Internet Explorer.

Now that Windows 10 has hit the stores, Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) has been mothballed and instead the new "Edge" has taken its place. Everyone *"knows"* that it's *"common knowledge"* that almost every single geek hated Internet Explorer with a passion, but have you ever wondered why? and did they really??

Let's take a fair look at the history of Microsoft's IE and see where it all began.

We've all been so used to thinking of Internet Explorer as that slow, buggy browser that is behind the times, but it wasn't always that way—in fact, way back when things started, Internet Explorer pioneered many innovations that made the web what it is today.

Here's a quick tour through the easily forgotten history of the infamous browser:

1996: Internet Explorer 3

This version of the browser, introduced in 1997, was the first browser to implement CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). In fact, it introduced many new features like Java applets and sadly, ActiveX controls.

1997: Internet Explorer 4

IE4 introduced a blazing fast (at the time) rendering engine as an embeddable component that could be used in other applications—this was a lot more important than people realize. This version also introduced Dynamic HTML, which allows web pages to dynamically change the page using JavaScript and added Active Desktop integration. And, it seems like nobody remembers this anymore, but IE4 was actually cross-platform—you could install it on Mac OS,

Solaris, and HP-UX—and by the time IE5 was released, IE4 had reached a 60 percent market share.

1999: Internet Explorer 5.x

Microsoft invented Ajax. It was this version of IE that introduced the XMLHttpRequest feature in JavaScript, which forms the underlying technology behind every web application you're using today—you know, like Gmail. Of course, the term "Ajax" wasn't actually coined until years later by somebody other than Microsoft, but this release supported everything required to make it work. From IE3 until IE6, Microsoft used all their resources to simply out-innovate the competition, releasing new features and better browsers faster than Netscape. In fact, Netscape 3 Gold was a piece of junk that crashed all the time, and Netscape 4 was extremely slow and could barely render tables—much less CSS, which would often cause the browser to crash. To put it in context: web developers used to complain about Netscape the same way they complain about IE now.

What made it go so very wrong?

The trouble all started when Microsoft integrated IE into Windows as a required component and made it difficult to uninstall and use an alternate browser. Then there was the whole business

with MS exploiting their monopoly to try and push Netscape out of the market and a lot of people started to view Microsoft as the evil empire.

By the time MS released IE 6 in 2001, complete with lots of new features for web developers, and since there was no real competition and they had a 95 percent market share, they just stopped trying, they did nothing for five years even after Firefox was released and geeks started migrating left and right.

The whole problem with MS's innovation is that much of it was done in ways that didn't follow the web standards, this wasn't as big of a problem when Internet Explorer was the only game in town but once Firefox and Webkit came around and started following the standards correctly, suddenly it became a huge problem for web developers and since MS decided they didn't need to try anymore and they didn't keep up with the competition from Firefox and other browsers, bugs and security holes just cropped up left and right—really terrible ones, too. For instance, this code is all that is required to crash IE6:

<script>for(x in document.write){document.write(x);}</script>

IE7 and IE8 were too little, too late.

It took five years after IE6 for MS to finally get around to releasing IE7, which added tabs and made the browser slightly more tolerable, but for web designers it was still a nightmare to deal with, and only complicated the issue since now you had to make pages render correctly in two lousy browsers instead of just one. It took another 2.5 years for MS to finally release IE 8, which greatly improved CSS support for web developers, and added new features like Private browsing, tab isolation to prevent one bad page from taking down the whole browser, and phishing protection. By this point, most geeks had already moved on to Firefox, and some to Google Chrome.

But here's the real reason geeks hate IE

Supporting IE was like a fork in the eye for Web Developers. Some years back they would spend hours making sure that their page looked great and then test it in Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and even Opera. It looked great, awesome! Now when it's opened in IE, the page looked like somebody had put it into a blender and hit the whip button. They then spend double the amount of time trying to fix it to look tolerable in IE6 and IE7, cursing loudly the entire time.

