

## MILESTONES OF FLIGHT

This hall, opened in December 2003 to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first powered flight, contains many important Aircraft from World War II. These include aircraft from Germany, Britain, Japan and the USA.

On this sheet you will find details of 4 of the important World War II aircraft from the Milestones of Flight building to help you with your self guided tour.

### THE NORTH AMERICAN P-51 MUSTANG

**Location:** At the far end of the ground floor of the hall on the revolving platform.

- The Mustang was the outstanding long range fighter of World War II.
- Its performance was completely transformed after it was equipped with the famous Rolls – Royce Merlin engine.
- It was undoubtedly one of the most versatile and successful single seater fighters of the war.
- The Mustang was representative of the close co-operation between the USA and the UK and shows the strengthening relations between the two countries. The Americans provided it with one of the best fighter airframes in the world and the British provided it with their Merlin aero engine.



### THE MOSQUITO

**Location:** In the middle of the ground floor of the hall on a platform.



- The Mosquito, nicknamed “The Wooden Wonder”, was made almost entirely out of wood. This was because the government refused to permit de Havilland to use metal which was scarce. The Mosquito relied upon its impressive speed for defence purposes as it could fly faster than the enemy fighters.
- No.105 Squadron introduced Mosquitos into service in May 1942 as daylight bombers. However, as the RAF’s night bomber offensive grew, they were used with the Pathfinder Force and in other roles within Bomber Command.
- The Mosquito also proved a remarkably versatile aircraft in other roles. It was a great success as a night fighter and intruder, as well as an anti-shipping strike aircraft. Both the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Force used Mosquitos for photographic reconnaissance duties.

### THE MESSERSCHMITT Me 262 A- 2A – SCHWALBE (SWALLOW)

**Location:** On the ground floor adjacent to the windows.

- The Me 262 was the most advanced fighter plane used during World War II. It was widely believed that, had this aircraft been introduced into the Luftwaffe in 1939 in large numbers, the Battle of Britain might have ended with a German victory. This would have had a dramatic impact on the outcome of the war.



- The Luftwaffe fighter ace and air defence chief Adolf Galland described flying it “as though Angels were pushing!”. The Luftwaffe used small numbers of Me262 fighters and fighter bombers from mid 1944. However, supply shortages meant that very few Me262 aircraft saw combat and its full potential was never realised.

- This was the world’s first operational jet fighter. It was powered by jet engines that were of advanced design; however, these engines were unreliable, often failing after 25 hours of flight.

### THE MESSERSCHMITT Bf 109 G-2

**Location:** On the ground floor adjacent to the timeline.

- The Bf109 was one of the great legendary German aircraft of World War II. Its great success was that it was flown by some of the highest scoring fighter aces in the history of air combat. It was not only one of the most widely produced and most respected Luftwaffe fighter planes but it was also, in the early stages of the war, its most varied fighter. It was small, light, aerodynamically efficient and very steady in flight, which made it a good gun platform for its excellent armaments. It could fly as fast as the Spitfire, faster than the Hurricane and could out climb both. Its main deficiency was that it was undergunned.

- With the Bf109G series, a more powerful engine was added and although higher speeds were obtained, this had an adverse effect on its manoeuvrability and handling.

- The Bf109 series was most widely known for its daylight bomber attacks in defence of Germany. However, facing such heavily armed opposition as the American B17 Fortress, B24 Liberator bombers, and later on in the war the P51 Mustang long range fighters, very few of them survived the war.



**Explore  
Further**

*You may find it interesting to look at the timeline for the World War II period. The other World War II aircraft situated in the Milestones of Flight Hall are the Hawker Tempest V, the Kawasaki Ki-1001b and the Sikorsky R-4B Hoverfly 1 KL110. Basic information about these aircraft can be found on our website*

[www.rafmuseum.org/london](http://www.rafmuseum.org/london)