



Spotlight

Hawker Hurricane

Too Lit

By the time Hurricanes arrived in Singapore the Japanese

When the Japanese assault in the Far East began on December 8, 1941, British and Commonwealth forces in the area were woefully unprepared and poorly equipped. In Malaya and Burma the main RAF fighter was the portly and lightly-armed Brewster Buffalo.

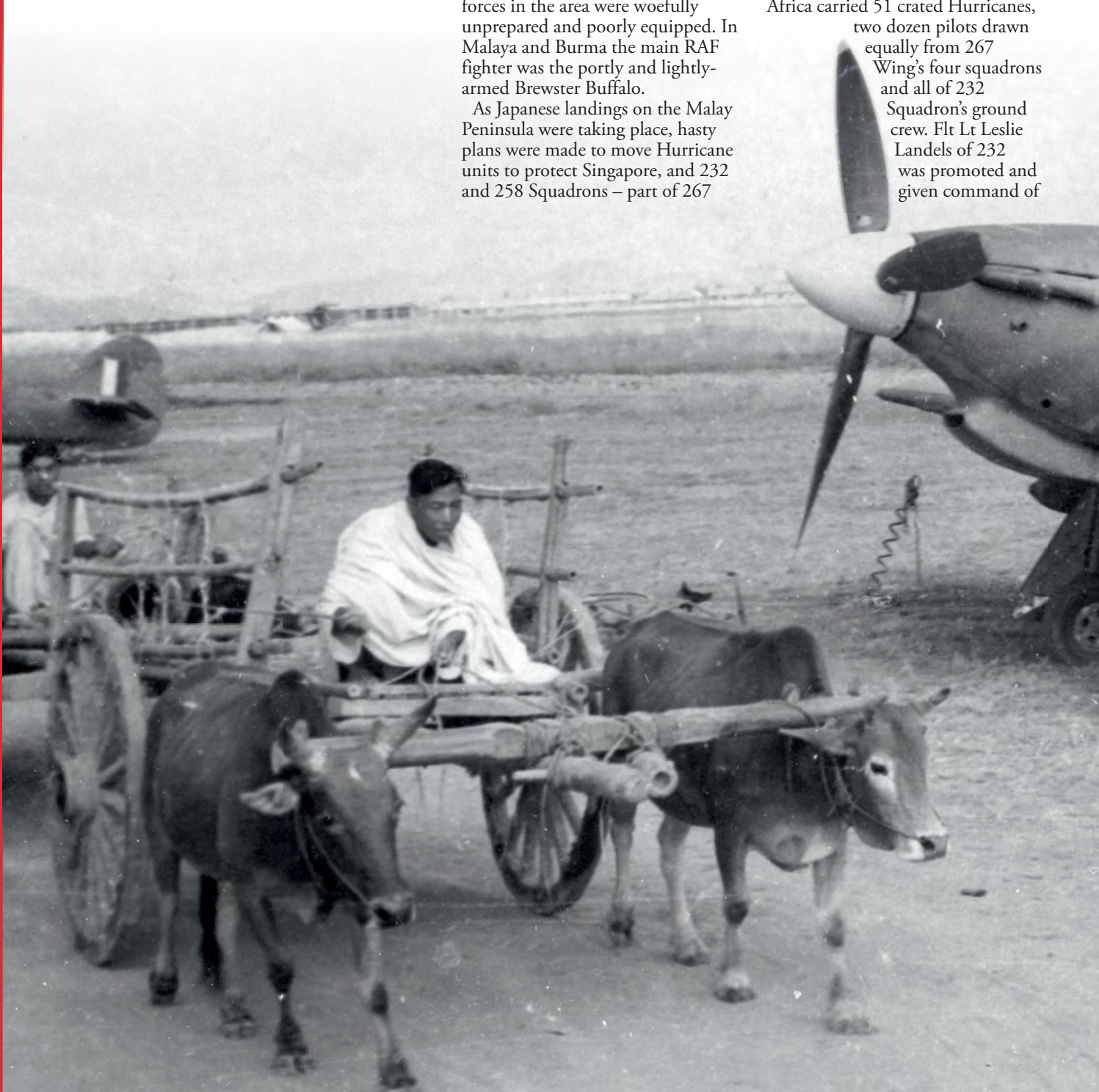
As Japanese landings on the Malay Peninsula were taking place, hasty plans were made to move Hurricane units to protect Singapore, and 232 and 258 Squadrons – part of 267

Wing – departed from West Africa to eventually fly their aircraft to the British colony from the deck of HMS *Indomitable*.