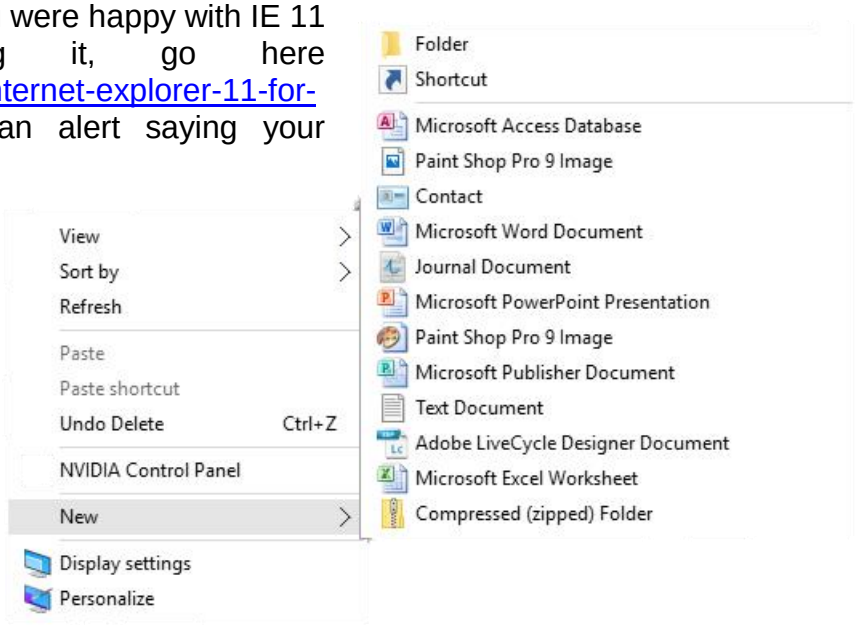
Thankfully by 2014, IE 6 and 7 were a statistical anomaly in actual Internet usage, and most of the bigger websites have completely stopped supporting them. When released, IE 8 usage dropped to single-digit percentages for many websites as a consequence of past experiences.

Now for the good news: The future is brighter for IE.

Thankfully, it seems that MS has finally learned from their many, many mistakes in the browser world. IE 10 and 11 were blazing fast, mostly standards-compliant, and other than the outdated user interface that really needed some love, are a solid choice for anybody. If you're happy with Windows 7 or 8.1, there is now no reason not to use IE 11 as it is very good, in fact, the new MS browser, Edge still has a way to go before it will be as good as IE 11, so you would be better off staying with the old and true

To say that Edge is a little rough around the edges is an understatement – many things just don't work and although it is completely usable as a browser, it still lacks some features. What you don't get yet is its support for extensions, this will come but you could have to wait for a little while.

If you've upgraded to Windows 10, you would already have Edge on your machine, but that doesn't mean you can't still use IE 11. If you were happy with IE 11 and want to continuing using it, go here http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/internet-explorer-11-for-windows-7-details.aspx. You might get an alert saying your machine is not compatible with IE 11, if so, disregard that and click Internet Explorer 11 (then either 32 or 64 bit – depending on your machine), then click the DOWNLOAD button. Follow the prompts and install it. Once it's installed, navigate back to your desktop, then ***right*** click a blank spot on your desktop, that will open another window (right), click NEW down the bottom, that opens another window, click SHORTCUT.



In the new window that opens, click

Browse, then navigate to ***C:\Program Files (x86)\Internet Explorer***. Scroll down and highlite ***iexplore.exe*** then click OK. Click NEXT. You will be asked for a name – type in ***Internet Explorer*** then click Finish.

This will put the familiar blue e back on your desktop and you can use Internet Explorer 11 again.

A man walked into a bar on a slow night and sat down. After a few minutes, the bartender asked him if he wanted a drink. He replied, "No thanks. I don't drink. I tried it once, but I didn't like it." So the bartender said, "Well, would you like a cigarette?" But the man said, "No thanks. I don't smoke. I tried it once, but I didn't like it." The bartender asked him if he'd like to play a game of pool, and again the man said, "No thanks. I don't like pool. I tried it once, but I didn't like it. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't be here at all, but I'm waiting for my son."

The bartender said, " He is your only child , I'm guessing."

Tacan Cancers.

About 10 years ago, retired WOFF Tony Pitt, RADTECHG, advised contacts that he had a host of rare cancers – 18 in fact – that he believed were caused by the SAL-219 Klystron that was the power tube in RTN-2 TACAN. The klystron operated at 25,500 volts. Tony learned that the tube emitted x-rays after about 1,000 hours of operation.

