to the British RAF base. This was just before the bombing of Hiroshima, so the fighters weren't needed. "In 1945, Spitfires were 10 a penny," says Cundall. "It was a typical British (4)_____: Let's bury them (5)_____!" He added, "They were just buried in transport crates. They were waxed, wrapped in greased paper and their (6)_____ tarred. They will be in near perfect (7)_____." Getting the planes out of the ground is one thing. Getting them out of Burma is another. The country has been ruled until recently by a brutal military (8)_____. However, following the visit by British Prime Minister David Cameron in April 2012, the Spitfires could soon be on their way back to the UK.

iconic

conflict

enemy

quest

cagey

sunk

stash

adventure

solution

joints

lads

condition

veterans

stashed

junta

adverts

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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GRAMMAR - edited

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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Recently a fascinating story caught (1)___ eye. It's about 20 Spitfires buried in Burma at the end of World War II that have suddenly been discovered! It's like something out of a boy's adventure book (2)___ an Indiana Jones story. A British farmer's quest to find (3)___ squadron of legendary fighter planes lost (4)___ Burma during the war has finally paid off. Lincolnshire farmer David Cundall, 62, has spent about US\$207,000, travelled to Burma a dozen times and negotiated with the cagey Burmese government. All in the hope (5)___ finding a stash of iconic British Spitfires that are buried somewhere in the South Eastern Asian country. Burying planes might sound a bit odd (6)___ was commonplace at the end of WWII as the conflict wound down (7)___ new jet aircraft replaced propeller-driven fighters. Many aircraft were scrapped, buried or sunk (8)___ Allies Forces in order to prevent them from falling into enemy hands.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	recently	11	odd
2	brutal	12	commonplace
3	certainly	13	stash
4	solution	14	Spitfires
5	magazines	15	something
6	terrific	16	suddenly
7	squadron	17	finally
8	quest	18	dozen
9	legendary	19	iconic
10	instance	20	cagey

LINKS

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/9203822/Spitfires-buried-in-Burma-during-war-to-be-retuned-to-UK.html>

<http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/04/17/buried-treasure-world-war-ii-spitfires-to-be-unearthed-in-burma/?xid=rss-topstories>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17710598>

<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2012/04/19/buried-treasure-in-burma-squadron-lost-wwii-spitfires-to-be-exhumed/>

Iconic = adjective, 1. of, pertaining to, or characteristic of an icon. 2. Art . (of statues, portraits, etc.) executed according to a convention or tradition.

Note: The capital of Burma is Naypyidaw. The colonial capital is Rangoon. Burma is also known as Myanmar.

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: 20 Spitfires buried in Burma during WWII to be unearthed: Recently a fascinating story caught my eye. It's about 20 Spitfires buried in Burma at the end of World War II that have suddenly been discovered! It's like something out of a boy's **adventure** book or an Indiana Jones story. A British farmer's **quest** to find a squadron of legendary fighter planes lost in Burma during the war has finally paid off. Lincolnshire farmer David Cundall, 62, has spent about US\$207,000, travelled to Burma a dozen times and negotiated with the **cagey** Burmese government. All in the hope of finding a **stash** of **iconic** British Spitfires that are buried somewhere in the South Eastern Asian country. Burying planes might sound a bit odd but was commonplace at the end of WWII as the **conflict** wound down and new jet aircraft replaced propeller-driven fighters. Many aircraft were scrapped, buried or **sunk** by Allies Forces in order to prevent them from falling into **enemy** hands.

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