

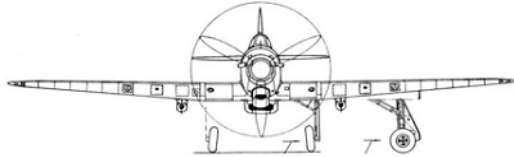


MEDWAY AIRCRAFT PRESERVATION SOCIETY LTD

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen



HAWKER HURRICANE – IIb – BH238



'A Soviet Warrior'



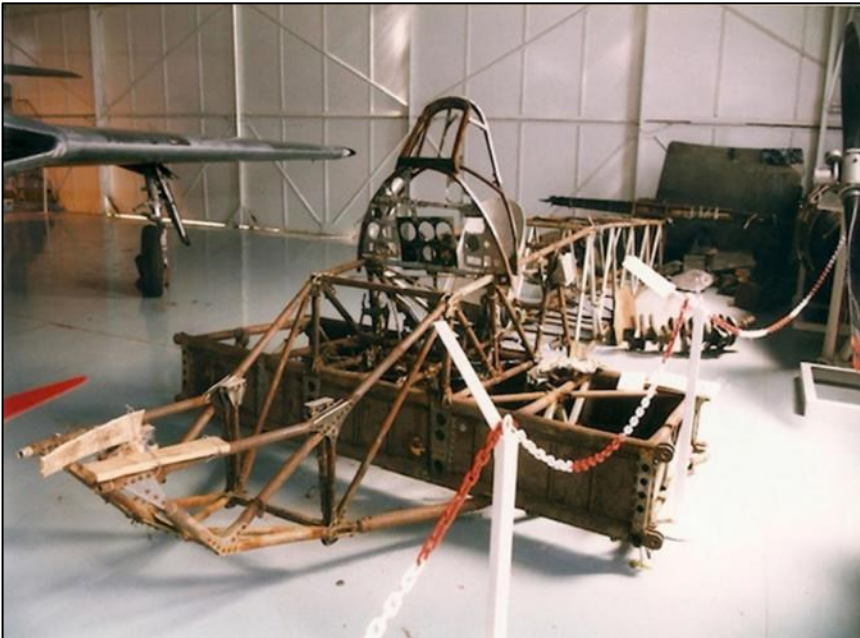
Hawker Hurricane IIb BH238 was originally manufactured by Gloster Aircraft Company at Brockworth in Gloucestershire in early 1942, as part of a batch numbered BH215 to BH264.

First delivered to No. 52 Maintenance Unit (MU) at Pangham Moors, Cardiff, it was dismantled ready for packing before transportation to Russia.

Leaving the UK on 26 January 1942, it may have travelled to Russia via Arctic convoy PQ9 or PQ11 arriving at Murmansk in February 1942.

No information is available relating to its Russian service but the skeletal remains of the aircraft arrived back in the UK and were taken to Sandown Airport on the Isle of Wight around 2000.

It went on display at the now closed Frontline Aviation Museum on the island before a period of storage, arriving in the workshop of MAPSL during December 2023, where it will undergo restoration before going on display at a destination that has yet to be decided.



1,884 Hurricane Mk IIb's were sent or handed over to Russia but before this the Hawker Hurricane was the mainstay aircraft in the Battle of Britain, there being more squadrons of this type than the Spitfire.

Its construction of metal, wood and canvas allowed it to take more punishment than the Spitfire and although slower in speed, many pilots preferred to fly this type in combat.

After the Battle of Britain, a change of policy at the Air Ministry dictated that the Spitfire was to be the main attacking aircraft for the Luftwaffe escort Messerschmitt 109s whilst the Hurricane was to attack the enemy bomber formations.



Air Defence in Russia

Mk II Hurricanes played an important air defence role in 1941 when the Soviet Union was under threat from the German Army approaching on a broad front stretching from Leningrad, Moscow, and to the oil fields in the south.

Britain's decision to aid the Soviets meant sending supplies by sea to the far northern ports, and as the convoys would need to sail within range of enemy air attack from the Luftwaffe based in neighbouring Finland, it was decided to deliver a number of Hurricane Mk IIBs, flying with Nos. 81 and 134 Squadrons, to provide protection.

Twenty-four were transported on the carrier HMS Argus arriving just off Murmansk 28 August 1941, and another 15 crated aircraft on board merchant vessels. In addition to their convoy protection duties, the aircraft also acted as escorts to Russian bombers.

Enemy attention to the area declined in October, at which point the RAF pilots trained their Soviet counterparts to operate the Hurricanes themselves and, by the end of the year, the RAF's role had ended, but the aircraft remained behind and were just the first of thousands of Allied aircraft that would be accepted by the Soviet Union.



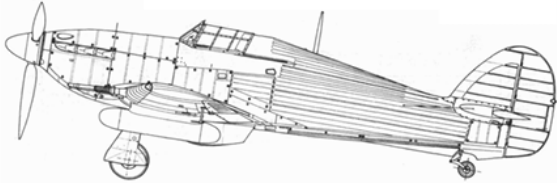
Hawker Hurricane Mk IIb Technical Data

Aircraft Type:

Fighter

Dimensions:

wingspan: 40 ft
length: 32 ft
height: 13 ft 1 in



Weights:

empty: 5,800 lb
gross: 8,100 lb

Power plant:

One 1,280 hp Rolls-Royce Merlin XX liquid-cooled in-line engine

Performance:

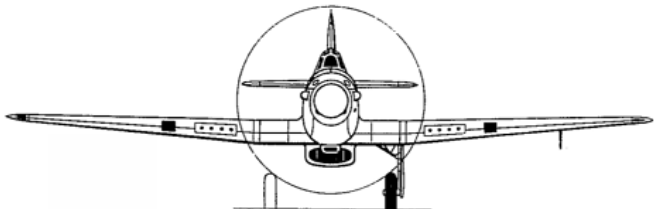
maximum speed: 336 mph
ceiling: 35,600 ft
maximum range: 460 miles

Armament:

8 × 0.303 in calibre machine guns plus
up to 1,000 lb of bombs or rockets

Service dates:

1938–1945



The Soviet Assessment of the Hurricane

Many of us view the Hawker Hurricane as the workhorse of the Battle of Britain and, while it was not as fast or glamorous as the Spitfire, most pilots found it to be a highly efficient aircraft that could take a lot of punishment. However, some Soviet pilots had a different view.

Soviet pilot, Vitaly Klimenko was brutal in his assessment. On the 1st of December 1941, his Reserve Air Regiment was re-equipped with Hurricanes.

“It was a piece of junk rather than a fighter!” said Klimenko. “A MiG might be clumsy at low altitude, but when flying higher I felt like a king. In comparison the Hurricane was slow and unwieldy – its wings were too thick.”

It is said that Hurricanes were deliberately broken up and buried after the war so the Soviets did not have to pay back the United States. Under the Lend-Lease legislation, the USSR was required to pay for any donated military equipment that remained intact after hostilities ended.

This is believed to be the reason not many examples survive. However, eight Hurricanes have been found buried in woodland south of Kyiv - now the capital of independent Ukraine, but until 1991 part of the USSR.

They had been stripped of their instruments, radios, machine guns and any useful scrap metal. Then dragged by tractors from a nearby airfield, broken up and dropped into a shallow ravine.

It is thought they were then covered with earth by bulldozers. It is believed they are being cleaned and restored.