About sometime in late 1970 or early 1971 techs working on TACAN at Mt Louisa, Townsville, had to wear film badges for a period. It was rumoured they received a years' worth of radiation in a week but never any more was said. Apparently, this test arose after a RADTECHG in Darwin was found to have radiation burns from working on TACAN. A lead-shield was apparently placed over the klystron. Later, another tech in Pearce received radiation burns after he had removed the lead shield to tune the klystron. A tech at Laverton was said to be getting terrible headaches for a few days when he worked on TACAN with a colleague.

Tony retired in 1978 and died on the 22 Sept 2008. DVA never accepted his cancers were service related. His wife's war widow's pension apparently came as a result of Tony returning from Ubon, Thailand, circa 1960 with a sunspot on his lip! Another colleague and a former

apprentice course-mate who worked on TACAN for many years (and who disagreed with Tony) died several years later from an extremely rare liver cancer.

If you were a groundy and worked on the Tacan – get yourself checked!!!

Defence Exposure Evaluation Scheme (DEES).

In April this year the Department of Defence released the Jet Fuel Exposure Syndrome (JFES) Study into the effects of jet fuel and solvents on the health of former F-111 Deseal/Reseal Defence personnel. The (then) Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Geoff Brown AO, met with F-111 Deseal/Reseal and fire-fighter representatives of those who participated in the study to discuss the report and their health concerns.

"It is important that Air Force provides the most up-to-date health information to our current and former workforce, on the effects of occupational exposure to jet fuel," Air Marshal Brown said. "Our people are our most important asset and I will continue to implement practical measures, such as safe work processes and the use of protective equipment, to minimise exposure to JP8 jet fuel. It is important to me that our personnel both past and present, have access to this independent research.

Defence's Senior Physician in Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Doctor Ian Gardner explained that the study utilised the latest university and medical research technologies into molecular and genetic aspects of cell biology. The study found small but persistent cellular effects many years after exposure. "The study found that while the kerosene component of jet fuel could adversely affect cells, the damage to cellular function is not expected to have immediate or adverse health effects," Dr Gardner explained.

The study did not find any evidence of genetic or chromosomal damage in cells exposed to jet fuel or the deseal/reseal solvents. Dr Gardner explained that a positive finding was that there is

no evidence found for the Jet Fuel to cause genetic or chromosomal damage that could lead to cancers.

“DVA and Defence are continuing to work on studies such as the 4th Update to the F-111 Mortality and Cancer Incidence Study and the ADF Firefighter Study which are being finalised,” Dr Gardner said.

The $3 million JFES study was undertaken by researchers at the Mater Medical Research Institute in Brisbane led by Prof Frank Bowling. The JFES Study resulted from initial research work undertaken by Air Force personnel.

The JFES study, and a summary can be downloaded at HERE and there is an excellent Power Point presentation available HERE. It’s a big file and will take a few seconds to download.

John was on his deathbed and gasped pitifully, "Give me one last request, dear," he said. "Of course, John," his wife said softly. "Six months after I die," he said, "I want you to marry Bob.." "But I thought you hated Bob," she said. With his last breath John said, "I do!"

Supermarine Spitfires and Hawker Hurricanes:

Which was the better aircraft??

HISTORYNET

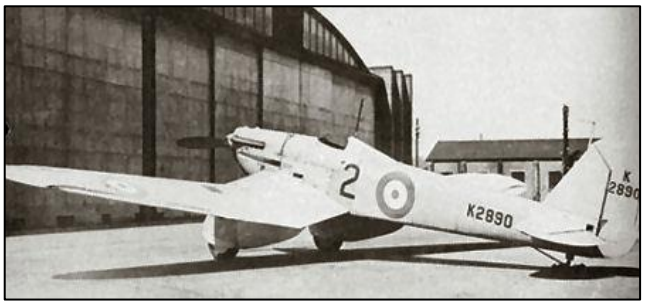
Which is better, the Supermarine Spitfire or the Hawker Hurricane? That question has been asked by pilots, historians and air enthusiasts since 1940. It does not have a definitive answer, however, each aircraft had its strong points and its disadvantages. Although both aircraft played a decisive role in the Battle of Britain they could not have been more different from one another. Each was created under a completely different set of circumstances and came from totally different backgrounds and antecedents. The Spitfire owed its famous graceful lines and speed to its early ancestors, evolving as a fighter from a series of extremely successful racing seaplanes that were designed in the 1920s–and 1930s. All of those racers were built by the firm of Supermarine Ltd. and were designed by one man–Reginald J. Mitchell. The innovative Mitchell has been called one of the most brilliant designers Britain has ever produced. His designs really were

ahead of their time. In 1925, when he began building racing airplanes, streamlining was considered more a theoretical exercise than an engineering possibility. But Mitchell made engineering theories more than just possibilities; he turned them into brilliant successes.