A convoy from Durban in South Africa carried 51 crated Hurricanes, two dozen pilots drawn equally from 267

Wing's four squadrons and all of 232

Squadron's ground crew. Flt Lt Leslie Landels of 232 was promoted and given command of



tle, Too Late

had established a superiority that the RAF was unable to counter. **Andrew Thomas** explains

the composite squadron, comprising the four groups of pilots and 232's ground crew. This was titled 232 (Provisional) Squadron, a confusing situation that meant there were two '232 Squadrons' heading east!

Sight for sore eyes

The Durban convoy arrived in Keppel Harbour, Singapore, escorted by Buffalos on January 13, 1942. The first Hurricanes were ready for air testing within a few days and 21 were available by the

17th. By then the air battles over Singapore had intensified with several heavy raids on the city and the airfields by both Japanese army and navy aircraft.

No.232 (Provisional) Squadron was divided into three flights, and was almost ready for operations. A pilot from one of the hard-pressed Buffalo units confided in his diary: "We had a great thrill when we saw our first Hurricane overhead today; to see the squadron in the air was a sight for sore

eyes". The Hurricanes were Mk.Ibs, encumbered with bulky tropical filters and fitted with old TR9D radios.

In the mid-morning of January 20 the heaviest Japanese raid yet on Singapore developed – and 232 was ready. Targeting Seletar were army Mitsubishi Ki-21 *Sallys* of the 12th and 60th Sentai escorted by Nakajima Ki-43 *Oscars* of the 64th Sentai. Leading the 64th was the experienced Major Tate Kato who had a simple plan: "We must drive away the enemy fighters

Below
'Hurribombers' being prepped in Burma circa 1944. KEY



"A pilot from one of the hard-pressed Buffalo units confided in his diary: "We had a great thrill when we saw our first Hurricane overhead today; to see the squadron in the air was a sight for sore eyes"

SPOT FACT Hurricanes were used in the fighter-bomber role in Burma until the end of the war



Above
Major Tateo Kato,
commander of the
64th Sentai. 64TH
SENTAI ASSOC VIA
YASUHO IZAWA

Right
The first Hurricane
shot down over
Singapore fell to
Lt Yonesaku Hatta
(centre) - but within
moments he also
became the type's
first victim in the Far
East. YASUHO IZAWA

Below
Main opponents over
Singapore were the
nimble Nakajima
'Oscars' of the 64th
Sentai. This example
is at Ipoh in January
1942. 64TH SENTAI
ASSOC VIA YASUHO IZAWA

from our bombers like a paper fan against flies." Additionally, 26 navy Mitsubishi G3M *Knells* of the Minor Kokoda were to attack Semarang and another 18, escorted by Mitsubishi A6M *Zees* (or 'Zeros'), hit Singapore city.

Amid some optimism, 'A' and 'B' Flights of 232 were on readiness from 07:00 hours at Seletar. As the army formation approached, Sqn Ldr Landels in BM906 led off a dozen Hurricanes in three four-ship sections. They climbed through cloud to 28,000ft when ground control reported the enemy were over Singapore at 15-20,000ft.

Landels acknowledged with a call of 'Tally Ho' and dived off, leading his No.2, Plt Off Jerry Parker. But Landels had missed the call detailing *other* bandits at 22,000ft - the escorting *Oscars* commanded by



"That morning Yonesaku Hatta had broken his toothbrush and confided to his friend, Lt Yohei Hinoki, that it was a premonition of his death"





Major Kato, climbing to engage. Almost immediately Lt Yonesaku Hatta got on Landels' tail, sending him crashing into the sea.

Broken toothbrush

Within moments Parker avenged his CO, as he recounted: "I fell into place about 600 yards behind the pursuing 'Jap' and rapidly overhauled him. He evidently didn't see me and pulled up into a gentle climbing turn as I came into range, still slightly above him. I laid off sufficient deflection, pressed the button and followed the 'Jap' round and up into his turn.

"I could see my bullets in the air and a myriad of golden flashes appeared sparkling on the nose of the enemy aircraft between

Taylor, Sgt Sam 'Bishop' Hackforth (in BG820), Sgt Geoff Hardie (BG810) and Sgt Joe Leatham (BE579). Other Hurricanes became embroiled with the Ki-43s and two were shot down, one each by Sgts Henry Nichols and Ron Dovell.

