

# The Battle of Britain

## A MAJOR BATTLE OF WW2

### What was it about?

This was the first battle mainly fought in the air, with the Royal Air Force (RAF) Fighter Command against the German Air Force who were stopped in attempt to seize the skies over southern and eastern England. Hundreds of Canadian air and ground crew participated with most as RAF members.



The Royal Air Force 1940

### Leading Up To the Battle

Ever since Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, the RAF was in progress of rebuilding its strength by re-supplying and increasing numbers. Its need for preparation made way for it building of an active defense against enemy aerial attack on Britain. Radar and a new generation of Monoplanes (single wing) fighters (images on the left) were the technological innovations linked together by were linked together by a unique command-and-control system under the authority of Fighter Command. The only problem was supplying pilots, however recruiting from Britain and its dominions of the British Empire, like Canada, gained recruits at a steady pace.



The Supermarine Spitfire



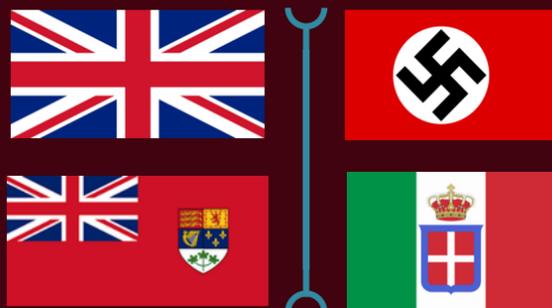
The Hurricane Hawker

With tactical support from the Federal Government in Ottawa and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) since the mid-1930's, there was a good source of RAF recruits for both flying and ground positions. The country only had a small air force since it was slowly emerging from the Great Depression, however those having an interest in a job in aviation turned to the RAF or RCAF and helped increase the numbers.

The Royal Canadian Air Force Flag 1940

### The Battle

The battle started on July 3, 1940 in the British Airspace and lasted until October 31, 1940 (3 weeks and 3 months). After the defeat of France and quit the war, Britain stood alone against the military forces of Germany. However, Britain was more favorable than what the world recognized at the time, they possessed an efficient air defense system, while Germany's army was unprepared for any form of massive operations, they had no navy left after the costly battle in Norway, the Luftwaffe had suffered loses from the west, and even more so, the Germans had poor idea of British vulnerabilities. They spent half of July waiting for Britain to surrender then attacked throughout August with air strikes that did substantial damage to radar sites. Then between 13-15 August, the Luftwaffe switch their focused to the RAF bases.



The United Kingdom and Canada against Germany and Italy.

At one point, the advantage seemed to swing in German's favor, but with bad intelligence and British attacks on Berlin led to the Luftwaffe changing its approach to attack Britain. Even though that the first attack was successful, the second failed with heavy loses and low morale among German crew when British air force appeared in large numbers and shot down many German fighters. This result to the postponed landing in the British Isles and the end of the Battle of Britain.

### Aftermath

- It is estimated that the British flying services lost 1,000 aircraft, and 1,900 were destroyed on the German side.
- The Battle memorial in England listed 2,937 airmen from 15 different countries flew to England.
- Of that number, 544 were killed, the Luftwaffe lost 2,600 men.
- It was estimated that 100 Canadian pilots took part in the battle, and officials say that 23 were killed in action.

Overall, Britain's victory saved the country from a ground invasion while proving that air power alone could be used to win a major battle.

### SOURCES

- <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/battle-of-britain>
- <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/battle-britain/>