Mitchell's efforts at streamlining produced aircraft that were not only graceful but also among the fastest in the world. In 1927, his S.5 racer won the Schneider Trophy with a speed of 281.65 mph. Four years later, his elegant S.6B captured the Schneider Trophy outright for Britain with a speed of 340.08mph. Later, on September 29, 1931, his S.6B, fitted with a special 'Sprint' engine with its horsepower upgraded to 2,550, pushed the world speed record to 407.5 mph.

During that time, Britain's Air Ministry began looking for a replacement for the Royal Air Force's (RAF) standard fighters, the Bristol Bulldog and Gloster Gladiator, both of which were biplanes. Knowing he had the experience and the reputation he acquired by designing his Schneider Trophy winners going for him, Mitchell decided to make a bid for the Air Ministry's contract to design this new fighter. The Supermarine firm had been taken over by the industrial giant Vickers by this time; the new corporation was known as Supermarine Aviation Works (Vickers) Ltd.

The first prototype of the aircraft that would become known as the Spitfire was an odd-looking affair. Officially designated the F.7/30, it was a gull-winged monoplane with an open cockpit and spatted undercarriage. It looked more like a German Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber than the Battle of Britain fighter. Mitchell was not satisfied with his F.7/30 for a number of reasons. For one thing, it was underpowered, its Rolls-Royce Goshawk II engine gave it a speed of only 238 mph. So he began to experiment. He added a larger engine, enclosed the cockpit and gave his new fighter a retractable undercarriage with smaller, thinner wings. These thin, elliptically shaped wings would become the fighter's most recognizable feature. Mitchell continued to modify his design in 1933 and 1934. The larger engine he had in mind was supplied by Rolls-Royce, a new, 12-cylinder, liquid-cooled power plant called simply the PV-12. Rolls-Royce would rename this engine the Merlin, a name that would become legend among aircraft power plants. The new fighter, now designated the F.10/35, developed into a low-wing interceptor with retractable undercarriage, flaps, enclosed cockpit, and oxygen for the pilot. The Merlin engine promised to give it all the speed Mitchell wanted and the Air Ministry would require. For armament, he gave his fighter four wing-mounted .303-caliber machine guns. Air Vice Marshal Hugh 'Stuffy' Dowding, Air Member for Supply and Research, had been in charge of the RAF's technical development since 1930. He was favourably impressed by Mitchell's F.10/35 except for one item, he wanted eight machine guns. Recent tests had shown that the minimum firepower needed to shoot down an enemy bomber was six or, preferably, eight guns, each capable of firing 1,000 rounds



per minute. With that armament, it was estimated that a pilot would need only two seconds to destroy an enemy bomber in the air, the time during which a fighter pilot would be able to keep the enemy in his sights, it was thought.

Dowding had the future in mind. He knew that the German Luftwaffe was expanding and that Adolf Hitler's ambition would probably lead to an armed conflict between Britain and Germany. His farsightedness would pay off eight years later, in 1940, when he was chief of RAF Fighter Command.

Because of his aircraft's elliptical wings, Mitchell was able to fit four Browning .303 caliber machine guns into each wing without increasing drag or radically altering the design. With that armament, along with the RollsRoyce Merlin engine and the other features he had designed, Mitchell knew that his fighter would be a match for any aircraft the Luftwaffe might produce. Now all he had to do was convince the Air Ministry.

R. J. Mitchell's masterpiece, the prototype Supermarine Spitfire.

Mitchell's fighter first took to the air on March 5, 1936. It had been given a name, the Spitfire, by Vickers and made official by the Air Ministry. (Mitchell himself did not like the name very much; he called it 'a bloody silly name.') This Spitfire was flown by J. 'Mutt' Summers, chief test pilot for Vickers and Supermarine, out of the Eastleigh airport in Hampshire. It was unarmed and fitted with a fixed-pitch wooden propeller. After landing from his test flight, Summers told his ground crew, 'I don't want anything touched.' Although some alterations would be made, he realized from just one flight that the Spitfire was an outstanding fighter.