Two other Hurricanes were lost to the phenomenally manoeuvrable *Oscars* whose pilots accounted for a total of five. Plt Off 'Tex' Marchbanks (BG848) was killed while Plt Off Norman Williams baled out of a blazing BG818 – Major Kato's ninth victim. The Hurricane's efforts could not prevent the bombers inflicting further damage on the RAF's battered airfields. That evening Sqn Ldr R E P 'Boy' Brooker DFC, an experienced pilot with four victories to his

Left, top to bottom
Lt Shogo Takeuchi of the 64th Sentai claimed three Hurricanes shot down on January 31, 1942. 64TH SENTAI ASSOC VIA YASUHO IZAWA

One of the last Hurricanes shot down over Singapore was probably the victim of Lt Hiroshi Onozaki of the 59th Sentai. 64TH SENTAI ASSOC VIA YASUHO IZAWA

No.232 Squadron's CO, Sqn Ldr 'Boy' Brooker. RNZAF



Above
Flt Lt Ricky Wright is thought to have been the pilot that ended up in the storm drain at Seletar in 258 Squadron's Hurricane IIb BE163 on January 31, 1942. A G DONOHUE VIA J A CAMPBELL



the cockpit and the aircrew. The machine turned more sharply to starboard and steeply beneath me and dived away whilst I continued my own swoop into the nearest cloud."

That morning Yonesaku Hatta had broken his toothbrush and confided to his friend, Lt Yohei Hinoki, that it was a premonition of his death. The Hurricane's first Japanese victim was the first of Parker's five confirmed victories over the next few weeks.

Meanwhile Flt Lt Murray Taylor led his section down onto 27 *Sallys* mostly flying in 'vics' of three, and they destroyed no fewer than eight. Four pilots claimed two 'kills' each:

name, arrived at Seletar to assume command of the unit after a day of very mixed fortunes. One of the squadron pilots described Brooker as "a determined, self-assured man. I admired him."

Forlorn Hope

No.232 was in action the following day, January 21, against Japanese bombers when 27 Mitsubishi G4M *Bettys* of the Kanoya Ku and 25 *Nells* of the Mihoro Ku, escorted by *Zekes* of the 22nd Air Flotilla, raided Tengah and Keppel harbour. At Seletar 'A' Flight's only three serviceable Hurricanes, led by Flt Lt 'Penny' Farthing, scrambled and engaged the *Nells*. ➔

SPOT FACT *The Hurricane was the first Allied 'lend-lease' aircraft to be delivered to Russia*



Above, left to right
Plt Off Bruce McAlister (right) of 258 Squadron was killed on January 31, 1942. VIA M GOODMAN

Plt Off 'Red' Campbell of 258 Squadron, an American serving with the RAF, first saw action on January 31, 1942. J.A CAMPBELL

Sqn Ldr Ricky Wright, CO of 232 Squadron. AIR CDRE E W WRIGHT

Right
Aircraft ablaze at Kallang after a Japanese bombing raid. RNZAF



Describing the encounter to a journalist, Farthing said: "We went in against the first batch on a beam attack, selecting a formation of three. I picked one out and gave him a fairly long burst. There was a terrific explosion and I saw there was a big gap in the enemy formation. I actually flew through a wall of smoke and burning machine debris. When I landed I found that the engine intake was full of bits and pieces of Japanese aircraft."

Plt Off Brian Daniel, who also claimed a bomber destroyed, believed Farthing's victim exploded and took with it the aircraft on either side. Brooker led a later patrol of four Hurricanes that was attacked by marauding Ki-43s. Plt Off John Gorton force-landed BE633 and was badly injured while 21-year-old Sgt Peter Lowe (BE577) was lost.

Sqn Ldr Brooker led off ten of his aircraft against another raid on the 22nd and was vectored onto the Genzan Ku *Nells* and Kanoya Ku *Bettys*. More Hurricanes from 'C' Flight, led by Flt Lt Mike Cooper-Slipper, arrived soon afterwards. In the initial attack, Taylor sent Tadashi Hino's *Nell* to destruction. Cooper-Slipper then opened up and set fire to one; then, under heavy crossfire, sent another down in flames – his first victories over the Japanese. Hackforth (BG720) confronted two more, one of which fell away burning furiously while the other was left smoking.

