

HISTORIC HANGARS

This Collection is housed in an original pair of World War I hangars, providing the perfect setting for many unique aircraft that trace the history of aviation and the Royal Air Force. If you look up you can still see the original wooden roof.

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 SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE Vb

Location: In the Fighters section, opposite the simulator.

- ✈ The Spitfire is arguably the most famous British aircraft of World War II.
- ✈ The Spitfire's superiority over the Messerschmitt BF109 was beginning to wane, when its fortune changed with the introduction of the Merlin XX engine and a new wing design. The Spitfire V was able to gain its reputation as one of the most impressive aircraft ever flown.
- ✈ By 1944 the Spitfire V was mostly out of service having been replaced by more advanced models. However, of the five remaining squadrons, two played an important role in providing gunfire direction for naval units during D Day landings on 6th June 1944.
- ✈ This Spitfire provided air cover in the Dieppe raid of 1942.



THE BRISTOL BEAUFIGHTER

Location: In the Wings Over Water section, near the helicopters.

- ✈ The Bristol Beaufighter was first flown as a prototype on 17th July 1939 and entered into service with the RAF the following April.
- ✈ It was the first high-performance night fighter to be equipped with airborne interception radar. This proved very useful to the RAF night interceptor squadrons who used it with increasing success against the German night raids of 1940/41



- ✈ Later in the war the Beaufighter played an important role in Coastal Command as a strike fighter. The main modification was the addition of rockets and torpedoes to the already impressive gun armament, giving it an even greater fire power.

Explore Further

There are 6 other World War II aircraft situated in Historic Hangars: the Republic P-47D Thunderbolt II, the North American Harvard IIB, the Supermarine Stranraer, Hawker Tempest II, the Curtiss Kittyhawk IV and the Bristol Beaufort. Basic information about these aircraft can be found on our website.

www.rafmuseum.org/london

THE HAWKER TYPHOON 1b

Location: In the Fighters section facing the Lancaster Bomber.

- The Typhoon was originally designed as a 12 gun fighter that would succeed the Hurricane.
- However, it was rushed into production and consequently had a disappointing early career. It suffered a series of setbacks with both structural and engine failures. The Typhoon suffered further setback on the realisation that it performed poorly at a high altitude.
- Despite this, it saw significant success when it was switched to a ground attack role. It was extremely fast at a low level and was fairly well defended against enemy fire. At the same time its own firepower was impressive enough to be comparable with the broad side of a battle ship as it packed a powerful payload of bombs and air to ground rockets. Each of its 8 rockets carried 60 lb (27 kg) of high explosive or else a 25 lb (11 kg) armour piercing nose.
- It reached the height of its fame as a tank destroyer. During the final European campaigns, Typhoons flew in standing patrols which came to be known as “cab ranks” and they gave considerable support to the allied armies by knocking out hundreds of tanks after D-Day. Awaiting calls from ground forces they would make immediate strikes against any German targets.
- The aircraft displayed is believed to be the only surviving Typhoon



THE LOCKHEED HUDSON IIIA

Location: In the Wings Over Water at the far end of the hall.

- The Lockheed Hudson was the first American aircraft built in RAF service during the war. It was developed for Maritime reconnaissance and ordered for the RAF in June 1938. It entered in service for Coastal Command in 1939 and was used primarily over United Kingdom waters on anti- submarine and general reconnaissance duties
- Despite its lack of wider fame the Hudson was, amongst other things:



- The first Allied aircraft operating from the British Isles to shoot down an enemy (exactly 5 weeks after the war started)
- The first aircraft to capture a U- Boat
- The first aircraft equipped to carry airborne lifeboats for air sea rescue