Following some persuasive arguments from Air Vice Marshal Dowding, the Air Ministry agreed with Summers' assessment. With a maximum speed of 342 mph, the plane was classed as the fastest military aircraft in the world. Less than three months after Summers' test flight, on June

3, 1936, a contract was placed with Supermarine for 300 Spitfires. Six hundred more were ordered the next year. By the time Britain went to war with Germany on September 3, 1939, the war that Air Vice Marshal Dowding had foreseen, 2,160 Spitfires were on order for the RAF.

But R.J. Mitchell never lived to see the success of his creation. In 1937, at the age of 42, he died of cancer.

Although the Spitfire was the product of one man's imagination, the Hawker Hurricane did not owe its origins to any single individual. It was the result of an evolutionary process that began with the fabric-covered biplanes of World War I. Revolutionary for its time, it was the RAF's first monoplane fighter and its first fighter to exceed 300 mph, the Hurricane was still a wood-and-fabric airplane. It was once referred to as 'a halfway house between the old biplanes and the new Spitfires.' Sidney Camm, Hawker Aircraft's chief designer, was the leading force behind the Hurricane's development. In the early 1930s, when the Air Ministry began looking to replace its biplanes with a more modem fighter, Camm already had a design for what he called his Fury monoplane, a modification of the graceful and highly manoeuvrable Fury biplane. The Fury was the direct descendant of Sopwith's Pup, Triplane, Camel, Dolphin and Snipe-fighters of World War I. Hawker Aircraft Ltd. had begun its life as Sopwith Ltd.

Apart from the fact that the Hurricane was a monoplane, its major differences from the Fury were its power plant and armament. The Fury was powered by the Rolls-Royce Kestrel, which gave it a maximum speed of 184 mph. But the Kestrel was much too small for the Hurricane. When Camm heard about Rolls-Royce's PV-12 engine, the Merlin, he modified his new monoplane to accommodate it.

The original armament of the new Hawker monoplane consisted of two .303-caliber Vickers Mark V machine guns mounted in the fuselage, and two .303-caliber Browning machine guns in the wings. But when Dowding decided that eight guns would be needed to destroy an enemy bomber, Camm changed his design. Just as Mitchell had done with his Spitfire, Camm incorporated eight Browning machine guns in his new fighter, four in each wing. But while Mitchell spaced the guns across the wing's leading edge, Camm grouped four guns together on each wing; this made for a tighter and more destructive concentration of fire.

When the Hawker plane made its first test flight on November 6, 1935, it was still without a name, the Air Ministry did not approve 'Hurricane,' the name suggested by the manufacturer, until June 1936. The Hurricane's maiden flight impressed the Air Ministry, but there were still some who had their doubts about such an 'unconventional' airplane, one that had eight machine guns and an enclosed cockpit. The first order of 600 Hurricanes was not placed by the Air Ministry until seven months after the initial test flight.

Enclosed cockpits, retractable landing gears and other features that would become standard for World War II era airplanes were considered too unorthodox by many authorities, even as late as the mid-to-late 1930s. High-ranking officers who had flown during World War I were accustomed to open cockpits, fixed wheels, struts and supporting cables. Wood and fabric biplanes were familiar; monocoque monoplanes were new and strange to them. And the 'old school' types had a good deal of influence in the pre-1939 RAF.

Some World War I pilots even insisted that the monoplane would always be outclassed by the biplane, because a biplane could always outmaneuver any monoplane. If those officers had had their way, the RAF would have faced the Luftwaffe's Messerschmitt Bf-109s with obsolete Gloster Gladiators in the spring and summer of 1940. It was that line of thinking that made Dowding's job of upgrading and modernizing the RAF more difficult.

The first RAF unit to be equipped with the Hawker Hurricane was No. 111 Squadron, which received its new fighters late in 1937. Production went into high gear during the following year, after the Air Ministry realized that the coming conflict was not far off. By the time war was declared, just under 500 Hurricanes had been delivered. Eighteen squadrons had been equipped.