Zekes arrived to deadly effect and Brooker's section was badly hit: Farthing (BG796), Daniel (BG804) and Leetham (BE579) were all killed. The *Zekes* then turned against 'C' Flight and Hackforth was shot down. He baled out into the sea but was



"...27 Kanoya Ku bombers with Zekes as escort appeared at 10:00 with little warning and plastered Kallang..."

fortunately picked up, with a badly bruised knee, as was Sgt Hardie, also slightly injured. In return 232 claimed just two *Zekes*, one falling to Nichols and the other to Farthing.

It had been a very grim encounter, 232 gaining its combat experience the hard way. In three days a dozen aircraft and six pilots had been lost – a quarter of the force. 'A' and 'C' Flights were off again on the morning of the 23rd and quickly tangled with incoming fighters, this time army *Oscars*. Although three were claimed shot down, it was at cost of four more of the precious Hurricanes, which were unable to prevent 12th Sentai *Sallys* covering Seletar with bombs – though Sgt 'Swampy' Marsh shot one down.

Desperate attack

Off the east coast of Malaya on the morning of January 26, a Japanese convoy under heavy escort was spotted approaching Endau in preparation for a landing. All available strike aircraft, mainly antiquated Vickers Vildebeest biplane torpedo bombers, were ordered to attack, and among the escorts for the first strike were 232's nine available Hurricanes, led by Brooker. Approaching the target, the biplanes began to take losses from flak and the escorting Nakajima Ki-27 *Nates* of the 1st and 11th Sentais as the escorts made vain attempts to stop the slaughter.

Brooker quickly shot down the nearest *Nate* – his first claim against

the Japanese. Parker dived on another that was engaging a Vildebeest: "I pulled up to come round again and found a fixed-undercart monoplane going straight into the air and on the point of stalling. My speed had dropped considerably and I had the plane properly under control so that I was able to hit the 'Jap' with several seconds of fire during which it remained in the same attitude before falling off under my nose."

Parker then went to the aid of another Vildebeest and fired on a second *Nate* to draw it off, which was credited as a 'probable'. Other *Nates* fell to the fire of Taylor and Nichols while Dovell reported that over the target area he found a group of 12 fighters and, following his leader down, found a Ki-27 coming up to him. He noted: "As he was on the top of a turn I gave him a short burst. Flames came from the engine and he went down with his engine blazing."

The 21-year-old then disengaged and was climbing when he spotted another: "I must have surprised him, because he made no attempt to get away. I gave him a long burst and he went down in an absolutely vertical spin from low altitude. He couldn't have had a hope."

All of 232's aircraft returned to

Singapore and were soon prepared for another strike. The second 'op' was led by Parker. The force reached Endau in clear weather and was immediately attacked by Japanese fighters. As soon as they arrived 232's Hurricanes waded into the enemy but it was too late as the Vildebeest formation had been destroyed.

In the close turning fight Nicholls claimed his second *Nate* that day. January 26 undoubtedly belonged to his friend, Dovell, who pursued one Ki-27 at low level: "I chased him, firing all the way, to within 10ft of the treetops. Finally he lost control and crashed into the trees."

Dovell went after a second *Nate*: "A short burst this time was sufficient to send it diving out of control." He received a DFM for his actions.

Despite the intense fighting, just one Hurricane, Sgt John Fleming's, was lost. These small successes were no recompense for such a disastrous day for the RAF and the Japanese landing effectively led to a full withdrawal from the Malay mainland.

Reinforcement

The following day 48 Hurricanes flown by pilots of the original 232 and 258 Squadrons began to

fly off HMS *Indomitable* to the Dutch East Indies. There were now two 232 Squadrons in the area! Enemy raids continued and, as if to emphasise the Japanese superiority, 27 Kanoya Ku bombers with *Zekes* as escort appeared at 10:00 with little warning and plastered Kallang, destroying two and damaging six of the aircraft that had just arrived for use by the resident 488 Squadron. (The latter unit, a Royal New Zealand Air Force fighter squadron, were in the process of exchanging its ageing Brewster Buffalos for Hurricanes.)

Another convoy bringing more troops and equipment arrived on the 28th and, when no raid materialised, Brooker led a strafe on Kluang airfield. The bombers returned the next day and hit Seletar once more but were intercepted by a section from 232, Plt Off 'Dizzy' Mendizibal bringing down a *Betty* and damaging a second, although he crashed BG808 on return.

