

# No 303 Squadron Hurricane

THE HISTORIC AIRCRAFT COLLECTION'S HAWKER HURRICANE HAS RECEIVED A PAINT SCHEME TO HONOR THE POLISH PILOTS THAT FOUGHT IN THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

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**W**hen the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain was commemorated in 2015, the Historic Aircraft Collection decided to repaint their very popular Hurricane IIa G-HURI into a new Battle of Britain paint scheme.

Since 2004, this Hurricane has been a regular on the European and United Kingdom air display circuit painted as Z5140 and coded HA\*C to represent an aircraft of No. 126 Squadron flown during the Siege of Malta. For the BoB anniversary, the fighter was repainted in a No. 303 (Polish) Squadron scheme to represent P3700 — a Hurricane coded RF\*E that flew operationally in the Battle of Britain from Northolt during August/September 1940.

The RAF's 303 Squadron was, of course, one of the most-famous RAF units that flew during the Battle. Despite only becoming fully operational on 31 August 1940, it became the RAF's highest-scoring squadron in that world-changing event. Even though the squadron had many experienced Polish pilots when it was formed in July 1940, it took some time for Fighter Command to accept that an all-Polish Squadron could effectively operate alongside other squadrons due to the language barrier and the perceived lack of discipline among some of the very aggressive Polish pilots.

On 2 August 1940, 303 Squadron moved to RAF Northolt and went through an extensive training period, which many of the pilots found frustrating since the vet-



Dave Harvey and Jacek Mainka pose with the Hurricane.

eran Polish pilots had much more combat experience than their RAF counterparts. Eventually, they were allowed to fly local defensive patrols over Northolt beginning on 24 August 1940 and were finally declared fully operational on 31 August — having scored their first official victory on 30 August while still being officially non-operational.

From the beginning of September 1940 onwards, 303 Squadron became fully involved in the Battle of Britain — flying continuous fighter combat operations from RAF Northolt until 11 October when the unit was moved to Leconfield in 12 Group for a rest, thus ending their Battle of Britain participation.

Some 126 Luftwaffe aircraft were claimed as shot

Dave Harvey enjoying an outing in the Hurricane over a beautiful English countryside. The Hurricane is finished in No. 303 "Kosciusko" Squadron markings. The squadron was named after Gen. Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the Polish and American hero who fought in the American Revolutionary War.