Although it may appear from their close completion dates that the Hurricane and Spitfire were developed in parallel, the fact that they appeared on the scene at roughly the same time was purely coincidental. Work on the Spitfire design actually began several years before the Hurricane, but because it was a more complex and innovative airplane, it took longer to

develop. Eventually, 14,000 Hurricanes would be built and 22,000 Spitfires (including Royal Navy Seafires).

During the Battle of Britain, between July and September 1940, 19 squadrons of Supermarine Spitfires (372 aircraft at peak on August 30) and 33 squadrons of Hawker Hurricanes (709 aircraft on August 30) faced the Luftwaffe from airports throughout southern England. Other fighters were also employed, such as the grossly underpowered Boulton Paul Defiant, which was no match for the Messerschmitt Bf-109 in spite of its four-gun power turret (neither was the twin-engine Bristol Blenheim). A squadron of Gloster Gladiator biplanes was actually assigned to defend the Royal Naval dockyards at Portsmouth. But the brunt of the fighting was taken on by the Spitfire and the Hurricane.

The Luftwaffe had tried to destroy the RAF, especially the RAF Fighter Command, during the Battle of Britain and had conspicuously failed. This failure was almost entirely due to the ‘unconventional’ creations of Reginald J. Mitchell and Sidney Camm. Dowding’s insistence upon equipping the RAF with these two fighters while he was still attached to Supply and Research paid large dividends in the skies over the south of England during the summer of 1940. But the question persists as to which was better, the Hurricane or the Spitfire. Pilots have been making comparisons between the two airplanes for more than 50 years. Wing Commander Robert Stanford-Tuck said the Spitfire was like ‘a fine Thoroughbred racehorse, while the dear old Hurricane was rather like a heavy workhorse.’

'After many years of reflection,' said a former Spitfire pilot during the 1980s, 'I take the view that it took both of them to win the Battle of Britain, and neither would have achieved it on its own.

As a more stable gun platform, many have said that the Hurricane was better suited to go after the Luftwaffe bombers. For attacking formations of bombers, the Hurricane offered better visibility and much greater steadiness for shooting. The Spitfire was a slightly higher performance airplane, faster, a better rate of climb, and much more responsive to the controls, according to Stanford Tuck. In other words, each had its good points and bad points. Or, as another pilot said, 'The Spitfire and the Hurricane complemented each other.' A former pilot of No. 65 (Spitfire) Squadron observed that the Hurricane inflicted greater damage on the enemy bombers than did the Spitfire; but without the Spitfire squadrons to fight the Messerschmitts, the Hurricane-inflicted casualties might not have been enough to win the battle.

By 1939, the Spitfire was significantly faster and had a higher rate of climb, according to Dennis Richards and Richard Hough in The Battle of Britain, and they noted, 'In handling, there was little to choose between the two,' The authors went on to point out that the Hurricane's twin batteries of four Brownings closely grouped together in the wings was preferred to the 'widely scattered' guns in the Spitfire's wings. Squadron Leader Douglas Bader, who became an ace in spite of losing both legs in an air accident, added that the Hurricane 'had more room in the cockpit and a better view, and the Spit's much trickier to land … on that little, narrow undercarriage.'

Peter Townsend, who flew both Spitfires and Hurricanes, said that Spitfires were 'faster and more nimble, the Hurricane more manoeuvrable at its own speed and undoubtedly the better gun platform.'

One of Townsend's fellow Battle of Britain pilots defended the Spitfire: 'Our Spits were so well balanced they would fly themselves. Many pilots owe their lives to this property …. If a pilot passed out through lack of oxygen, the Spitfire would fall away in a dive and correct itself' But another of Townsend's contemporaries spoke up for the Hurricane: ' It was built with the strength of a battleship, had an engine of great power and reliability and was throughout an excellent and accurate flying machine.'

Some of the Hurricane's detractors (or Spitfire's defenders) point to the Hawker fighter's wood-and-fabric construction as one of its failings. But author Len Deighton claimed that this 'old-fashioned' construction was actually one of the airplane's advantages. He noted that the exploding cannon shells of the Messerschmitt Bf- 109, which inflicted heavy damage to metal skin, had less effect on any sort of girder work-in the same way that bomb blasts so often failed to topple the skeletal British radar towers. He pointed out that the RAF had very few men who understood the complexities of the Spitfire's stressed-metal construction, but that its airframe and flight mechanics had spent their lives servicing and rigging wood-and-fabric aircraft like the Hurricane. In consequence, many seriously damaged Hurricanes were repaired in squadron workshops while badly damaged Spitfires were being written off. Deighton also noted that the Hurricane had a tighter turning radius than the Spitfire, 800 feet for the Hurricane compared with 880 for the Spitfire. This meant that the Hurricane could turn inside the Spitfire, like a sports car outmanoeuvring a sedan–a vital attribute in air combat.