After refuelling and arming in Palembang on Sumatra, 15 Hurricanes of 258 Squadron led by Sqn Ldr Jock Thompson flew on to Singapore, landing at Seletar. Early on the 30th, Flt Lt Ricky Wright DFM, the experienced flight

Below
Hurricanes first encountered the highly manoeuvrable, but obsolescent, Nakajima Ki-27 'Nate' over Endau on January 26, 1942. 64TH SENTAI ASSOC VIA YASUHO IZAWA



SPOT FACT One trial aircraft flew with a fabric-covered port wing and a metal-covered starboard wing

Right
Hurricane IIb BE208 after crash-landing at Kallang on February 8, 1942. Newly promoted Sqn Ldr Ricky Wright in front.
G BEACHAMP



Below
Hurricane IIb BM900 (in the background), one of three captured by the 64th Sentai, was painted in its markings. 64TH SENTAI ASSOC VIA YASUHO IZAWA

Bottom
The remains of Ricky Wright's BE208 after its accident. E BAKER

commander of the 'original' 232, led the advance elements of the next wave from *Indomitable*.

The reinforcements arrived just before an air raid. The incoming Japanese were intercepted by several Hurricanes of 232 (Provisional) Squadron accompanied by four 'Kiwis' from 488, although the latter failed to make contact. No.232(P)'s aircraft became embroiled with the raid's escort of Ki-27s: Taylor claimed one shot down and also hit one of the *Sallys*, but conditions

at Singapore's airfields, especially Tengah, were bad.

Siege and attrition

On the night of January 29 the causeway connecting Singapore to the Malay Peninsula was blown up. A siege began and the airfields subjected to further air raids. As a force of bombers with Oscar escorts approached, Sqn Ldr Thompson led 258's first scramble along with some from the now veteran 232 (P). Over Johor on the mainland

the Hurricanes ran into the bomber formation and attacked, but were quickly engaged by the escort.

Plt Off 'Red' Campbell, a US 'Eagle' pilot serving with the RAF, described the action to the author in 2005: "Our force was led by Sqn Ldr Jock Thompson. I was his wing man. The other pilots in the formation were Flt Lts Denny Sharp and Ricky Wright DFM and Plt Offs Bruce McAlister, Kleckner and Nash. We intercepted an enemy bomber formation of 27 with fighter escort. We made a quarter to rear strike. Thompson made a quick attack and then dove away.

"I found myself dead astern of, and very close to, the lead bomber... and firing like mad. My gunfire was hitting very low on his aircraft. When I raised my sight and fired, the rear gunner [was] slumped over his guns. His two wing aircraft, which up to then had been unable to hit me without striking their own tails, were now firing at me. I could see no future in that so I did a quick break away. As I passed below I saw a Hurricane 'flame' a bomber [this was Denny Sharp, as was





Left
Fitters assembling BE632 for service with 488 Squadron at Kallang on or around January 30, 1942. RNZAF

determined in debriefing later].
“My next reaction was I should be back in the engagement. As I started to climb back up I saw a Hurricane being attacked by two enemy fighters. They had him boxed in a little below me. I dove down to give help but the Hurricane pilot must have thought I was an enemy as he turned and started in my direction, so I turned to show him my underside. He pulled away and I manoeuvred up to clear my tail. As I turned towards them the ‘Japs’ fired on him and he dove away trailing smoke. I believe the other Hurricane pilot was Bruce McAllister, who was our only pilot lost in this battle.

“I dove down onto the two fighters. They took no evasive action, and I think they lost sight of me as I was up sun of them. I opened fire on the lead fighter from about 300 yards and I observed what looked like kitchen matches being struck all over his aircraft. I continued short bursts until he became a ball of flame and I had to take violent evasive manoeuvres to prevent hitting him.

“As I recovered I was amazed to see that I was almost wing to wing with the other fighter! We both turned towards each other and I fired first but ran out of bullets – but luckily he didn’t know that and I pulled a quick break away and got the hell out of there.

“Wright ended up on his nose in a slit trench [see photo on page 85]. Kleckner and Nash both landed safe, but shot up. We did not affect the bombing attack and lost more than we destroyed.”

Ron Dovell tangled with an *Oscar*, probably that flown by Sgt Major Tsutomu Goto. Following it in a dive, he fired a lengthy burst, resulting in flames and smoke pouring from it before it

were destroyed during the scramble, one each claimed by ‘Red’ Campbell and Flt Lt Ivon Julian. Ricky Wright took over command and scrambled the next day, flying BE208, when large numbers of the enemy were again over the island, but his aircraft was hit and he force-landed on Kallang. He ended up on his nose in a ditch for the second time.

