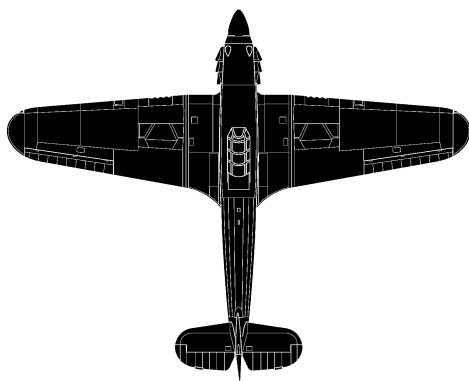


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

Hurricane



The Hurricane, developed in the Depression 1930s, proved to be one fine example of the virtues of capitalism. The Hawker fighter was undertaken as a private venture; chief designer Sydney Camm was the key to the effort. The Royal Air Force saw its utility and, in the late 1930s, bought some 600 of them. Soon enough—in summer 1940—the RAF would be vindicated, as the Hurricane became Britain's most important fighter of the Battle of Britain.

Essentially a monoplane version of the Hawker Fury fighter, the Hurricane employed the magnificent Rolls Royce Merlin V-12 engine in a traditional wood, steel, and fabric structure. At a stroke, the Hurricane's enclosed canopy, retractable landing gear, and eight-gun armament rendered obsolete all of the traditional RAF biplane

fighters. Its performance was generally inferior to that of later German fighters, and lagged the Spitfire in public popularity. Still, introduction of the constant-speed propeller in May 1940 vastly improved its performance.

The Hurricane deployed to Europe immediately after Germany's September 1939 invasion of Poland. When the blitzkrieg went west, the Hurricane did well in the Battle of France. The German air assault on England found the Hurricane bearing the brunt of the battle, scoring the most kills and suffering the highest losses. Later in the war, the Hurricane served admirably in North Africa, Southeast Asia, the Mediterranean, and just about every other theater. A great gun platform, it did well in the close air support role, and served until war's end.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Hurricane Mk I—#P2923—as it looked in August 1940 when assigned to No. 85 Squadron, RAF Debden, Britain. Last flown by Flight Officer Richard H. A. Lee, who was last seen Aug. 18, 1940, chasing three German fighters some 30 miles off Britain's east coast.



In Brief

Designed by Hawker ★ built by Hawker, Gloster, Canadian Car and Foundry, Fairey ★ first flight Nov. 6, 1935 ★ crew of one ★ single Rolls Royce Merlin engine ★ armament four 20 mm or eight .50 cal guns ★ number built 14,553 ★ **Specific to Hurricane Mk IIC:** max speed 340 mph ★ cruise speed 296 mph ★ max range 460 miles (loaded) ★ weight (max) 7,800 lb ★ span 40 ft ★ length 32 ft ★ height 13 ft 1 in.

Famous Fliers

Victoria Cross: James Eric Nicolson. **Aces:** M. T. S. "Pat" Pattle (35 victories in Hurricanes), William Vale (20), Karel Kuttelwascher (18), Richard Stevens (14.5), Vernon C. Woodward (14), J. "Hamish" Dodds (13), Ted Hewett (13), James MacLachlan (13). **Notables:** E. J. "Cobber" Kain (first Hurricane victory, first Hurricane ace), William Dunn (first US ace of WW II), Victor Beamish.

Interesting Facts

Accounted for 1,593 of 2,739 Battle of Britain victories ★ appeared in 1969 film "Battle of Britain," ★ nicknamed Hurry, Hurribomber, Hurricat ★ featured steel tube fuselage with mechanical joints, not welds ★ operated as Sea Hurricane off merchantmen and escort carriers ★ led to development of Typhoon, Tempest, Sea Fury ★ acted in roles of fighter, ground attack, night fighter, night intruder, and reconnaissance aircraft.



The Hurricane was a hero.