The Spitfire's job was to engage the enemy's fighters, to draw the Messerschmitts away from the German bomber formations. Then, when the Bf-109s were out of position, the Hurricanes would attack the bombers. That was the plan, but it didn't always work out that way. Hurricane pilots found themselves fighting Messerschmitts as often as did the Spitfire pilots.

German pilots had a great deal more respect for the Spitfire than for the Hurricane. The standard wisecrack among Luftwaffe fighter pilots was that the Hurricane was 'a nice little plane to shoot down.' But this could be attributed to Spitfire snobbery, no German fighter pilot wanted to admit that he had been badly shot up by a fighter made of fabric and wood.

Some Spitfire pilots shared that bias in regard to the Hurricane. A former pilot of No. 65 Squadron admitted that he had become slightly partisan on the relative merits of the Hurricane and the Spitfire and noted 'I would not like to have been a Hurricane pilot in 1940 and greatly respect the courage and achievements of those who were.' Among RAF pilots, the Spitfire-vs.-Hurricane

controversy went on and on, with no quarter given by either side. And the argument was not always confined to the officer's mess.

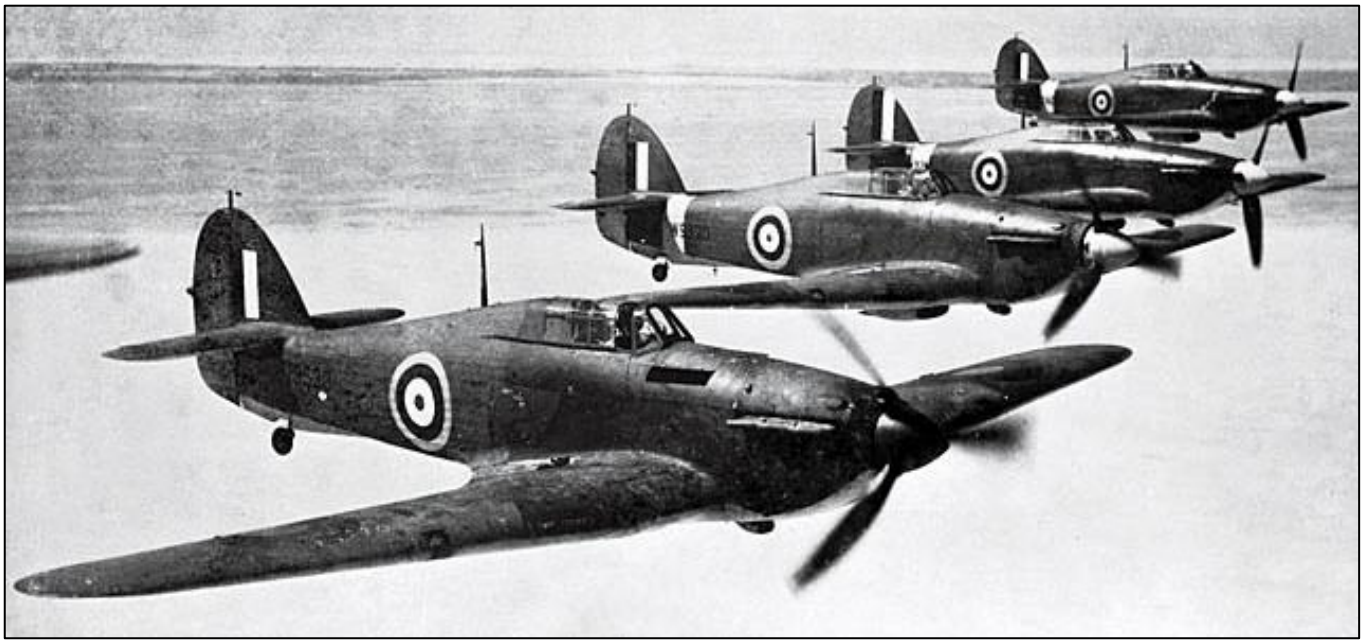
Shortly before the Battle of Britain began, a practice air raid had been arranged between a Spitfire squadron and a Hurricane squadron. The Hurricanes were to make a mock bomb run over the Kenley airfield in Surrey. Number 64 Squadron was to send six Spitfires to intercept the incoming 'bombers.' It all looked like a nice, easy practice drill on paper, but whoever planned the exercise had not reckoned on the rivalry between Spitfire and Hurricane pilots. Each side thought its own airplane was the best. Now they had their golden opportunity to demonstrate which fighter really was superior, once and for all. The exercise began according to plan-the Spitfires patrolled above their aerodrome, and the Hurricanes showed up flying in bomber formation. But when the Spitfires dove to the attack, the plan quickly fell apart. When the Hurricane pilots saw their adversaries closing from behind, they broke formation and turned to meet their attackers–a highly unbomberlike manoeuvre! For the next several minutes, the two squadrons chased each other for miles in all directions. The strain of dogfighting quickly wore down the pilots' enthusiasm and both squadrons landed after several minutes of wild aerobatics. Despite the great effort, however, nothing was accomplished by the little drill. Nobody's skills at breaking up bomber formations had improved, and neither side could brag about a clear-cut victory over the other. But at least it had given the pilots something else to argue about.