The Japanese flew over Singapore virtually at will next day and early on February 9 began crossing to the island city from Johore. By dawn some 10,000 men were ashore and



Above
A 232 Squadron Hurricane being serviced at Kallang. RNZAF

crashed. The fight cost 258 four of its precious Hurricanes, but that night Sharp and Campbell collected bottles of champagne from a Chinese businessman – a gift he gave to every pilot who brought down a Japanese aircraft.

Evacuation

With the airfields now coming under shellfire it was decided to evacuate most of the remaining fighters to the Dutch East Indies. The ‘scratch’ 232 Squadron was credited with 38 confirmed victories in 11 days of action.

Some of the ‘original’ 232, led by Sqn Ldr John Llewellyn, were in action over the doomed city on February 5 when they tangled with patrolling *Nates*. During a later scramble Sgt Jimmy King was credited with one of two Ki-21s shot down.

Sections continued patrols the following day and, on the 7th, tragedy struck when Sqn Ldr Llewellyn crashed on take-off and was killed. Three enemy fighters

air attacks on forward positions were incessant. Among those airborne was Sgt James Sandeman Allen in Z5667, and during two sorties that day he shot down a brace. He remembered: “I was sent up to annoy the fighters and I was lucky enough to get up sun and catch two before I had to run for cover in the clouds.”

Bombers were credited to Ivon Julian, Plt Off Ernie Gartrell and Sgt Pip Healy, who was attached from 258 Squadron. These were the last fighter victories over Singapore. There was desperate fighting on the ground but Kallang was evacuated the next day and the fortress surrendered on the 15th.

The full story of the Hurricane units in Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies can be found in Bloody Shambles Vols 1 and 2 by Christopher Shores, Brian Cull and Yasuho Izawa, and Hurricanes Over Singapore by Brian Cull and Paul Sortehaug, all published by Grub Street. ●

Hawker Hurricane



Keep 'em flying

The number of flying Hurricanes is always changing as new restorations are completed, but there are currently believed to be around 12 airworthy examples.

Spotlight Next Month

Lockheed Constellation

Next month, *Spotlight* shines on the elegant lines of the Lockheed Constellation, regarded by many as being among the most beautiful airliners ever built. Although intended for civil use, the first examples flew with the USAAF in World War Two as military transports. However, the 'Connie' is best remembered as the first pressurised airliner, flying large numbers of passengers in comfort over long distances. We reflect on the type's history in our *September* issue, on sale in the UK on *August 1* – see page 106 for our latest money-saving subscription offers.



A list of airworthy Hawker Hurricanes

Identity	Registration	Variant	Keeper, location and status
'P3351'	F-AZXR	IIa	Jan Roozen, Cannes, France. Coded 'K'.
'P3700'	G-HURI	XII	Historic Aircraft Collection, Duxford, Cambs. Really 5547
'P3886'	G-CHTK	X	Peter Monk, Biggin Hill, Kent. Really AE977. Coded 'GZ-L'
R4118	G-HUPW	I	Peter and Polly Vacher, Oxfordshire. Coded 'UP-W'
'V6793'	N943HH	XIIb	Fighter Factory, Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA. Airworthy. Really 5667. Coded 'DZ-O'
Z7015	G-BKTH	Sea Ib	Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden, Beds (pictured)
'AG244'	G-CBOE	XII	Privately owned, Aalen Elchingen, Germany. Rhodesian Air Force livery. Really RCAF 5487
'BE505'	G-HHII	IIb	Hangar 11, North Weald, Essex. Really RCAF 5403. Coded 'XP-L'
KZ321	CF-TPM	IV	Vintage Wings of Canada, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada. Coded 'JV-N'
LF363	-	IIc	Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Coningsby, Lincs. Airworthy, coded 'JX-B'
PZ865	-	II	Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Coningsby, Lincs. Airworthy. Coded 'EG-S'
'5429'	N54FH	XII	Flying Heritage Collection, Everett, Washington, USA. Coded 'Z'

Notes: Mk.I P3717 (G-HITT) has been restored in Suffolk, and is expected to make its first post-restoration flight imminently. Mk.XII 'P2970' is currently undergoing extensive maintenance at Scone, New South Wales, Australia, and isn't considered airworthy.