The pilot at the controls of either a Hurricane or Spitfire was not the most comfortable person in the world. Both machines may have had their good points and bad points, but no one ever praised either one for its comfort or luxury. According to Wing Commander Raymond Myles, who flew with the all-American Eagle Squadrons, a fighter pilot was a lonely man. The cockpit was so narrow that his shoulders brushed against the sides whenever he rubbernecked for enemy fighters (which was constantly); his flying helmet, with his radio headset, covered his ears; his nose and mouth were covered by an oxygen mask, which also contained his

microphone. He could not hear very well, even the engine roar was muffled; his vision was severely restricted, and his entire body was boxed in by the confines of the cockpit. He was, in short, not only lonely but also extremely uncomfortable.

In spite of their differences, it would be the combination of Hurricane and Spitfire, together that turned the tide in that summer of 1940. The pilot's disposition was not improved by the fact that he was traveling at speeds in excess of 300 mph and he felt even more anxious when a pilot in another machine, probably just as uncomfortable, began shooting at him.

Die-hard defenders of the Hurricane are quick to comment that the Hawker aircraft is credited with shooting down more enemy aircraft than the Spitfire. The Air Ministry confirmed this with its statement, 'The total number of enemy aircraft brought down by single-seater fighters was in the proportion of 3 by Hurricanes to 2 by Spitfires,' and also noted, 'the average proportion … of serviceable [aircraft] each morning was approximately 63 percent Hurricanes and 37 percent Spitfires.' A cynic might be tempted to say that the Hurricane did most of the work, but the Spitfire got most of the glory - and the cynics would have a point. For in spite of all the facts, it is the myth that is best remembered, the myth of the Spitfire taking on the air fleets of the Luftwaffe single-handedly. In their jubilee edition of The Battle of Britain, Richard Hough and Denis Richards give their own version of the Spitfire myth: 'The Battle of Britain, despite Fighter Command's being down to its last few aircraft, was won by unfailingly cheerful young officers flying Spitfires … and directed by 'Stuffy' Dowding ……



The reason for the Hurricane's second-class status was that it was competing not with another fighter, but with a genuine legend. William Green wrote: 'The Supermarine Spitfire was much more than just a highly successful fighter. It was the material symbol of final victory to the

British people in their darkest hour, and was probably the only fighter of the Second World War to achieve legendary status.'

The fact that the Hurricane was responsible for more enemy aircraft destroyed is eclipsed by the Spitfire's graceful silhouette and romantic legend. Glamour usually outshines performance, in war as in love. Both aircraft were modified many times as the war progressed; they were given larger engines, more spacious cockpits and 20mm cannons. Both also saw active service until World War II ended in August 1945.

Although they served on other fronts from Malta to Singapore, they reached their pinnacle during the high summer of 1940, when the Spitfire and Hurricane joined forces to thwart the Luftwaffe over the green fields of southern England.

In spite of their differences, both in origin and in performance, the two fighters became counterparts. Together, they turned the tide of history's first great air battle.

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Vol 51

The Wheels of Life